MU to cut graduate tuition waiver, increase stipends

By Megan Favignano

Wednesday, July 1, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Some current University of Missouri graduate assistants will see an increase in their stipends this fall, but in fall 2016, incoming graduate assistants will receive less of a tuition discount under new rules.

MU Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin said students with a full stipend, or 20-hour appointment, will receive a full tuition waiver, and students with half of a stipend, or a 10-hour appointment, will receive half of a tuition waiver starting in 2016. Currently, full tuition waivers are given for all assistantships.

“Essentially, the student is working for the university 10 hours a week, and for that we are giving them a full ride. And a student who works 20 hours a week is also getting the full ride. So they are both getting the same full ride, but they are not working the same amount,” Rubin said.

If the number of 10-hour assistantship positions stays the same, Rubin said this policy change could save the university $3.5 million to $4 million in five years.

Stipends vary by discipline, with the majority of programs awarding graduate assistants the university’s minimum stipend of about $10,000 for a nine-month appointment.

The MU graduate studies office ordered an 8 percent increase to the minimum stipend across all programs starting this fall. Graduate assistants making the minimum will see an increase in their stipend, and departments will decide if students already making above the minimum will get an increase.

Calvin Coker, graduate teaching assistant in MU’s Department of Communication, said MU’s stipend is more generous than the one he received at Missouri State, where he earned his master’s.

“The demands of a doctoral program are such that one doesn’t have the luxury to spend large amounts of their time at an external job,” Coker said in an email interview.
The teaching and research assistantships in the Department of Communication, Coker said, are crucial to students when they look for jobs.

Coker has a 20-hour appointment teaching two sections of public speaking. He was attracted to MU’s assistantship both for the financial and professional benefits, he said.

“Mizzou was absolutely my top choice of programs, but without” MU’s financial incentives “that ranking may have changed relative to other programs,” he said.

The academic programs, Rubin said, are worried they will have difficulty recruiting students for assistantships with the change in the tuition waiver.

“The programs are convinced that students won’t come here if they have to pay half their tuition,” Rubin said.

Rubin said the university can’t afford to pay for tuition discounts the way it has as programs continue to grow.

Academic programs, which pay the stipends out of their individual budgets, are starting to look at their budgets and consider their options, Rubin said. Some programs could offer more 20-hour appointments with a full stipend. Some 10-hour positions could switch to a fellowship or scholarship rather than an assistantship. It won’t be clear whether or how much additional money departments will pay out for stipends until budgets are finalized.

MU’s graduate studies office will work with academic programs to create a transition plan, Rubin said.

A little more than 600 students have 10-hour appointments, and about 2,100 have 20-hour appointments. Three programs give half of the 10-hour appointments: music, business and journalism.

Martha Pickens, academic adviser and fiscal manager for the School of Journalism graduate program, said the program still is working through the options.

Rubin said the money the university gains by scaling back its tuition discount could end up being put back into the specific academic programs.
Missouri to begin fiscal year with surplus, no restrictions on spending

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, July 1, 2015 at 2:00 pm Comments (5)

Missouri opened a new fiscal year Wednesday with no money being withheld from the $26 billion budget approved by lawmakers thanks to a surge in revenue that closed fiscal 2015 with a surplus, state Budget Director Linda Luebbering said.

General revenue grew by almost 9 percent in the 12 months that ended Tuesday. Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, said he expects the state will close the year with a surplus approaching $250 million, a number Luebbering said was “probably a reasonable guess.”

It is a stark contrast to the situation last year at this time, when Gov. Jay Nixon vetoed $144 million in general revenue spending and imposed restrictions on $641 million more. Revenues fell in fiscal 2014, and lawmakers passed tax cuts Nixon said would put the budget far out of balance if passed over his vetoes.

Nixon signed this year’s budget in May without vetoing any spending items after lawmakers worked at an accelerated pace to pass the spending orders early. They included many of the items Nixon vetoed or withheld last year but funded few new initiatives. Under a new constitutional provision, approved last year by voters, Nixon is required to issue a proclamation saying which spending items are being restricted.

If lawmakers disagree with the decisions, they can overturn them at the September veto session.

“We have not done any notification at this time,” Luebbering said. “We will, if necessary, but the constitution does not require when.”

The $26 billion state operating budget includes general revenue, federal aid for state programs and other funds. The final figures for revenue in fiscal 2015 will be released Thursday, but preliminary numbers put the growth rate near 9 percent, Luebbering said. Lawmakers wrote the budget for the new fiscal year anticipating 4.6 percent revenue growth in the fiscal 2015 budget and 3.6 percent growth in the coming fiscal year.
At almost 9 percent, the general revenue of almost $8.7 billion means the new fiscal year’s budget is covered if revenues remain steady.

Under the budget approved by the Republican-led General Assembly, public schools next year will get $3.2 billion in basic aid. That’s an increase of $84 million from this year but short of the $482 million increase needed to provide the full amount called for under a 2005 state law.

Public universities and colleges are set to receive $12 million more in performance-based funding, a 1.3 percent increase. For the University of Missouri, that represents an increase of about $5.7 million, to about $434.5 million in state support. In addition, programs such as the $10 million medical school collaboration with Missouri State University are fully funded.

Lawmakers also approved almost $540 million in capital improvement projects, most of it to come from a state bond issue to pay for repair and maintenance of college buildings and state property. The University of Missouri system is slated to receive $56.5 million from the bonds, and $35 million was approved for a new home in Columbia for the State Historical Society of Missouri.

“The legislature appropriated more than what would have been spent under the governor’s original budget, but we don’t anticipate at this point any concerns,” Luebbering said.

There is no reason for any permanent restrictions on spending at this time, Schaefer said. Any limitations on individual spending items will be because of cash-flow issues, not revenue receipts, he said.

Meningitis vaccine needed for some Missouri college students

NO MU MENTION

July 1, 2015

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Students living on Missouri public college campuses now must be vaccinated against bacterial meningitis.
A state law requiring the vaccine for those living in on-campus housing took effect Wednesday. Students can seek a religious or medical exemption to the requirement.

Meningococcal disease can cause an inflammation of the brain lining known as meningitis. It can spread among people in crowded places such as dormitories and can strike quickly with sometimes deadly results.

Some symptoms can appear similar to the flu, including fever, headaches and neck stiffness.

All Missouri University Students Must Get Meningitis Vaccine


COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU Mini Medical School gives high school students hands-on experience

HALEE ROCK, 1 hr ago

COLUMBIA — One of the tests the MU School of Medicine uses for people who want to be surgeons looks a lot like a video game.

To practice laparoscopic — or internal, non-invasive surgery — the students must use their fingers to control clamps on the ends of rods and move quarter-size red and blue triangles from
one set of pegs to the other, then back again, all while watching their work on a screen. To make it even harder, they have to perform the task in less than two minutes.

**On Tuesday afternoon, some Missouri high school students got their chance to take the test. Dressed in blue scrubs emblazoned with the image of Truman the Tiger wearing a white lab coat, teenagers from across the state attended MU's Mini Medical School.**

The program, now in its 17th year, allows the students to get hands-on experience with medical practices and to learn whether medical school might be a good fit. There are up to 56 students in each of the two one-week sessions who gain experience and learn about different options in the medical field.

About a dozen medical students acted as counselors for the program. All of the counselors are between their first and second years of medical school, and this is the last summer while in school that they'll have any free time.

The Mini Med students get a look at how medical school works. They attend lectures, read patient scenarios and determine best treatment options. But the most popular activities are the ones that allow them to use their hands and learn what doctors and surgeons really do.

The students this week have learned different techniques for stitching wounds and helped brainstorm solutions to problems that can arise while delivering babies. They practiced CPR and checked the vital signs of mannequin patients. They also spent an hour in the anatomy lab using real cadavers to learn about muscles, bones and tissue.

"They like looking at dead stuff," counselor Alex Heck said.

Indeed, several of the students said studying the cadavers was their favorite part of the week. "We got to feel how human flesh and tissue feels," Colby O'Dell of Blue Springs said.
To practice sutures — including simple interrupted, vertical mattress, and horizontal mattress techniques — the high schoolers worked on embalmed pigs' feet with instruction from Jared Sinclair.

"Is it bad to go past the skin?" Paige Shockley of Springfield said as she pushed her needle too deep into the muscle. "Well, he'll live," Shockley joked.

Rock Bridge High School senior Zoya Khan compared suturing to knitting or sewing. Counselor Ariel Carpenter said that was the best description she had heard during Mini Med.

On Tuesday, the students were challenged to help deliver a plastic-and-rubber baby born by a mannequin mother that muttered pre-recorded complaints throughout the simulated labor. "Ouch," the mannequin moaned. "This feels different from the last time."

Fourth-year medical student Nathan Nolan presented different scenarios to the teenagers. What if a baby had its umbilical cord wrapped around its neck as it was being delivered? What if its shoulders became stuck? Many of the students stayed quiet with puzzled looks. Others eagerly offered suggestions, such as a cesarean section.

The different simulations help the high school students figure out where they might fit in the medical field. Whether they're destined for careers in surgery, physical therapy or emergency medicine, Mini Med School can be a stepping stone to figuring that out.

Some of the students joined Mini Med because they had friends who had done it in the past or thought it would look good on medical school applications. The high school students offered various reasons for exploring a career in health care.

"I had a surgery a couple years ago, and one of my nurses really helped me out," O'Dell said. "She kind of changed my life, so it influenced me a lot."

Khan wants to pursue a medical career because both her parents are doctors.
Raytown South High School senior Emmanuel Madu said he's not sure what he wants to do with medicine, but he does know what he likes about what doctors do.

"I like working with a team and trying to find solutions to patients problems," Madu said. "It was kind of fun tossing around ideas, seeing what we could do better and trying to find what was wrong with the patient."

July 1, 2015

**Obama’s Overtime Proposal Could Be Costly for Colleges**

By Paul Basken

**NO MU MENTION**

President Obama visits the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse on Thursday to detail a labor initiative that’s cheering workers at retail stores and restaurants while alarming their owners.

By the time the president’s proposed change in federal rules on overtime pay could take effect next year, however, it might also generate similar divisions among college administrators and their workers.

The basic thrust of the proposal is to raise, from $23,660 to $50,440, the annual salary cutoff below which workers are generally eligible for a time-and-a-half wage rate for work that exceeds 40 hours a week.

That change, the Obama administration estimates, would help nearly five million workers, many in retail and food services, whose employers manage to avoid paying the overtime rate by classifying them as managerial.

Colleges and universities, however, are not bystanders in the matter. Teaching positions are exempt from the overtime rule, at least for now. But most of the workers on American college campuses are outside of teaching, and the economic effect of the change could be significant, according to several labor lawyers.

"I certainly expect that this salary threshold is going to impact higher education," said Lisa A. Schreter, chairman of the board at Littler Mendelson, a law firm that represents management in employment cases.
That’s especially true if the process of changing the rule leads to a reconsideration of the teaching exemption, said William A. Herbert, executive director of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions at Hunter College of the City University of New York. "It would be prudent for colleges and universities to re-examine the situation," he said.

The administration’s plan on overtime wages is the latest in a series of steps by Mr. Obama to creatively find areas where he can advance his policy goals — in areas that include the environment, foreign policy, immigration, and gun control — in the absence of cooperation from the Republican-led Congress.

In this case, the changes in overtime-pay policy are being pursued by the Department of Labor through a standard rule-making mechanism for setting the exact definitions and boundaries of laws previously approved by Congress. The process is expected to take a little more than a year — just enough time for Mr. Obama to see them take effect before his second and final term expires.

Jobs on Campuses

Various experts in higher education and labor relations said they could not predict exactly how many workers on college campuses would be affected by the proposed change, though it could be several hundred thousand nationwide.

American institutions of higher education employ more than 3.8 million people, according to government data cited by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources. That figure includes more than 1.5 million faculty members; 238,000 people in executive, administrative, or managerial positions; 800,000 in other professional positions; and more than 900,000 in other positions not exempted from federal overtime rules, the association said.

Many entry and midlevel professional positions — including many in student life, development, administration, and academic affairs — pay less than $50,440 per year, said Andy Brantley, the association’s president and chief executive officer.

An increase in the overtime threshold "was long overdue," Mr. Brantley said. "Unfortunately, a change of this magnitude will have a significant impact for every campus."

The effect will be most pronounced for colleges in parts of the country that have lower average wages and lack state laws that already set stricter rules on overtime pay, said Tara E. Daub, a partner at the law firm Nixon Peabody.

Colleges will have to absorb that cost in some way, such as cuts in services or tuition increases, said Shannon D. Farmer, a partner at Ballard Spahr, a law firm with clients in higher education. And the effect would linger, she said, as Mr. Obama’s proposal calls for automatic increases in the future tied to average incomes.

Worries About an ‘Ambush’
Even more concerning, Ms. Farmer said, is the possibility that the Department of Labor will end or revise the exemption for teaching positions. That exemption also applies to many doctors and lawyers, who, along with professors, are in positions that are either relatively well paid or involve wide fluctuations in numbers of hours worked each week, she said.

The administration’s proposed change does not explicitly suggest repealing the teaching exemption, she said, though it does invite comments on it. "So what people are concerned about is that there is going to be basically an ambush rule here," where the Department of Labor might endorse a change in the teaching exemption later in the process, she said.

That type of change — sought by many advocates of adjuncts as part of an overall campaign for improving pay and conditions for part-time, non-tenure-track faculty members — could perhaps happen some day, said Ms. Daub, a member of Nixon Peabody’s Labor and Employment group. But it won’t happen in the current rule-making process, she said, because revising the teaching exemption has not been included in the terms of the initial proposal.

"It would have to go through the whole notice-and-comment period," said Ms. Daub, who was scheduled to address the topic on Wednesday morning at the annual conference of the National Association of College and University Attorneys in Washington. "They can’t just slip that in at the end."

Either way, at least one university doesn’t seem especially concerned. At the University of Wisconsin at La Crosse, Mr. Obama’s scheduled visit on Thursday to outline the plan is largely a matter of celebration, given that it will be the first time a sitting U.S. president has ever visited the campus. It’s "an historic opportunity for our UW-L community," the chancellor, Joe D. Gow, said in a campuswide email.

The campus’s vice chancellor for administration and finance, Robert J. Hetzel, said he hadn’t looked at the plan, which Mr. Obama publicly outlined in an op-ed on Monday in The Huffington Post, or tallied its possible effects on Wisconsin-La Crosse. "I’m not able to comment on this matter as we haven’t seen the proposal," Mr. Hetzel said.
NO MU MENTION

Students may soon be able to use Pell Grants to attend coding boot camps and enroll in MOOCs and other nontraditional programs under an experiment that the Education Department is considering conducting.

The pilot project, which has been in the works for several months, would let colleges contract out entire programs to education-technology companies and retain the programs’ eligibility for federal grants and loans. Colleges are now limited in how much of a program they can outsource.

If successful, the test could open the door to federal student aid for a host of ed-tech upstarts that offer alternatives to traditional degrees, such as badges and microcredentials. Beneficiaries could include providers of massive open online courses like edX and Udacity, and coding schools like General Assembly and Pluralsight.

Details of the experiment are still being worked out, including the thorny question of who would validate the partnerships — existing accreditors, new entrants, or both. On July 30 the department will bring together colleges, companies, and accreditors to discuss issues of quality control.

"They’re trying to sort out, What could this look like?" said Southern New Hampshire University’s president, Paul J. LeBlanc, who has just completed a three-month stint at the department as an adviser on the pilot, dubbed "Project Badger" (after badges). "There is still a lot of internal wrangling with how do we do this well, how do we prevent abuses," he said.

A department official stressed that no decisions had been made on the pilot, which is known as an "experimental site," but said the agency was encouraged by “the exciting work” being done on some campuses.

"We’re interested in encouraging more collaborations between institutions and new providers," the official said.

Accommodating New Players
"Noninstitutional providers," as the diverse mix of ed-tech companies are collectively known, have become popular with lawmakers, who see them as a way to get more students to earn a postsecondary credential more quickly and at a lower cost. Yet the companies, which don't offer degrees and don't rely on the credit hour, don't fit the mold of traditional accreditation. Finding a way to accommodate them has become a priority for the Obama administration and congressional Republicans alike.

Partnerships between colleges and ed-tech companies have become more common in recent years, with agreements like the one between the University of New Haven and Galvanize, an unaccredited coding school, making national headlines. Still, most of the arrangements have been narrower, with colleges outsourcing their marketing or technology, but not their academic affairs.

That's partly due to federal rules that bar colleges from outsourcing more than a quarter of a program's instruction or training — 49.9 percent if the program is approved by an accreditor. Under the rules, programs that exceed those limits lose their ability to award federal aid.

Lifting the caps on outsourcing would pave the way for more partnerships, and allow third parties to play a bigger role in educating students at traditional colleges. As such, the pilot is likely to face pushback from faculty members worried about ceding academic control and from consumer advocates nervous about expanding the role of for-profit companies in higher education. It could also raise alarms among community colleges and some state comprehensive universities, which might lose students to the newly eligible programs.

But Michael B. Horn, a co-founder of the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation, said he expected the grumbling from faculty members to be muted, in part because the agreements can provide desperately needed revenue to struggling colleges.

"It will ultimately challenge the existing institutional model, but in many ways that is already under threat," he said. A pilot "gives traditional institutions a window to transform themselves," he said, "to experiment, and see what does and doesn't work."

Ben Miller, senior director for postsecondary education at the Center for American Progress and a frequent critic of for-profit colleges, said he was not worried about letting more companies into the federal student-aid system under a "controlled and supervised" experiment.

"This is the right way to approach letting new players into the system," he said. "And if they produce good results, it makes sense to allow students to use their aid there."

Still, not everyone is convinced that the government needs to intervene in the market. Richard Garrett, director of the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, said he worried that federal subsidies could make the companies less efficient, less driven to innovate. He argued that it might be better to let the fledging companies evolve "without the crutch of public subsidies."

"A lot of these experiments are young and unproven," he said. "To me, it feels a bit premature and a bit faddish."
Quality Control

The debate over opening up the student-aid system to new players comes as the department is preparing guidance for colleges that are seeking access to aid for competency-based programs under another pilot project.

In both experiments, the department is trying to encourage innovation, while safeguarding the student-aid system from fraud and abuse. It’s a difficult balancing act, particularly because there’s disagreement about who should be in charge of quality control.

Some regional accreditors, including groups that represent New England and the West, have said they’re interested in expanding their purview to cover such partnerships. They argue that accreditors, as the original guardians of quality, are best positioned for the task.

"We need to be working within the changing landscape of higher education," said Mary Ellen Petrisko, president of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges’ Senior College and University Commission.

Asked if accreditors might evaluate partnerships differently than they judge traditional colleges, Ms. Petrisko said no. "I don't see this as a qualitatively different thing, as far as outcomes are concerned," she said.

But others argued that the arrangements should be held to a higher standard, with a greater emphasis on student learning and labor-market outcomes.

"This could go wrong really quickly if you don’t have good quality assurances," said Amy Laitinen, deputy director for higher education at New America.

Ms. Laitinen said she doubts whether the regional accreditors are up to the task, but is encouraged by their willingness to innovate.

Some lawmakers, meanwhile, are calling for the creation of alternative pathways to accreditation. This spring two U.S. senators — Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, and Michael Bennet, a Colorado Democrat — sought to add language to the budget blueprint for "a new outcome-based process for authorizing innovative higher-education providers." Last year Sen. Mike Lee, a Utah Republican, introduced a bill that would leave the task to the states. The top Republican on the Senate education committee, Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, has expressed interest in both approaches.

If the department goes ahead with the pilot, it could be "a fertile testing ground for Congress" as it prepares to reauthorize the Higher Education Act, Ms. Laitinen said.

"It will be messy, and it will be hard to do it well," she said. "But in some ways, that’s the point."
Colleges Face Calls for Better Support of Students With Learning Disabilities

By Mary Ellen McIntire

When Katherine J. Walsh was choosing a college, she wasn’t as focused on which college did best in U.S. News & World Report’s rankings or tied to living in a particular part of the country. One thing she did care about was finding an institution prepared to support the attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder she’d struggled with for most of her life.

She’s not alone. The number of students with learning disabilities has jumped in the past decade, said Lindsay E. Jones, director of public policy and advocacy at the National Center for Learning Disabilities. According to a November 2014 report by the center, 67 percent of young adults with learning disabilities had enrolled in some type of postsecondary education within eight years of graduating from high school.

But just 24 percent of students who received support for a learning disability in high school disclosed that disability in college, according to the report.

It’s an issue that has caught the eye of the U.S. Department of Education, which announced last month that it would fund a new center to share information and best practices to help students with learning disabilities make the transition to or attend a postsecondary institution.

The disabilities-support system at many colleges can make it difficult for students to prove they have a learning disability, Ms. Jones said. While students with learning disabilities were often first tested for them in elementary school, they could need to provide a college’s support-services office with a more recent test, which tends to be costly. Then, each semester, the students must show each of their professors a letter that says they require some sort of assistance.

"That’s a hard thing for any 18-year-old to do," Ms. Jones said. "It’s a very daunting experience for a young person who hasn’t had rock-solid self-advocacy training to get those accommodations."

Some students work with officials who have helped to draft their Individualized Education Program, which guides the assistance they need while they’re in elementary or secondary school, to prepare them
to seek assistance in college. That could include additional time on examinations or having another person take notes in class.

In elementary and secondary schools, support for students with learning disabilities is governed by the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA. But college students must seek support under a different law, the Americans With Disabilities Act. IDEA puts the requirement on teachers to identify a potential learning disability; in college, students must be more proactive about getting support for their disabilities.

The new information center that the Education Department is supporting will help students and their families understand how the support system at colleges differs from the system at elementary and secondary schools, while helping colleges improve services for students with learning disabilities.

Raising Awareness

Even though more students with learning disabilities are enrolling in higher education, colleges have been slower to raise broad awareness across their campuses, said Allison R. Lombardi, an assistant professor of educational psychology at the University of Connecticut.

Some institutions have started offering faculty-development programs for professors to learn more about how to work with students who have a learning disability, but that tends to be "the exception, rather than the rule," she added.

Four-year universities "have a whole staff of people in DSS offices doing good things," Ms. Lombardi said, referring to disabilities-support services programs. At some universities, those offices have tried to raise faculty awareness of how to help students with learning disabilities instead of just referring them to the DSS office, she added.

Some universities have gained recognition for specialized programs to accommodate students with learning disabilities. One of them is the University of Arizona, where Ms. Walsh decided to attend, largely because of a program it calls the Strategic Alternative Learning Technique Center, the SALT Center.

Students who are accepted to the SALT Center have access to a smaller community on the campus that includes upper-class role models and staff learning specialists, who meet with students individually each week to help with skills like time management, studying, and communicating with professors about their disabilities.

The program helps students gradually feel more confident about their situation, said Rudy M. Molina, director of the SALT Center.

"We find that most students who meet with us weekly, they’re able to discuss those things incrementally over time and not kind of in crisis mode," Mr. Molina said.
Still, those types of programs are costly and rely heavily on donors. The program costs an additional $2,600 per semester for underclass members, while access to the campus disability-resource center, which can help provide students with amenities such as extra time on exams, is free.

At East Carolina University, in North Carolina, a program called STEPP enrolls 10 students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, or dyscalculia annually. The program is free for those students, who typically would not be admissible to the university based on its traditional application, but who prove they are "college material," said Sarah Williams, the program’s director.

The program supplements support already offered by the university’s disabilities-support services office, Ms. Williams said. By requiring freshmen and sophomores to use certain services, but offering them to all students throughout their time at the university, students are focused on the transition into college life.

"They need a set of supports, but they’re going to be just fine," Ms. Williams said. "The first couple of years, for some students, is a couple of years of confidence building. They come in, they use our resources, they do fine, but they begin to believe in themselves and become more and more confident."

The Education Department’s new center could help more colleges develop larger programs — and help students and families obtain support, said Ms. Jones, at the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

"The reality is that in some cases it’s very clear," she said. "But in some cases it’s extremely difficult to find."

Minimum Wage Hike

July 2, 2015

By Kellie Woodhouse

NO MENTION
More and more colleges and universities are hiking their minimum wage above what’s required by their states and the federal government.

The increases -- often motivated by concerns about equitable pay for all employees, changes in local ordinances or pressure from advocates for low-wage worker -- can cost millions. Yet many colleges that are raising pay say they have an obligation to do so.

“We are a higher-minded part of the economy, and you would expect that we would be among the first to be doing the right things for our employees,” said Charles Dougherty, president of Duquesne University, in Pittsburgh. Earlier this year Duquesne raised its minimum wage to $16 an hour -- more than double what’s required by state and federal law.

Pennsylvania is among the 24 states where the minimum wage is set at federal levels: $7.25 an hour. Yet some of private and public colleges in those states and others are choosing to offer a higher minimum wage than required.

The cost of living has increased about 10 percent since 2009, the last time the federal minimum wage was adjusted, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Labor. A person earning the federal minimum wage would have an annual income of just $15,000, and advocacy groups have been popping up across the country seeking a higher minimum wage.

At Duquesne, the decision to offer double the minimum wage has been years in the making. In 2010, the university was offering a minimum wage of $12 an hour.

“We began to think that it simply wasn’t fair to our lowest paid universities,” Dougherty said. “We are a Catholic university so part of what motivates us in a sense of responsibility to the people at the lower end of our payroll.”

Yet many of the institutions that increase their minimum wage aren’t religious. And several are public.

Duke University has 3,600 employees, and offers the roughly 400 workers who earn minimum wage $12 an hour, two-thirds more than the university is required by law in North Carolina. Before the hike, approved earlier this year, the institution’s lowest wage was $10.91 and hour, still higher than state mandates.

Last year Indiana University raised its minimum wage to $8.25 an hour, a dollar above the minimum wage required by state and federal laws, and this year the institution raised it again to $9 an hour.

“We didn’t spend a lot of time thinking about whether or not it was mandated,” said MaryFrancis McCourt, IU’s chief financial officer. “We were trying to think about what is the right thing to do for employees.”

Yet McCourt acknowledged the financial impact of the wage increase is significant. “It’s not a minor amount of money,” she explained. So far, the hikes have cost IU about $2.5 million, including $1 million in 2014 and $1.5 million in 2015.
“These decisions were made during a time when the pressure on the top line is tougher than ever,” McCourt explained.

“There’s a strong focus on keeping costs down, nonetheless you want to do the right thing,” she continued. “If you’re looking to hold tuition flat, there’s a myriad of ways you can look to hold costs. It’s easy not to think of employees, but we didn’t even let ourselves go there.”

At Duquesne, 170 of the university’s 2,300 employees were affected by the wage increase, at an annual cost of $500,000 to the institution, which has an annual operating budget of more than $300 million. Duke declined to disclose the financial impact of its minimum wage hike, but an official there did say the cost was not “enormously substantial.”

As more states and cities consider hiking their minimum wage, universities can find themselves in the midst an often passionate debate. When municipalities increase their minimum wage, private institutions must comply with the new laws.

But mandated increases have put public institutions in a tough spot. In many cases, public institutions have claimed that, because they’re autonomous entities or have constitutional protections, they don’t have to comply with municipal minimum wage laws.

Yet they’re often under enormous pressure to do so.

A handful of municipalities in California have increased their minimum wage in recent years -- Los Angeles, for example, passed a law this year that will eventually increase the city’s minimum wage to $15 an hour -- but California’s colleges don’t have to comply. That’s because, as a state agency, California’s public universities are only required to pay the state minimum wage of $9 an hour.

Seattle passed a law this year that increases the minimum wage to $11 an hour. The law gives large employers three years to bring their minimum wage up to $15 an hour. The state’s minimum wage is $9.47 an hour.

The University of Washington, considered a large employer, is complying with the law, even though its lawyers believe the public institution is exempt from the mandate.

“It’s the right thing to do, but it’s not necessarily the easy thing,” said UW’s interim president, Ana Mari Cauce.

Cauce says that if UW raised its minimum wage to $15 an hour tomorrow, it would cost the institution a lump sum of $25 million. The cost may end up being less than that, given that employees would have received pay increases over the next three years anyway. Or it may be more: “One of the things we’re still grappling with is what this does in terms of compression of the salaries that are above” minimum wage, Cauce explained.

To cope with the annual operating increase, UW is already looking at cost saving measures. Administrators are considering back office and administrative efficiencies, and possible savings through
attrition. The annual operating loss will need to be accounted for: “It’s not like it’s happening and manna is going to fall from heaven,” Cauce said.

“Seattle is an expensive city. Puget Sound is an expensive region. We certainly want our employees to make a living wage,” she continued. “It’s also going to be a struggle.... We’re going to need to really think differently on how we can get things done without it causing higher tuition for students, because that’s not the way we want to go.”

As they decide to increase minimum wages, institutions have different philosophies on student workers.

At Duke, student workers are excluded from the wage increase. Kyle Cavanaugh, Duke’s vice president for administration, says that’s because Duke bases its wages off of the market conditions in the Durham area and in higher education. Students, he said, usually aren’t supporting themselves or their families.

At Indiana and Washington, student workers earn the same minimum wage as staff.

Washington’s minimum wage increase to $11 an hour this year affected far more students than staff. Roughly 70 staff saw their wages increase under the new minimum wage. Meanwhile, more than 2,600 students received wage increases. As the university continues raising its minimum wage, it expects more and more employees to be affected.

“When we think about student affordability, that’s helping,” said McCourt, of Indiana. “For a university to say we’re bringing [the minimum wage up], but it doesn’t apply to students, they’re cutting a huge piece off the table.”

Unsurprisingly, minimum wage hikes have been popular at the universities instituting them. It’s at least one change in an era of many changes that administrators consistently receive positive feedback on.

“We’ve had uniform support,” offered Cavanaugh, the Duke administrator.
Canceling Clery?

July 2, 2015

By Jake New

NO MENTION

Sen. Claire McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat, suggested last week that she was in favor of “removing” the Clery Act, the law that requires colleges to provide and publicize information about campus crimes. In a statement late Wednesday night, though, she softened her language, saying through a spokeswoman that she had been referring only to the campus security law’s reporting requirements.

While McCaskill -- who has promoted legislation that would toughen oversight of colleges on sexual assault -- has long been critical of the Clery Act, her statements last week were especially condemnatory. The comments, which came during McCaskill’s keynote address at last week’s Campus Safety National Forum, elicited cheers from campus law enforcement officials and concern from campus safety groups.

“I don’t need to tell you it’s flawed,” McCaskill said to the gathering of college security officials on Thursday. “To be honest with you, I am OK with removing the Clery Act completely.”

Adding that the Clery Act accomplishes little besides being "a waste of time pushing paper" for campus safety officials, McCaskill said she would ultimately like to see the law replaced with something that would provide a clearer picture of what crimes are taking place on campuses. "My goal is to remove [the Clery Act],” she added. "Or at a minimum, simplify it."

The Clery Act requires colleges to annually disclose the number of particular types of crimes on campus and to provide timely warnings to students about ongoing criminal activity, such as an active shooter or a recent sexual assault. But critics like McCaskill, including many campus administrators, say Clery statistics do not accurately illustrate the prevalence of campus crime, as increases in the number of a particular crime may have as much to do with improved reporting techniques as an actual uptick in criminal activity.
McCaskill and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, a Democrat from New York, have sought to alter the Clery Act, as well as other facets of how sexual assault is handled on campuses, with a bill called the Campus and Accountability and Safety Act. The law would require campuses to conduct annual climate surveys regarding gender violence and sexual misconduct.

That legislation has not yet been voted on, but some amendments to the Clery Act did go into effect on Wednesday as part of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. Colleges are now required to disclose reports of stalking and domestic violence.

The Clery Act does not have many fans among campus law enforcement officials, and McCaskill’s comments drew applause from the crowd at the Campus Safety National Forum on Thursday. A similar reaction was seen this week at the annual meeting of the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators in Nashville.

During a presentation about the role of the Clery Act and Title IX in sex crime investigations, Susan Riseling, chief of police and associate vice chancellor of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, said the Clery Act was a “cluster.”

Riseling said McCaskill would like to see the Clery Act repealed or at least stripped down to simply requiring colleges to provide timely information and warnings about ongoing crimes.

“That information is what might prevent someone else from becoming a victim, and timely warnings are really the point of Clery,” Riseling said. “Some of the best news I’ve heard was Sen. McCaskill saying ‘maybe we’d better throw out Clery.’”

The room of more than 100 college law enforcement administrators in Nashville broke out in applause.

In an open letter to McCaskill, the Clery Center for Security on Campus said it was “disappointed” by the senator’s comments. In the letter, the center listed a number of positive scenarios that are now possible thanks to the Clery Act, including students receiving text messages about active shooters and parents easily learning online about safety and security issues at a particular campus.

McCaskill made use of Clery data in her 2014 report on campus sexual violence, the center noted.

“The Clery Act was shepherded into existence by Connie and Howard Clery -- two parents who lost their only daughter, Jeanne, when she was raped and murdered in her residence hall in 1986,” the Clery Center stated. “They turned incomprehensible grief into incredible change in the effort to ensure no other family would experience such loss. It’s more than just paper work. It is meaningful policies that drive powerful action.”

On Wednesday, McCaskill’s office sought to clarify the senator’s comments.

"Claire’s criticism of Clery was specifically about its reporting requirements, which virtually everyone agrees are burdensome and need updating," Sarah Feldman, a spokeswoman for McCaskill, said. "She
fully supports retaining many of the law’s other provisions, but would like to see crime statistic reporting
simplified, along with the campus climate surveys her legislation requires."

Designing a Federal Ratings Tool

July 2, 2015

By Tom Allison

NO MENTION

Last week, the Department of Education walked back from its plans to develop a comprehensive college
ratings system. In its place, the department plans to release “easy-to-use tools that will provide students
with more data than ever before to compare college costs and outcomes.”

There are already plenty of resources and tools to help students and families research these questions,
provided by government (College Navigator), nonprofit organizations (College Results Online), and
media outlets (U.S. News & World Report College Rankings), and lawmakers continue to call for more
consumer information about college outcomes.

But is anyone actually using these tools, and are the interfaces, graphics and user experiences designed
to actually help students? And how “easy to use” will these new tools be?

To better understand what works and what doesn’t, I recently co-wrote a report with Healey Whitsett,
now of the Pew Charitable Trust, that provides best practices on how to design and deliver information
to help prospective college students navigate the best programs available for them. The department
should turn to these principles as it develops its new tools to maximize their effectiveness.

We synthesized scores of studies on behavioral economics, information search, retention, and
bottlenecks that get in the way and break down the proper processing of information – and
recommended ways to design tools so students get the information they need to make more informed
decisions about where to go to school, what to study, and how to pay for it. We also recommend that
designers target their efforts at students from low-income families, as unfortunately, they’re the least likely spend a lot of time searching for information.

For example, designers shouldn’t try and cram too much information in one place. Cognitive research tells us this overwhelms the reader and makes it difficult to comprehend and retain the information.

In one study, researchers compared individuals’ interactions with the standard mortgage disclosure form, against a redesigned, better organized prototype: borrowers using the redesigned form were 38 percentage points more likely to correctly identify the amount of the loan, and 11 percentage points more likely to correctly identify their monthly payment amount. Since students are unable to identify how much money they took out in student loans, redesigning these forms makes a lot of sense.

The literature also demonstrates the importance of personally tailored information: Consumers are much more likely to identify, remember, and use information if it is personally relevant to them. That’s why broad national rankings are probably only so useful to students and families. In this regard, the Department seems to be on the right track by making the tools “customizable” to the user.

Our research also finds that higher education stakeholders shouldn’t present students with too many options of comparison. With 7,000 colleges and universities to choose from, it’s critical that we figure out manageable ways for students to compare a limited set of schools that tailor to their interests, or they risk facing what we call the “tyranny of choice.”

A study by Judith Scott-Clayton at the Community College Resource Center at Columbia University's Teachers College showed that too many choices in community college majors or programs may overwhelm and discourage students from persisting in and succeeding at earning a credential.
Furthermore, information should be as personally tailored as possible, as individually contextualized information is much more likely to be recalled and used in decision making.

Aspiring students must also be able to compare and contrast their school and loan choices. It would be very difficult to choose which school to attend if you knew the graduation rate of one and the list of majors of the other. They must be able to compare the same variables side by side.

Fortunately, it looks like Congressional leaders are interested in arming students with more information as well. In its white paper on proposals for reauthorizing the Higher Education Act, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee called for “extensive consumer testing on what information is needed and how it should be presented” and to “[a]pply this research to any federally produced consumer tools and make the research available publicly to voluntarily inform the market.”

The House Education and Workforce Committee recently said, “Access to better information will empower students with the knowledge they need to make smart decisions in the college marketplace.”

We hope that the department will take note of this research as it designs this new tool and we also applaud department officials for committing to work with outside parties to design their own mobile apps and interfaces optimized for usability. After all, aspiring students can have all the data and information in the world, but if it’s not packaged and delivered in a way that’s useful to them, then we’re wasting our time.