Nixon signs higher education spending plan with tuition freeze

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, April 27, 2016 at 11:15 am

Gov. Jay Nixon approved the spending bill for higher education without changes on Wednesday, sparing students at public colleges and universities a tuition increase in the fall.

Nixon signed the bill during a visit to Missouri State University in Springfield. It is the first action on any of the 13 budget bills approved last week by lawmakers and provides $37.2 million for a 4 percent increase in state support for colleges and universities. The bill also authorizes $4 million to increase need-based Access Missouri scholarships, $2.5 million more for the A+ Scholarship program that pays tuition at community colleges and $500,000 in additional funds for Bright Flight scholarships to top students who stay in the state for their education.

“Making higher education better and more affordable was one of the five principal goals I laid out when I first took office in 2009, and today we continue to deliver on that commitment with significant investments in our higher education campuses and another tuition freeze for Missouri undergraduates,” Nixon said in a news release announcing his action.

Since Nixon took office in 2009, the average tuition for public higher education in Missouri has increased 9 percent, the news release said, compared with an average increase nationally of 33.5 percent.

The University of Missouri Board of Curators must meet soon to set rates for tuition and required fees for the 2016-2017 school year. No date has been set, UM System spokesman John Fougere wrote in an email, but the board intends to meet in a teleconference sometime in May.

The next scheduled board meeting is June 16. Tuition for a 14-hour course load on the Columbia campus is $10,586 for Missouri residents and $25,198 for nonresidents, plus almost $600 per semester in fees for health, recreation, student activities and information technology. Fees are frozen in addition to tuition.

The budget allocates $430.5 million in base funding for the UM System, a figure that includes a $3.8 million cut to UM System administration.
The university will receive an increase of about $17 million through the pool set aside for increased aid to colleges and universities.

The increase is expected to add $6 million to $7 million to the Columbia campus budget but will not alter plans to cut $20 million from campus spending and impose a hiring freeze because of unavoidable costs and falling tuition revenue as enrollment declines.

The budget also includes several new items for the university and related programs. In Columbia, the State Historical Society of Missouri received a $1 million budget increase, to $3.2 million, and $500,000 was set aside for equipment purchases at the College of Veterinary Medicine. There also is $1.5 million to double funding for an MU Extension community health care program and $250,000 for the Greenley Research Center in Knox County.

Nixon did not veto any item in the bill and took no action to restrict spending when the new fiscal year begins July 1, spokesman Scott Holste wrote in an email. State revenue is above estimates so far this year, and the budget is based on estimates lower than the spending proposals Nixon made in January.

Nixon approves higher education funding; UM System's appropriation to be cut $3.8 million

ELLEN CAGLE, 15 hrs ago

JEFFERSON CITY — A $3.8 million funding cut to the University of Missouri System, a punitive legislative action born out of lawmakers' frustration following turmoil at MU last fall, was approved Wednesday after Gov. Jay Nixon signed off on Missouri's fiscal year 2017 higher education appropriation.

The bill allows universities to freeze tuition for next year and includes a 4 percent boost in performance-based funding for all Missouri universities, totaling about $37 million. To receive that funding, colleges must meet criteria including certain graduation and retention rates. Nixon originally recommended a 6 percent increase, which would have totaled $55.6 million.
Next year will mark the fourth time universities have frozen tuition since Nixon took office in 2009.

Nixon signed the bill at Missouri State University.

"Today, I am very proud to mark another milestone for higher education in Missouri and our shared commitment to putting a quality, affordable college degree within reach for more Missouri families," Nixon said.

"Making higher education better and more affordable was one of the five principal goals I laid out when I first took office in 2009, and today we continue to deliver on that commitment with significant investments in our higher education campuses and another tuition freeze for Missouri undergraduates."

Some legislators contend that the UM System's share of the increase, which is about $17 million, would offset the $3.8 million cut. The cut will take effect in July and will be taken from a line item for UM System administration.

How to fund the UM System proved contentious for the legislature this year, and debate stretched nearly two months before legislators reached a compromise. Legislators' frustration stems from turmoil at MU last fall, when UM System President Tim Wolfe and MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin resigned in November amid student-led anti-racism protests at MU.

UM System funding: a point of contention

Whether to include the UM System in the performance-funding boost has ignited debate from legislators in past months.

The House voted to deny the four-campus system any performance-based funds, with some lawmakers citing poor university system leadership during the November protests as a reason to exclude the system.
The House approved a 2 percent performance funding increase for all state universities except the UM System, which the Senate upped to 6 percent a month later. The Senate voted to include the UM System in the increase. The House and Senate compromised last week on the 4 percent increase and held with the Senate's decision to include the UM System.

The compromise also included the $3.8 million cut to system administration. A legislative panel agreed to fund the line item for administration by $9.8 million, a halfway point between the House-approved $5.9 million and Senate-approved $12.6 million.

The House's version would have been a $7.6 million cut, and the Senate's would have been $1 million.

Over the past months, legislators have tried unsuccessfully to target cuts specifically toward MU.

In February, a House committee proposed cutting about $400,000 from MU, an amount equivalent to the salaries of assistant communication professor Melissa Click and two of her superiors. Leading up to the announcement, legislators repeatedly urged the UM System Board of Curators to fire Click, who tried to block a student journalist from filming campus protests on the day of Wolfe's resignation. A week after proposing the cut, the committee voted against adopting it following a vote by the Board of Curators to dismiss Click.

In March, the House voted to route $1 million from MU to Lincoln University in Jefferson City. The Senate voted to restore the money in April.

This year's bill appropriates money to the UM System through seven line items, a move not typical for the legislature. Each campus will receive its own appropriation, as will MU Extension, UM System administration and a project for collaboration between campuses. In past years, the legislature has funded the system through a lump sum, which the UM System president then distributed with the consent of the Board of Curators.

Boone County's three Republican House members — Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, Chuck Basye, R-Rocheport, and Caleb Jones, R-Columbia — voted in favor of the appropriations bill.
Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, also voted in favor. Columbia's two Democratic representatives — Stephen Webber and Kip Kendrick — were opposed.

"The University of Missouri was lucky to get the money that they got," Jones said Monday.
"They're very lucky they didn't get zeroed out."

Why a cut to administration?

Legislators have denounced how UM System leaders, including the Board of Curators, handled campus protests last fall. Some have offered criticism for the Missouri football team, whose members announced they would boycott football-related activities until Wolfe stepped down. Wolfe resigned days two days after the team announced the boycott.

In February, House budget committee chair Rep. Tom Flanigan, R-Carthage, said cuts targeted toward administration would "send a strong message to the administration without harming our students, who deserve better."

Legislative budget analysts told a Senate panel in April that administrative cuts could affect informative technology services and human resources.

Webber said employees such as maintenance workers will bear the brunt of the cuts.

"This retaliatory cut is not negatively impacting any of the administrators," he said during House debate Thursday. "It is being felt by the maintenance workers and the folks that are actually making the University of Missouri System run."

Schaefer advocated to reduce the cuts, and in March he proposed the formation of a new commission to investigate the efficiency of the system's structure. If passed, the eight-member commission, which Schaefer named the University of Missouri System Review Commission, would review the efficiency of the system's administration structure, diversity programs and research procedures. Schaefer said the commission could adequately identify problems within the system without the negative effects of budget cuts.
The Senate passed the resolution, but the House has not yet voted on it. The higher education budget includes $750,000 for the commission's operations.

MU’s response

Interim UM System President Mike Middleton said in a statement last week that he's grateful the legislature included the UM System in a performance funding increase.

"We deeply appreciate that the legislative conference committees appropriated $17.12 million for our performance funding," he said.

"We also recognize that, as illustrated by the reduction of $3.8 million to the UM System administration budget, that much work remains to restore confidence and trust in our leadership, which we will continue to do by being completely transparent, accountable and fiscally responsible in our actions."

In March, Interim Chancellor Hank Foley announced MU would face a $32 million budget shortfall due to an enrollment drop of about 1,500 students. To combat the loss, MU will enact a hiring freeze and a 5 percent budget cut to MU's fiscal year 2017 general revenue budget. The shortfall does not account for the cuts in state appropriations.

New admission standards from Illinois universities and lowered high school graduation rates in Missouri account for about 60 percent of the enrollment drop. Turmoil last fall has also played a role in the drop, Foley has said.

MU will cut 50 maintenance positions as part of the 5 percent cut, MU Vice Chancellor for Operations Gary Ward said in April. MU's College of Engineering also announced a $900,000 cut to its budget.
Even In Equal Societies Girls Have Higher Math Anxiety Than Boys

Parental expectations could be part of the problem, a new study says.

04/27/2016 04:57 pm ET
Rebecca Klein Editor, HuffPost Education

Math anxiety — the phenomenon of having such negative emotions about math that one avoids the subject — affects females at higher rates than males, but only in developed nations, according to a new study.

The researchers from the University of Missouri, the University of California-Irvine and the University of Glasgow in Scotland found that in less developed countries all students — both male and female — have high levels of math anxiety.

They studied data from over 700,000 15-year-olds across the world who participated in the Program for International Student Assessment to glean results, which were published in the journal PLOS One. What they found is somewhat puzzling.

While “the general belief in the field is that as society became more gender equal, with more women in politics ... and [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] fields and so forth, this would provide more role models, and therefore the gender differences in math anxiety and math performance would disappear,” David Geary, Curators Professor of Psychological Sciences at the University of Missouri, told The Huffington Post in an interview. “We found the opposite.”
Overall, students in more developed nations — where performance is higher — have less math anxiety than students in less developed nations, the study found. As math performance increases, overall levels of anxiety tends to decrease. But there’s a catch.

“The math anxiety of girls didn’t decrease as rapidly as the math anxiety of boys. As a result, when you looked at economically developed countries with good educational systems, you begin to see a gap where girls have more math anxiety than boys. In less developed countries, everyone has high math anxiety,” Greary said. Even when researchers control for performance, girls “still have more math anxiety than they should.”

So why is this happening?

One possibility is that parents tend to instill a sense that math is more important for boys than it is for girls. Using a PISA survey that asked students about their parents’ attitudes toward math and one that asked parents about the subject, researchers found that parents of girls found math less significant.

“Whether that directly contributes to math anxiety gap or is a reflection of that we don’t know,” Greary said. “But it really is the wrong message for girls and women, particularly in a modern economy where everyone needs reasonably good math skills.”

Researchers also found that a country’s proportion of women working in STEM fields had no bearing on the levels of math anxiety felt by teen girls. Whether or not a student attended a single-sex school also did not have a significant impact.

Greary is calling on parents and teachers to focus more on the usefulness of math in everyday life.

“We don’t really know why the math anxiety doesn’t fully disappear as much in girls as in boys,” he said. But either way, leaders need to “focus on the long-term usefulness of math and the greater options it’s going to give you in life. Even if you want to go into business and move into management, you have to have reasonably good math skills.”
Report shows more Missourians experiencing hunger, biggest increase in country
By Michele Munz St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 8 hrs ago

The percentage of households experiencing hunger in Missouri has more than doubled in the last decade, the highest increase in the country, according to a report released Wednesday by the University of Missouri.

The 2016 Missouri Hunger Atlas shows that 8 percent of households — or about half a million Missourians — went hungry at some point during the last year. An additional nearly half a million are “food insecure,” meaning they worry about not being able to put enough food on the table. They avoid hunger by eating a less nutritious diet and relying on assistance programs.

“Missouri households are the hungriest they have been in decades,” said Sandy Rikoon, director of the MU Interdisciplinary Center for Food Insecurity and co-author of the report.

In total, nearly 17 percent of Missouri households were food insecure last year, compared with 14 percent nationwide, placing it among the top 10 worst states.

The highest levels of food insecurity are seen among persistent high-poverty areas in southern Missouri and in St. Louis, where it’s estimated that nearly 26 percent struggle, the report found. However, areas in northern Missouri are experiencing increasing levels of poverty and people in need of food.
The economic and social costs of not having enough to eat are high. Studies of children show that food insecurity and hunger are big predictors of chronic illness, lower school performance and developmental problems.

“One in five children in Missouri live in food insecure households,” said MU doctoral student Darren Chapman. “We know these kids are much more likely to face health issues, miss school and have difficulty concentrating when they are in class.”

Adults face income loss, missed days at work, increased health costs and higher demand for public benefits and social services. The state spent well over $1.4 billion in 2012 on food stamp programs and reimbursement to schools to provide free and reduced-price meals, according to the report.

However, that amount does not include the administrative costs of operating the programs or private contributions. While food banks contribute more than 90 million pounds of food a year to pantries and other facilities, hundreds of faith-based and civic groups and other organizations also donate.

While assistance programs are critical in the daily struggles of hundreds of thousands of Missourians to provide enough nutrition for them or their families, they are not solutions to reversing worsening trends, the report says.

Rikoon suggests the first step in alleviating hunger is to raise the income of the poor through efforts such as higher wages, housing assistance and Social Security payments for the elderly and disabled.

“If a family has a working member, and this income barely covers rent, utilities, health care, transportation and other essentials; food is often the last expense to be covered,” Rikoon said. “We see lots of working households at food pantries. The same for the elderly whose Social Security checks disappear before they can get to the grocery store.
“It's not people making poor decisions, it's people making hard decisions and facing trade-offs between medicine and meat or between rent and red beans.”

Judy Berkowitz, director of the Harvey Kornblum Jewish Food Pantry in Creve Coeur, said the pantry sometimes lacked items such as milk, yogurt and eggs for families.

“If we have to give a little bit less for families during certain weeks because our food supply is low, we will do that to make sure everyone goes home with food,” she said.

When the food pantry opened 25 years ago, it served 40 families. Last year, it served 16,758 people, most of them in St. Louis County, she said. More than 41 percent were children, and 19 percent were older adults. They include people who have used up their savings after losing jobs, are struggling with medical bills or are sick and can’t work.

“It's important not to assume who comes to a food pantry,” Berkowitz said. “It could be your neighbor.”

She said food pantries expected to see an increasing need because of changes in the food stamp program that went into affect April 1. Able-bodied adults with no dependents can no longer receive the assistance.

**Missourinet**

**Study: nearly one million Missourians lack food or worry they will**

A University of Missouri study says nearly one million Missourians lack food or worry about not having enough of it. That translates to nearly one in six individuals lacking adequate access to food.
Study author Sandy Rikoon and his team at Mizzou’s Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security compiled the data, which charts food insecurity and hunger on a county-by-county basis. He says Missouri households are the hungriest they have been in decades.

“Year after year, Missouri’s numbers continue to get worse in terms of the percentage of population that is anxious about having sufficient food and then the percent of population that actually experiences disruptions in terms of skipping meals,” said Rikoon.

A 2015 USDA report ranks Missouri the state with the second greatest number of people lacking food in the nation.

“Food is a tradeoff. You have to pay for your gas. You have to pay for your rent. Food is at the bottom of that list and we are finding that more people are pressed to the edge,” said Rikoon.

Rikoon says one of the most vulnerable populations is children.

“About one out of every five children lives in a home that is food insecure, which is a really high percentage. Although, it’s our experience and probably most people’s experiences that in these households if there’s any food it’s often given to the children first. Their experience of hunger is probably less. We also know that children who are food insecure, do worse in school, miss more school days and fall asleep more in class,” said Rikoon.

He says another vulnerable population is the elderly, especially in northern Missouri.

“The elderly are much less likely to participate in government programs, for various reasons like access and stigma,” said Rikoon.

The report also shows that southern Missouri continues to have the greatest levels of those lacking food.
“It’s pretty clear that the highest levels are in the Ozarks in southern Missouri, the Bootheel and a few rural northern counties. It’s also clearly a problem in the urban areas. By and large it tends to be a core urban and a rural problem, but we really try to stress to folks is that it’s also a suburban problem,” said Rikoon.

Rikoon says more than 260,000 Missourians receive assistance from food pantries each month.

Food insecurity facing nearly 1 million Missourians and increasing


COLUMBIA - Missouri is facing a major problem when it comes to hunger in the state.

According to the 2016 Missouri Hunger Atlas, nearly one million Missourians face either food insecurity or worry about not having enough food within the last year.

This means that nearly one in six individuals in Missouri lack adequate access to food, with the most vulnerable being children and the elderly.

The MU Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security put together the report.
Graduate student Annie Cafer helped compile the information for the Atlas, and said the center expects those numbers to get worse before they get better.

“Missouri is dealing with an alarming increase in the most vulnerable in its population, and that’s the population that’s most food insecure with hunger,” said Cafer. “That means people are actually missing meals and reducing food intake. We have the single largest increase in that population than any other state. That’s a really alarming figure for those of us who work in this world.”

The Atlas, through a series of graphs and statistics, details the extent of food security in St. Louis and all 114 counties in Missouri. According to the Atlas, Boone County has 17.2 percent of individuals facing food uncertainty and 8.1 percent of individuals facing food uncertainty with hunger, both of which are ranked as high. The Atlas also finds that persistent poverty areas in southern Missouri seem to be the ones most affected.

Cafer said programs like the Meals on Wheels for seniors, the Buddy Pack program for children, and multiple food banks are helpful in addressing some of the food insecurity problems in Columbia.

Janese Silvey, Communications Director for The Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, said reports like the Atlas are helpful in getting information out.

“I always think it’s helpful to have these studies coming out of MU,” Silvey said. “There are a number of these reports and it’s nice to have multiple researchers and sources sharing the same statistics and verifying that the statistics we use on a regular basis are reflective of the community.”

Although Silvey believes it’s important to increase awareness about food insecurity, she said the food bank does not have the resources to address the worsening food insecurity issues in Missouri. Currently the food bank distributes 30 million pounds a year in its 32 county service area. Boone County currently receives around six million pounds of food, which Silvey said just isn’t enough.

“It would take closer to 40 million. We just can’t do that in this operation. In Columbia the need is around 10 million,” Silvey said.

Monetary funds and food donations are the most helpful to the food bank, Silvey said. It allows the volunteers to save money and double their workforce.
Cafer said the center’s biggest hopes is that policy-makers use the information in the Atlas to make decisions to help alleviate poverty and food insecurity in Missouri.

**Black or Latino Surnames Don't Actually Hurt Job Applicants, Mizzou Study Finds**

We've all heard about the study suggesting that job applicants with black-sounding names should go to the back of the bus. The fact that white-sounding candidates named Emily Walsh were 50 percent more likely to get a callback than those named Lakisha Washington has become an oft-cited stat — and a political talking point.

**But a major new study from the University of Missouri casts doubt on those conclusions. Its markedly different findings suggest either that the oft-cited 2004 study may be due for an update — or that the researchers behind it perhaps inadvertently measured more than just race.**

**In fact, the new study shows that the response rates for male vs. female applicants, as well as black vs. Hispanic vs. white applicants, are statistically indistinguishable, says co-author Cory Koedel, an associate professor of economics and public policy.**

Koedel says he believes it is the first major study to revisit the question raised in the landmark 2004 research. And if anything, a comparison shows, it’s even more comprehensive.

The 2004 study that found such a marked racial divide, by Marianne Bertrand and Sendhil Mullainathan, sent 5,000 fake resumes in response to help-wanted ads in newspapers in Chicago and Boston. The authors of the new study, Koedel and Rajeev Darolia, both professors at Mizzou’s Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs, sent in 9,000, in seven different cities.

Koedel and Darolia surveyed how those fictitious applicants were treated in six broad occupational categories, including customer service, medical billing and information technology. The applications were randomly assigned names that are highly correlated with gender and race/ethnicity based on U.S. Census records — Washington and Jefferson for blacks; Hernandez and Garcia for Latinos; Anderson and Thompson for whites.
Across the board, 11.4 percent of resumes got a response from employers, the study found. And while white applicants — and white women in particular — got the most responses, those results were not statistically distinguishable.

That is also true when the professors tracked explicit requests for an interview by the employer, according to their report — a more clear sign of interest in the candidate. There, too, the responses were similar, Koedel says.

So what's changed since the 2004 study?

For one thing, the 2004 researchers, Bertrand and Mullainathan, gave their fake applicants distinctly African-American-sounding first names — Ebony, Jamal and Aisha. The more recent Mizzou study did not. The reason: "researchers have indicated concern that these names could be interpreted by employers as being associated with relatively low socioeconomic status," Koedel and Darolia write. They wanted to remove that as a variable. (The 2004 study, unlike the Mizzou one, didn't include Latino surnames at all.)

But while the Mizzou professors removed that variable, they acknowledge, they may have created another one. Census data shows that 90 percent of individuals named Washington are black, and 75 percent of people named Jefferson are as well, but is that widely known? By not using ethnic-sounding first names, Koedel and Darolia write, "a tradeoff is that the surnames in our experiment may not be as strong indicators of race as the distinctly African-American sounding names in" the previous study. Still, they note, the error rate would have to be nearly 60 percent to get similar results as in the 2004 study if confusion were entirely to blame.

There is another factor at play, however, and that's the passage of time. Have hiring managers in the U.S. come a long way in the last twelve years?

"I think that's absolutely a possibility," Koedel says. "Our study can't say why this happened, but that is one possibility."

After all, back in 2004, job applicants were still answering help-wanted ads they saw in the newspaper. Who's to say that the twelve intervening years haven't made them more receptive to candidates with a different racial or ethnic background?

It's a hopeful thought, and Koedel, for one, sees plenty of possibilities for future research to explore.

"I think in terms of this line of inquiry, we're at the end of the road for us right now," he says. "But there are lots of smart people who can pick this up and ask further questions in interesting ways."
Race and gender may not affect employer interest in resumes

In 2004, research found that resumes submitted by people with distinctly sounding African-American names were less likely to get callbacks regarding the job. Now, new research from the University of Missouri finds no evidence of employer preferences for applicants from a particular race or gender at the initial stage of the hiring process. In re-visiting the question of how job applicants' race and gender affect employer interest in their resumes, Cory Koedel, an associate professor of economics and public policy in the MU College of Arts and Science and Truman School of Public Affairs, analyzed employer response rates to resumes that were assigned randomly selected names.

"A key difference in this research is the inclusion of Hispanic applicants," Koedel said. "To the best of our knowledge this study is the first to use a resume audit design to study labor market outcomes for Hispanic applicants in comparison to black and white applicants. This study also updates past research on resume response rates with newer data. Our data collection occurred between 2013 and 2014."

Researchers sent 9,000 fictitious resumes to employers, using last names that were likely to be interpreted as coming from black, Hispanic or white applicants. For African-American applicants the researchers used the surnames Washington and Jefferson. According to data from the U.S. Census, 90 and 75 percent of individuals with these surnames are African-American, respectively. Similarly, the researchers used the surnames Hernandez and Garcia, and Anderson and Thompson, for Hispanic and white applicants, respectively. These surnames also are strong indicators of race/ethnicity. The researchers used first names to convey gender in the study.

"The labor market is constantly evolving," Koedel said. "To best understand why race and gender based gaps exist in the market, we need to understand at what point the gaps occur. Our analysis reveals little evidence to suggest that employers discriminate by race or gender in responding to resumes."

Rajeev Darolia, assistant professor in the Truman School of Public Affairs, co-authored the study with Koedel and other colleagues. "Race and Gender Effects on Employer Interest in Job Applicants: New Evidence form a Resume Field Experiment" was published in Applied Economics Letters.
COLUMBIA, Mo. — I love historically black colleges and universities.

Spelman College was my dream school until I found Howard University and Clark Atlanta.

**But I chose a predominately white institution -- to be exact, the University of Missouri.**

If you don’t think you’ve heard of us let me tell you about a few of our newsworthy headlines.

In 2014, Michael Sam became the first openly gay football player in the nation, coming out after his senior season on the eve of the NFL draft.

But most recently, we became the home of Concerned Student 1950, the advocates for race inclusion on campus.

Several protests, a high profile hunger strike and the football team threatening not to play were amazing signs of unity that ultimately led to the resignations of both our president and chancellor.

Being black on this campus took on a whole new meaning for me this year.

I had to stick up for my black peers in ways that I would have never thought. I became a voice and moderator in the classroom on conversations about the campus’ racial climate.
As a journalism student, the only way I could help was by being a voice and trying to help people understand what was really going on.

If you didn’t already guess, the conversations weren’t always there.

Conversations on race were actually non-existent -- unless someone was saying something ignorant.

When I first arrived on campus in 2013 the divide was surreal.

Maybe it was so noticeable because this school is five times as big as my high school or maybe it’s because there are just a lot more white people on campus than I would have thought.

Nonetheless, the divide was something you couldn’t ignore.

I met people in the dorm who said they had never gone to school with an African-American before.

That was a shock to me because I went to school with every nationality I can think of.

I never expected to feel uncomfortable at a frat house because it wasn’t the norm for a group of black girls to walk in.

It never crossed my mind that we would get turned away.

I never expected a friend to come back to the dorm crying because she was forced to leave a party she was already in.

I never expected for Kevin Hart quotes to be thrown my way just because I was black.

I never expected it, but it happened. I never cried or said anything back.

I just walked away with my head held high.
All I could do was talk to my friends or call my mom and move on.

That’s how I was able to ignore the ignorance.

And the more I talked it out the more I realized those people were honestly just ignorant.

They never knew any better and they were never taught any better.

I go to a PWI, where racial issues have always been a problem. Long before Mizzou was even an option of mine.

After I realized there were race problems I could have left, but I wanted to stay because I belong here.

Before other campuses stood behind Mizzou there was a lot of “hate” thrown our way because we chose to come to a PWI instead of a HBCU.

I saw a lot of the comments and ignored them. It was just more animosity on my timeline that wasn’t needed.

Although, I once wanted to attend an HBCU I would never trade going here for the world.

Who wouldn’t want to be a part of a community where your peers stand up for themselves and for you? I am proud to go to this PWI and nothing anyone could have said would have changed my mind.

We’re all getting an education, we’re all doing amazing things and we’re all making our family proud.

I didn’t choose my school for the people. I’m not here for them.

I’m here for my education, the experiences I have, and the ones that still await me.
As black students at a predominately white institution our community is small and big at the same time.

We are Black Mizzou.

If there’s an event going on everyone knows about it and everyone will most likely be there, packed houses with no breathing room is a norm for us.

In the classroom a group of us sit together and we know who is absent or not. There’s a support system between us that can’t be touched.

Personally, I wouldn’t change any of this for the world.

As a small minority group on campus I still see black excellence everywhere I turn.

APRIL 27, 2016 6:08 PM

Dispute in Missouri attorney general’s race may get legal scrutiny

BY DAVE HELLING
dhelling@kcstar.com

A Washington-based public interest group is considering its next steps after the Missouri Ethics Commission rejected its complaint against Sen. Kurt Schaefer, a Columbia Republican and candidate for Missouri attorney general.

The Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust — a nonprofit group known as FACT — filed the complaint against Schaefer earlier this month. It claims Schaefer improperly tried to pressure a University of Missouri official into making it harder for Josh Hawley, a law professor at the school, to run for attorney general.
Hawley and Schaefer are candidates in the GOP primary for the office. Schaefer says that he did not act improperly and that the complaint is politically motivated.

The Ethics Commission rejected the complaint because its subject matter falls outside the commission’s jurisdiction. Because the accusations may reflect criminal misconduct, it said, the complaint is a matter for prosecutors.

“It does not feel as though we’re the correct venue for these types of allegations,” said James Klahr, executive director of the commission.

Kendra Arnold, a lawyer for FACT, said the group would consider the commission’s views before pursuing their complaints.

“We’re waiting for the written decision from the Ethics Commission before deciding what our next action would be,” Arnold said.

The group’s complaint has been forwarded to prosecutors in Boone County and Cole County and the U.S. attorney for the Western District of Missouri, she said.

In a statement, Schaefer called the allegations “baseless.” He claimed FACT’s leadership is connected financially with groups associated with Hawley.

“Missouri citizens are entitled to know who is financing the election of their top law enforcement officer,” Schaefer’s statement said. “So far, professor Hawley and those financing his campaign against me are failing that test.”

The ethics complaint is the latest development in a story that has bubbled below the surface of Missouri politics for weeks.

In a private email disclosed earlier this year, former University of Missouri System president Tim Wolfe claimed Schaefer — the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which oversees university funding — had pressured him to make it harder for Hawley, a law school professor, to run for office.

“Kurt Schaefer had several meetings with me pressuring me to take away Josh Hawley’s right to run for Attorney General,” the email said. “When I questioned the fairness of this and I refused to budge on his right to run for office, he then asked me to get in the middle of the tenure decision for Mr. Hawley, which I refused as well.”

Schaefer has not denied talking with Wolfe but says the conversations were proper and meant to save taxpayer money. He wanted to make sure the university was following its own rules on how it handled tenure and leaves of absence when it came to Hawley, the senator has said.
At least two former U.S. attorneys who are unconnected with the complaints told The Star an investigation could be warranted. University funding from the legislature is considered “something of value” under the law, one former U.S. attorney said, as is elimination of political competition that Schaefer might face.

Any evidence of a direct trade of one for the other could point to a violation of the law.

“An investigation would have a salutary effect for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the senator may have done something criminally wrong or, just as importantly, done nothing wrong,” said Paul Charlton, who spent six years as the U.S. attorney for Arizona and 10 years as an assistant U.S. attorney.

Bud Cummins, a former U.S. attorney in Arkansas appointed by President George W. Bush, said in an email that “the offer of something of value in exchange for official action can constitute a federal crime under one of several statutes.”

It is not known whether any authorities are investigating the allegations for any criminal culpability.

Jake Zimmerman of Olivette and Teresa Hensley of Raymore are the Democratic candidates for Missouri attorney general.

**Complaint questions Schaefer's role in University of Missouri policy change**

By Rudi Keller

Saturday, April 23, 2016 at 12:00 am

State Sen. Kurt Schaefer “may have” illegally tried to influence the University of Missouri’s decision on political leave policies to keep Associate Professor Josh Hawley from seeking the Republican nomination for attorney general, according to a complaint filed Thursday with the Missouri Ethics Commission.
The complaint, filed by the Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust, uses news articles, minutes from UM Board of Curators meetings and a highly publicized letter from former UM President Tim Wolfe to back up a call to investigate whether Schaefer misused his office.

“These facts … suggest Schaefer may have acceded to corruption,” according to the complaint, signed by foundation Executive Director Matt Whitaker.

The complaint asks the commission to investigate whether Schaefer used his position as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee to threaten the university’s funding if it did not prevent Hawley from running. If he did, the complaint asserts, Schaefer violated several state and federal laws.

Hawley was granted leave without pay for a year beginning Sept. 1. The university changed its leave policies but did not make the new policy effective until after candidate filing ended March 29.

The budget written under Schaefer’s direction during the 2015 session gave the university $5.4 million from a $12 million pool for increased funding to colleges and universities as well as $64 million for construction projects.

The complaint has no basis in facts and is meant to smear him, Schaefer said.

“The allegation is ridiculous,” he said. “No one has done more for the university, including the budget we just finished.”

Wolfe’s Jan. 19 letter claimed Schaefer worked hard to persuade the university to prevent Hawley’s candidacy or make him choose between politics and his faculty appointment.

“Kurt Schaefer had several meetings with me pressuring me to take away Josh Hawley’s right to run for Attorney General by taking away an employee’s right to ask for an unpaid leave of absence when running for public office,” Wolfe wrote.

Wolfe did not respond to messages seeking comment.

The ethics commission investigates complaints of official misconduct as well as of campaign finance and lobbying violations but does not acknowledge receipt of complaints or comment on investigations until it takes action. The foundation sent a copy of the complaint to the Tribune.

Spokesman Scott Paradise said Hawley’s campaign “had nothing to do with this complaint” and was unable to comment on the substance of it.

Whitaker is a former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Iowa. The complaint takes the evidence and asks for an investigation because he can’t take it any further, Whitaker said.
In June, Whitaker sent the university a Sunshine Law request seeking all emails that mention Schaefer or his then-Chief of Staff Yancy Williams, university political leave policies or Hawley’s tenure status. The complaint includes two emails from that request as exhibits.

“They are the ones that support our theory of what happened here,” Whitaker said. “I don’t have the same tools that prosecutors and ethics investigators have had.”

One email is from UM Vice President for University Relations Steve Knorr, sent Jan. 28, 2015, to Williams and Schaefer and forwarded on Feb. 23, 2015, to Curator David Steelman, outlining the rule on leave for political purposes.

The second email is from Steelman to Wolfe and the other curators, arguing for a change.

Steelman knew when he pushed for change that Schaefer controlled the budget, the complaint says. Steelman said Friday that he wanted policies that did not grant special privileges to university employees considering a bid for political office.

“I don’t believe the university should be granting leaves of absence and guaranteeing positions to run for office,” he said.

The complaint is baseless, Steelman said. Whitaker “is doing what Washington, D.C., political operatives do, which is try to slime people without any facts,” he said.

Whitaker said he is not supporting Hawley. His organization generally targets Democrats with ethics charges.

The response from Schaefer and Steelman “sounds like somebody just lashing out,” he said.

Schaefer and Hawley are the only candidates in the Republican primary for attorney general. The winner will face either Teresa Hensley, former prosecuting attorney of Cass County, or Jake Zimmerman, St. Louis County assessor, as the Democratic nominee in November.
**This Commonly Prescribed Drug Could Help Treat Autism**

Researchers say the blood pressure medication propranolol has been linked to improved social skills in people with autism.


Researchers at the University of Missouri are studying how a commonly prescribed beta blocker could be used to treat individuals with autism.

"There was a study done in the 1980s that suggested a social and language benefit with this blood pressure drug, propranolol," Dr. David Beversdorf said.

Propranolol has been used to treat high blood pressure and other cardiovascular diseases since the 1960s. Dr. David Beversdorf and his colleagues wanted to explore other possible uses for the drug.

In their study, individuals with autism who took the drug instead of a placebo showed higher scores in social skills, such as eye contact, nonverbal communication and staying on topic.

"We were initially looking at it because of its use for test anxiety. That's exactly the drug people take for public speaking anxiety, performance anxiety. ... And then we started to look at it in autism because they have flexibility issues with social interaction," Beversdorf said.

Propranolol is currently FDA-approved to treat a lot of things. Autism is not one of them.

An Autism Treatment Network spokesperson said the organization welcomes the research but also warned it's still too early to start prescribing the drug to people with autism.

Researchers plan to begin a federally funded clinical trial this fall. Beversdorf says the trial could take up to four years to complete.
**Fading Affordability**

*College affordability has declined in 45 states since 2008, with low- and middle-income students in particular feeling the pinch, new study finds.*

**No MU Mention**

Overall college affordability has worsened in 45 U.S. states since 2008, creating a significant financial burden for students of modest economic means.

That’s the top-line finding in a new, state-by-state study by researchers from the Institute for Research on Higher Education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College of Education and Human Development, and the Higher Education Policy Institute.

The report defines affordability as reasonable estimates of the total educational expenses for students and families in each state, calculated as a percentage of family income. Educational expenses include tuition and costs of living, minus all grant-based financial aid from federal and state governments and institutions.

Students who lack wealth have been hit hardest, the study found, as college has become less affordable since the Great Recession began.

“This study shows how the deck is stacked against low- and middle-income Americans when it comes to paying for college,” Joni E. Finney, one of the study’s co-authors and a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, said in a written statement. “Without policy changes, the data point toward a problem that will only worsen. That paints a bleak picture for millions of Americans.”

Even the best-performing states tend to have a college affordability problem, the report found.

Only 15 states improved on affordability measures for community colleges between 2008 and 2013, meaning families in these states would pay a smaller portion of their income, on average, for students to attend full time.
Likewise, the report, which is based on federal data, found public, four-year institutions in just six states became more affordable during that period. Seven states saw an improvement on measures of affordability in the private nonprofit college sector. (Click here for an interactive map of the report’s findings.)

One reason for the problem, according to the study, is that much of state financial aid is not based on financial need.

For example, average state financial aid received for reasons other than financial need at public institutions -- such as merit aid -- increased from $189 per student in 2004 to $268 per student in 2013, after adjusting for inflation, the report found.

In addition, the amount of state financial aid flowing to high-income students at public four-year institutions increased by more than 450 percent between 1996 and 2012, wrote Will Doyle, a professor at Vanderbilt and one of the report’s co-authors.

“State leaders can craft policies that ensure everyone who can benefit from college can go,” Doyle said in a written statement, “but in too many states they have allowed college costs to rise beyond the reach of families.”

Another affordability challenge is that full-time students increasingly cannot work to pay their way through college, even at community colleges. And low- and middle-income families often must weigh the trade-offs between attending college and getting a job, a problem exacerbated by stagnant household incomes over the last decade.

That all means loans increasingly fill the gap between educational expenses and what students get in financial aid, according to the report -- a serious concern, particularly for less wealthy students.

“Unless state and federal policy makers act together to ensure that educational opportunities beyond high school are affordable,” the report concludes, “it would not be surprising to see greater economic and racial stratification reflected in our colleges and universities -- as well as society.”