Ending WIC at age 5 leaves families without food

Generated from News Bureau: Age Limit for Federal Food Assistance Program is Increasing Food Insecurity

When a US food assistance program, WIC, ends at age five, the families of children who aren’t yet in kindergarten may fall into food insecurity.

One in five American households with children does not have adequate access to food. To combat food insecurity, the US relies on a variety of food and nutritional programs, including the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). This program is designed specifically for pregnant women, mothers and children from birth to age five.

The researchers say policy makers should consider extending WIC eligibility until children enter school, rather than setting an age limit.

“The cutoff age of five for WIC is associated with an assumption that this is the normal age at which children enter kindergarten and become eligible for free and reduced price lunch programs,” says Irma Arteaga, assistant professor in the University of Missouri’s Truman School of Public Affairs and lead author of the study. “However, not all children who are five are automatically eligible to attend school.

“State and local rules, not federal, determine the age at which children begin kindergarten. These rules are reliant on some predetermined date—a common one being September 1st—meaning children born after that date will not enter kindergarten until the following year, thus losing WIC benefits with nothing to replace it.”

Arteaga and her team analyzed data for 1,350 children between the ages of four and a half and six from a nationally representative dataset. The
researchers found evidence that aging out of WIC increases food insecurity for children who have not yet started school.

“Food insecurity is a significant social problem in America, especially for households with children, so it’s imperative that we understand the extent to which current nutrition and food programs are effective,” says Colleen Heflin, professor in the Truman School of Public Affairs. “People who cannot provide enough food for themselves or their children are more likely to miss days at work, experience declines in their health, and experience more anxiety, creating economic losses.

“Children without access to sufficient food are likely to have lower educational outcomes and worse health than children in food secure households.”

The study appears in the journal *Children and Youth Services Review*. The USDA supported the work and the dataset came from the National Center for Education Statistics.
First, the obvious: the presidential debate Monday is must-see TV, crucial to Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, a turning point in the race.

“The stakes are huge,” said David Spence, once a Republican candidate for Missouri governor.

“They both need to do well,” agreed Democratic strategist Richard Martin of Kansas City.

The 90-minute, ad-free exchange will air on the big TV networks, cable news outlets, CSPAN. Websites will stream it live. Social media will reach the melting point.

Many expect it to be the most-watched debate in U.S. history, exceeding the 2012 encounter between President Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, which drew around 70 million viewers. Some analysts said 100 million people may watch part of this year’s contest, moving it close to Super Bowl audience territory.

But what to watch for? What will be the important moments? What will your neighbors and co-workers talk about when it's over? Who wilted? Who won?

Below is a rough guide to help answer those questions and prepare for Monday's big event, which begins at 8 p.m. CDT, with help from political experts, partisans and debate coaches.

Remember:

• Most voters have already made up their minds. They’ll be watching the debate for affirmation of their views, not for differences between the candidates. If you watch at a debate party, the cheering and booing may make it hard to hear the candidates. If you’re an undecided voter, a quiet location will be a better choice.

• While the debate is very important, it may not decide the winner of the election. Romney clocked Obama in that first 2012 debate, yet Romney still lost in November. At the same time, poor debate performances might have doomed Michael Dukakis in 1988 and Gerald Ford in 1976. Some disappointment in your candidate is acceptable; despair is not.

• Snap judgments can be wrong. Everyone will have a reaction to the debate, but it may take a few days for the conventional wisdom to lock in. Everyone will be pointing to perceived errors and gaffes after the debate ends, but a final ruling will take longer.

• Beware instant fact-checkers, whether on mainstream media or social sites. While the pressure will be on moderator Lester Holt to make immediate true/false calls in real time, quality fact-checking takes time. The candidates will call each other liars; nonpartisan fact-checking organizations will want to take more time to look at the record.

With those caveats in mind, let’s look at the debate.
**The issues**

The debate will be segmented, with Holt picking the topics. He’s said he’ll spend 30 minutes on each of three issues: America’s direction, securing the nation and prosperity.

Pretty open-ended. The recent bombing in New York City may tilt the exchange to the terror threat, some analysts believe.

“Obviously the hot button today,” Spence said. “I would also think that there might be some talk about trustworthiness.”

Taxes, federal spending, even immigration are likely to be on the table. Clinton will talk about college affordability and the minimum wage; Trump will likely discuss trade agreements and jobs in declining blue collar industries.

Each will attack the other on scandals related to their nonprofit charities.

Voters will want to see specifics, Republicans and Democrats said. To date, even Republicans believe Trump has talked about issues largely in generalities. He’ll get the chance to fill in the blanks on some policy ideas during the debate.

“I think Trump will win on the issues,” said Kay Hoflander, a Missouri Republican and delegate to the party’s national convention in Cleveland. “The economy, immigration, crime. The military.”

Democrats think Clinton will have a clear advantage on policy details.

“She may want to tweak Trump, but that can’t be her game plan,” said Burdett Loomis, a political science professor at the University of Kansas. “She’s factually based. ... I think she shows that he’s unfit by dealing with facts.”

Other Democrats are worried Clinton will focus too much on facts and policies, losing the contrast with Trump’s more generic statements.

“Trump won the Republican nomination by turning debates against experienced candidates and debaters into reality TV contests,” said Jim Ward, a Wichita Democrat and member of the Kansas House of Representatives. “Even mistakes of fact or decorum do not diminish him, they just make him appear authentic.”

Clinton’s goal, Ward said, should be to keep the focus on Trump’s lack of experience and her own knowledge of the world.
Race will also be an issue. It’s the most difficult and dangerous topic of the 2016 campaign, with accusations of racism and bigotry flying in both directions. Both candidates will face enormous challenges in addressing race relations while avoiding inflammatory rhetoric, if they can.

Recent police shootings in Tulsa, Okla., and Charlotte, N.C., will almost certainly be on the table.

**Demeanor**

But most viewers won’t be tuning in for a rational exchange of view on, say, currency manipulation. They want to watch how Clinton and Trump act: Angry? Insulting? Funny? Frustrated?

“The candidate that stands there for 90 minutes and spouts more facts and figures, evidence and statistics, is typically seen as the loser” in post-debate surveys, said Mitch McKinney, a communications professor at the University of Missouri. “Viewers are not tuning in to see who’s smartest.”

Instead, “demeanor and approach are as important as the things they’re actually saying,” noted Kyle Dennis, director of debate at William Jewell College. “It’s everything. It’s the non-verbals. It’s all the body language. It’s the tone. And a lot of it is the circus, too.”

Republicans believe Trump has altered his approach in recent weeks, becoming more subdued. They expect — and want — him to continue to tone down the language in order to attract moderate undecided voters.

“People want to see if he can be presidential,” said Kelly Arnold, chairman of the Kansas Republican Party. “Can he look, act and be that role of a president? He’s done that before ...like when he went down to Mexico.”

Spence: “He has been rational as of late, and that needs to be seen and heard. He needs to come across as compassionate, caring and knowledgeable.”

In the days leading up to the debate, Trump himself offered mixed signals on his approach.

“She can bait me and I can bait her and we will see what happens,” he said Monday on Fox News.

On Tuesday, Clinton suggested she’ll return whatever gets lobbed her way.

“I am going to do my very best to communicate as clearly and as fearlessly as I can in the face of the insults and the attacks and the bullying and bigotry we’ve seen coming from my opponent,” she told a radio interviewer.
Democrats know Trump flummoxed his GOP opponents on debate stages in the spring. But they note he’s never debated one-on-one with any opponent, and has never faced a candidate from the other political party.

“I think it’s going to be Donald Trump acting like he’s in a knife fight,” said Jim Slattery, a former Kansas congressman and a Democrat. “I expect him to come in and really go for the jugular.”

Clinton’s reaction to those attacks, if they come, will be important, outsiders said.

Dennis, the debate director, suggested another complication: It’s the first presidential debate between a man and a woman. How Trump treats her, and how Clinton treats him, may directly affect voters’ impressions of the debate.

**Errors, gaffes, zingers**

Most presidential debates, if they’re remembered at all, are recalled for one-liners and slip-ups. Both candidates will seek to avoid the latter and employ the former.

“Hillary Clinton, being the first woman candidate to run for president, will need a brilliant performance,” said Barbara Ballard, a Democrat from Lawrence and a delegate to the party’s national convention in Philadelphia.

Clinton is also expected to emphasize Trump’s earlier stumbles — on the Khan family, women, minorities.

“She will hit him on more social issues and some of his earlier gaffes,” said Spence, a Republican.

Yet some Democrats fear Clinton could over-think the strategy, making comments and jokes appear canned. Trump is much more practiced in the art of quips, insults and name-calling, they noted.

“His style of the one-liners, the very condensed stream of consciousness, off the top of his head retorts” worked to Trump’s advantage in primaries, McKinney said.

But Republicans believe Trump’s supporters are willing to overlook factual mistakes, if he makes any. They will watch to see if the businessman effectively skewers Clinton, throwing her off her stride during the exchange.

“This debate,” the GOP’s Arnold said, “is (about) how they operate when the pressure’s on.”
Expectations

It’s the media’s favorite post-debate game: did the candidates do better, or worse, than expected?

Clinton may already be losing the pre-debate expectations battle. By consensus, she’s expected to perform better than Trump.

“The most pressure is on Clinton,” Ward of Wichita said. “People expect her to do well. She is the experienced candidate and debater.”

Yet Trump can’t mail it in, Republicans agreed. If he fails to meet already low expectations, it could damage his candidacy. He still trails in the Real Clear Politics average of all polls, although the margin is just one point, well within the possibility of error.

Interestingly, the two candidates appear to have approached debate preparation differently. National media reports say Clinton has practiced extensively for the exchange, while Trump has rehearsed more sporadically.

There are also wild cards. Clinton’s well-documented health issues may prompt some viewers to watch for signs of physical weakness. Trump’s stumbles on basic questions — he didn’t know what America’s nuclear triad is, for example — could haunt him in the final weeks of the campaign.

It’s also possible the debate could be a dud. Election Day is closer, but it isn’t here yet.

“This first debate might just be enough,” said the GOP’s Hoflander, “to get people to tune in to the other debates.”
MU Expert Says Debates Matter When Races Tighten


Listen to the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=ee964110-6d25-4c1a-9e26-1188e26a474a

Exercise Post-Menopause May Be Impacted by Brain Changes

Generated from News Bureau press release: Deactivation of Brain Receptors in Postmenopausal Women May Lead to Lack of Physical Activity

Gov Nixon to Address Thompson Center’s 11th Annual Autism Conference

Generated from a News Bureau media advisory

Listen to the story: http://mms.tveys.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=d8896b93-6d83-4137-8cd4-1821522e10a5

Mizzou allows students to change the name on their diploma, transcript

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 3 hrs ago

ST. LOUIS • Two years after allowing students to change their first and middle names on class rosters and their student email, the University of Missouri-Columbia now allows students to change their names on their student ID, transcript and diploma.

Effective immediately, students can go to the campus registrar and get a new Mizzou ID with the preferred name that they changed their email and class roster information to reflect. There is no timetable on how soon transcripts and diplomas will reflect name changes, officials said.

An email announcing the change went out to students Wednesday afternoon.
The change is something that transgender and gender-nonconforming students and their allies have sought for years.

“For us it’s basic common sense,” Jack Miller, Mizzou junior and communications officer for the campus’ Triangle Coalition, said. The Triangle Coalition is an umbrella organization for the flagship campus’ LGBT organizations. “We think it’s long overdue and should have been done with those changes a few years ago, but we’re so happy it’s (happening).”

Mizzou spokesman Christian Basi said this change was something administrators “have wanted to do for quite some time.”

None of these documents — diploma, transcript, ID — is considered a legal document in Missouri, Basi said. When that was confirmed by legal counsel, the campus was able to move forward and announce the change.

Students can change their names to anything so long as it is not derogatory, Basi said. This includes changing a name to one that is typically associated with a different gender.

The policy is also seen as potentially benefiting international students who adopt more common American names.

Mizzou alumni can also have their transcripts or diploma reprinted with an alternative name.

A name change is free, but there is a fee associated with replacing a student ID — as well as reprinting transcripts and diplomas — and it’s something that students take issue with.

The Triangle Coalition argues that charging transgender students the standard fee for replacing an ID card isn’t fair. The cost is $15 per ID.

“We disagree with this part of the policy,” Miller said. “We will be talking to administrators about this. We think it makes more sense to charge the much smaller fee of a few dollars that incoming freshmen pay.”
The cost for the ID is “necessary,” according to Basi, because of the technology inside of the cards. Cards are used to pay for meals in the dining halls and to get into some campus buildings.

In the two years since Mizzou allowed the preferred name change policy for rosters and emails, more than 2 percent of the more than 32,000 students have opted to change their names.

**Editorial: Crop insurance is taxpayer-subsidized and now state tax-free, too**

By the Editorial Board, 16 hrs ago

If you want something from the Missouri Legislature, it's good to be a farmer.

Last spring, after finishing work on the state’s $27.2 billion fiscal 2017 budget, lawmakers passed a few more tax breaks. The big one was $50 million in potential retroactive tax refunds for farmers who received federal disaster insurance for damage caused by the epic drought of 2012. People who sign up for exercise classes also will get a $5.7 million break on sales taxes.

In June, Gov. Jay Nixon vetoed those tax breaks. On Sept. 14, the Legislature overrode his veto. The next day, Nixon put a hold on $57.2 million more from the budget passed in the spring. He’d already withheld $115 million in spending, saying the Legislature had overestimated the amount of money the state would take in. If the economy picks up dramatically, the money could still be spent.

Because of all of this, farmers are going to get money that otherwise would have gone mostly to highways, school transportation and K-12 education, which absorbed the brunt of the budget hold-backs. It could be farmers’ tax refunds won’t amount to $50 million, but Nixon’s budget office estimates they will.
This is what happens when you have a lot of needs and not enough money to meet them. Relative to their tax burden when the 1980 Hancock Amendment was passed to block the state budget from growing faster than the average family’s budget, Missourians are currently undertaxed by about $3.9 billion. But no one in Jefferson City wants to touch that one.

The Missouri Farm Bureau is the state’s most powerful lobby. While it milks the image of the sturdy yeoman farmer, most of its business comes from brokering insurance, including federally subsidized crop insurance. When a farmer buys insurance on his crops, federal taxpayers pick up about 60 percent of the cost. When drought ravaged the Midwest in 2012, taxpayers covered most of the losses.

In fact, a 2012 study by the University of Missouri Extension Service found that over the previous decade, Missouri farmers had received $1.80 in federal crop insurance indemnities for every dollar they paid in premiums. “Insured farmers had a pretty good year,” MU economist Raymond Massey said after the 2012 drought.

Crop insurance payments were paid out in 2013 and thus were taxable in 2014. The Internal Revenue Service generally treats such payments as taxable income. So did Missouri and 39 other states that levy income taxes.

But by passing Senate Bill 641, and then overriding Nixon’s veto, the Legislature decided that from now on, and retroactively to 2014, crop insurance payments no longer are subject to the state income tax. With enough tax-free, taxpayer-subsidized insurance, some farmers could be praying for drought.

It’s good to be a farmer.
COLUMBIA — **MU has eased its preferred name policy so documents will accurately reflect the name a student has chosen.**

The policy that used to only enable students to enter their preferred names on Blackboard and on class rosters will be expanded to include ID cards, transcripts, residence hall rosters and diplomas, in addition to any documents not requiring a legal name, according to a university email sent on Wednesday.

Officials expect it will be a few months before all facets of the policy will be functional, said Christian Basi, the associate director of the MU News Bureau. He said that just 2 percent to 3 percent of students use the preferred name option for class rosters.

"We have been looking at this ever since we implemented the original preferred name option a couple of years ago," Basi said. "There was no policy in place, so we knew that we needed one."

Creating an option for students to change their preferred names is a trend among universities nationwide. Approximately 150 schools are now implementing such policies, according to Campus Pride.

Students were sent a link with step-by-step instructions on how to change a name in the MU system.

However, MU is taking precautions against students trying to misrepresent themselves. "The University of Missouri reserves the right to deny or remove any preferred name for misuse, including but not limited to misrepresentation, attempting to avoid legal obligation, or the use of
derogatory names, with or without notice in accordance with University Collected Rules and Regulations," according to the new policy.

"Every student will benefit from this," Basi said, including international students, students who go by their middle name and transgender students.

MU announces "Preferred Name Policy"

COLUMBIA — MU announced Wednesday morning a new policy that expands its existing preferred name policy.

Students can now choose to have a preferred name appear on student ID cards, transcripts and diplomas.

Previously, the policy allowed preferred names on class lists and online platforms, such as MyZou and Blackboard.

The policy will be implemented in the upcoming months.
University of Missouri student craft studio faced with closure

When Amy Hay was preparing to reopen the University of Missouri student Craft Studio in late August, she asked when hot water would be turned back on in the north wing of Memorial Union.

Not during the fall semester, she was told. In that meeting, Hay learned for the first time that the studio would have to move or close at the end of the semester. The sewer beneath the studio, which occupies 3,000 square feet in the basement of the union, is collapsing and must be replaced, work that has been planned for some time.

“It is my understanding that had we not asked about hot water, we would still not know,” she said.

The Craft Studio is funded through the Missouri Students Association. Last year, it was the fifth-largest MSA expense with an allocation of $112,392 from fees paid to support student government. About 2,000 students use the studio each semester, Hay said, paying a $40 membership fee for unlimited use. The studio offers structured classes at a cost of up to $60 for five weeks, as well as space for students to do woodworking, photography and ceramics, and a gallery where undergraduates can display their artwork.

Hay has worked for the studio for 10 years, starting when it was in Brady Commons. The studio was in that location for 30 years.

MSA President Sean Earl has been looking for a new location with little success.

“We have reached out to all of the easiest spaces we thought we could get our hands on that is in the student affairs family,” said Bryan Goers, senior coordinator for student government. “There is a waiting line of academic units that want that space.”

The studio needs space without utility or rent costs, Goers said. The enrollment decline this fall means less revenue from student government fees, pinching the MSA budget.

Exactly how long the space in Memorial Union will be unavailable is unknown, MU spokesman Christian Basi wrote in an email. A sewer replacement project under the International Center required that program to relocate for more than three months, he wrote.
“Because of space and budget issues, the Craft Studio will either have to relocate or close,” Basi wrote.

The union and other student centers are directed by the Department of Student Affairs and Auxiliary Services in the Division of Student Affairs. The division also includes the Department of Student Life, which provides administrative oversight of the craft studio.

Plans for the space after the sewer work are uncertain, said Michelle Froese, assistant director of Student Auxiliary Services marketing.

“We have a someday hope of renovating the second floor of Memorial Union,” she said. “In the case that would happen, we would need other space as swing space.”

The second-floor renovation, planned for more than seven years, Basi said, has no definite funding or start date.

The craft studio will have to curtail programs by mid-October, Hay wrote in a letter posted on the studio’s website. It has a small stock of supplies for sale, but no new supplies will be ordered. All workshops and other events scheduled after Oct. 28 are canceled, and the last gallery show will close Nov. 18.

On Tuesday afternoon, Brittani Savage and Jade Thompson were in the studio, learning to make a projector for cellphone video from a shoebox. Savage, a senior psychology student, said the studio helps her relieve stress. The failure to inform the studio or find a new space isn’t surprising, she said.

“It all falls along the idea that arts aren’t important and that mental health is not important,” Savage said.

MU Confucius Institute celebrates five years with performances, talks

SHARON MAI, 11 hrs ago

Generated from News Bureau media advisory: “MU Confucius Institute to Celebrate 5th Anniversary”

COLUMBIA — Starting Thursday, the MU Confucius Institute will host a week of events to celebrate its five-year anniversary.
Events, all free and open to the public, include guest speakers, performances by students from Shanghai Normal University and exhibitions for Museum Day.

A China Forum will be held at 3:30 p.m. Thursday in Stotler Lounge in Memorial Student Union. A question-and-answer session and a reception will follow. Jianfei Lu of Shanghai Normal University will speak on the strong influence of Confucianism in every aspect of life in China, and Michael Volz, an assistant professor and coordinator of the Chinese program at MU, will speak about the differences between Chinese and American cultures and how they interact.

A Chinese arts presentation will be held from 10 to 11:30 a.m. Friday at the Missouri Theatre, 203 S. Ninth St. Students and faculty from Columbia Public Schools will watch performances by Shanghai Normal University students specializing in martial arts, traditional dance, instrumental and vocal music.

Since it opened in April 2011, the MU Confucius Institute has had ties with Shanghai Normal University. It will be the first time students from there will visit and perform in the U.S., Sang Kim, interim director of the institute, said. He also is the director of the Asian Affairs Center and Missouri International Training Institute at MU.

Due to potential overcapacity, the MU Confucius Institute recommends that the public attend the same presentation but on a different day, from 3 to 5 p.m. Sunday in Jesse Auditorum.

Museum Day will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday at the MU Museum of Art and Archaeology in Mizzou North, 115 Business Loop 70 W. It will be a family-friendly event with activities for children.

Museum Day will feature events beyond a celebration of Chinese culture. W. Arthur Mehrhoff, academic coordinator at the museum, called the event an education festival. "While that term suggests clowns and balloons, it's really about learning activities that we think are entertaining," he said.
Exhibitions and workshops include a Missouri folk arts presentation by Michael Massey, saddle maker and leather carver. The MU Textile and Apparel Management Program will show off some of its recent works. Other presentations and collaborations will involve the State Historical Society, Ellis Library's Rare Book Collection, Mizzou Botanic Garden and MU Museum of Anthropology.

Museum Day is an attempt to create a critical mass of museum activities that can help people think about the different ways in which museums add meaning and interest to peoples’ lives, Mehrhoff said.

“As we deal with issues of culture diversity and change, a museum is a great resource to look at change over time and cultures over time and to see what has changed and what are constants,” he said.

The week of Confucius Institute anniversary events concludes with MU International Flag Day and International Bazaar starting at 10 a.m. Tuesday on Lowry Mall. The event is in collaboration with the Missouri International Student Council. Students will carry and raise flags from nations around the globe. Attendees can have food and beverages as well as international arts and culture at the International Bazaar that has been an MU tradition since 1974.

“This is a very global campus,” Kim said. "We have about 3,000 international students on campus, and about 60 percent of them are from China. Students and our faculty and staff interact daily with those Chinese students."

Kim said the anniversary events will allow people to learn the fundamentals of Confucianism. “We all behave a little differently because of different cultural foundations, and Confucianism is one of the bases of how folks from Asia behave.”

Bridget Caddell, program coordinator at the institute, said the China Forum will be an opportunity to learn about Chinese culture, both its history and how that history shapes events and attitudes today.
“The Museum Day activities offer a chance for hands-on fun by trying Chinese tea or calligraphy or papercutting,” Caddell said. "The Chinese Arts Performance will transport the audience to experience the masterful pageantry of skilled traditional artisans.”

The MU Confucius Institute is one of 64 institutes in 37 states; most are at colleges and universities.

Confucius is honored as one of the world’s greatest philosophers. In Chinese history, he is remembered as a teacher, politician, editor and philosopher. The philosophy of Confucius is said to emphasize morality and respect in all aspects and relationships of everyday life. The MU anniversary was timed to occur near the same time as International Confucius Day, which is Sept. 29.

MU School of Law to offer free legal work

The University of Missouri School of Law will partner with the MU Family Impact Center to provide free estate planning legal services to Central Missouri residents.

Ten MU law students working under a practicing lawyer will meet with people wanting estate planning services Oct. 10-12, MU said in a news release. The students will draft simple wills, durable powers of attorney and living wills or health care directives.

An appointment is required by calling the School of Law at 573-882-0940.
COLUMBIA — Jennifer Hudson, who has designed streets and sidewalks for the city of Columbia for eight years, has rarely used her paid sick and vacation days for herself.

Instead, she used 10 weeks worth of paid time off when she bore each of her two children — 5-year-old Avery and 5-month-old Bryce — so that she could spend time with them when she felt she was most needed. The time allowed her to help the children establish regular eating and sleeping patterns and to bond with them rather than sending them to daycare at such an early age.

"When you are at work, it's kind of hard to do," Hudson said.

The city of Columbia allows eligible full-time city employees to accrue up to 18 paid sick days and various amounts of vacation depending on length of service. Hudson said she knows a few city workers who could take only four to six weeks of paid leave because they either lacked sufficient time accrued or for other personal reasons.

"When you are at work for eight hours a day and they are at a daycare, they don't really get to bond with you," Hudson said. "And that's when you get most of your bonding. It's in the beginning."

City Council discussion

Since Aug. 15, the Columbia City Council has been discussing whether to grant up to 10 weeks of paid leave to full-time employees who have newborn children, who adopt children or who bring foster children into their homes. The council decided not to include paid parental leave in
the budget for fiscal year 2017 that it approved Monday night, but it left room for discussion about adding it in the 2018 budget year.

Second Ward Councilman Michael Trapp, who first proposed the paid-leave policy, said that he did so after learning that Kansas City had started a similar policy in May. That program allows up to six weeks of paid leave to city employees.

Although he initially pushed for 10 weeks of leave, Trapp said six weeks might be more feasible considering the city's economic situation.

The city is in a beginning phase of creating its own leave policy. Human Resources Director Margrace Buckler said it needs to consult with labor groups and other peer cities.

Buckler estimated that 34 employees were eligible for paid leave in 2015 and that about $326,000 would be needed to grant 10 weeks of paid leave to those people. If the idea had gone forward, about $200,000 of the cost would come from the city’s general fund and the rest from the city’s utility and internal services funds, Buckler said.

The general fund is largely dependent on sales tax, which made up more than a quarter of the city's 2015 general fund revenue, according to the city's financial trends report. Sales tax revenue per capita, however, is not growing as fast as it once did. In 2015, individual sales tax contributions rose by 0.27 percent from the previous year, compared with 1.10 percent in 2006. City officials say that this is largely due to the growing amount of untaxed internet sales and that the trend equates to $10 million in potential sales tax revenue lost from fiscal years 2006 to 2015.

Trapp said that if sales tax growth continues to lag behind the city's population growth and inflation, it could hinder the city from offering paid leave benefits.

**Family and Medical Leave Act**
Columbia complies with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. It requires employers to grant up to 12 weeks of unpaid parental leave to employees who have worked either more than 12 months or 1,250 hours.

While the act makes both full- and part-time employees eligible, the city would not have to offer a new paid leave policy to part-time workers.

Trapp said that while expanding the benefits of the paid leave policy was possible, it would not happen within, for instance, five years.

The city code says employees requesting parental leave under the current policy should notify the city “significantly in advance of the anticipated date of delivery.” There is no specific time requirement, but employees taking leave for a newborn child usually tell the city three or four months in advance, Buckler said.

The precedent

Columbia would be only the second city in Missouri with a population of more than 100,000 to create a separate paid leave policy.

Kansas City offers qualified full- and part-time employees with either newborn or adopted children full base pay while on leave, but it doesn't do the same for foster parents, Kansas City Human Resources Director Gary O'Bannon said.

Adopting a paid leave policy was first considered as part of a 2014 strategic plan that called for enacting the policy by 2017. The city, however, enacted the policy almost a year early with support from Mayor Sly James and the city's Women's Empowerment Initiative, O'Bannon said.

In addition to six weeks of paid leave, Kansas City allows another two weeks of paid leave to birthing mothers when deemed medically necessary.

O'Bannon so far is pleased with the policy.
“Employees who feel more engaged with their employers are more productive,” O’Bannon said. “They are certainly more dedicated, and they find ways to show that appreciation through high performance.”

If Columbia intends to offer paid parental leave in fiscal 2018, a policy should be finalized for budget purposes by May, Buckler said.

**Private businesses**

At least two large private businesses in Columbia have adopted their own paid parental leave policies.

State Farm Insurance, which has about 800 employees in its Columbia office, allows four to eight weeks of paid leave to birthing mothers under its short-term disability policy at a full pay rate, company spokesman Jim Camoriano said.

State Farm also gives a week of paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers. For those who adopt children, the company gives up to four weeks of paid leave, Camoriano said.

Similarly, Veterans United Home Loans, which has more than 1,500 full-time employees in Columbia, provides five weeks of paid maternity leave to mothers who have a newborn child or a child who has been adopted, company communications director Lauren Karr said.

Moreover, returning mothers at Veterans United can receive an additional week of paid time off at their free will, Karr said. Fathers, however, can only have a week of paid time off during the first six months after a child's birth.

**By contrast, MU, which has 11,976 full-time employees and 4,238 part-time employees, has no separate paid leave policy, but it follows the federal act, Christian Basi of the MU News Bureau said.**

When requesting parental leave, policy dictates that eligible employees should notify MU at least 30 days beforehand.
Potential benefits

The city has 1,481 full-time employees, and about 340 are women who are primarily working in public health and human services and administrative support areas, where they regularly interact with the public, Buckler said. She said the reduced stress that new mothers would have under a paid-leave program could make them better at serving the public.

“I think probably, technically, that could be a result,” Buckler said.

The city's Human Rights Commission unanimously supports Trapp's proposal and has already sent a memo to the City Council, Chairman Scott Dean said.

“We would like the city in the future to look at extending (paid leave policy) to other groups,” Dean said. “Someone needs to take some paid time off to care for an ailing family member, mother or father that is sick. Maybe a child that is sick but is not a newborn child. We want to make sure that in the long term, we would like to see a policy that doesn’t exclude anyone.”

Hudson said having a paid parental leave would improve her morale and make her less concerned about her children while at work.

“When it comes to benefits and knowing that company is really family-oriented, I think it makes you a better and better employee – a happier employee,” Hudson said.

Pulitzer Prize winner Leonard Pitts Jr. urges public to stop accepting lies

EMMA BEYER, 8 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Media outlets aren't holding politicians accountable for what they say and neither is the public, Leonard Pitts Jr. told an audience at MU Wednesday evening.
Almost 300 community members, professors and students packed an auditorium at MU's Reynolds Journalism Institute to hear Pitts, a Pulitzer Prize winner and nationally-syndicated columnist, speak. His talk was part of the Gerald M. Boyd Lecture Series, which aims to examine the relationship of the press to politics.

"It’s not that we don’t have the facts. It’s that we don’t want the facts," Pitts said.

Pitts spoke about how the media has covered the election cycle, political opinion and topics such as immigration and the Black Lives Matter movement. Pitts said that lies are eclipsing the truth in today's public discourse and in the media.

"Lies are hurting our society," Pitts said.

Pitts named several lies told by prominent media figures and politicians. He cited a quote from Newt Gingrich, who said no government employees could wish each other a 'Merry Christmas.'

Pitts criticized conservative news outlets for perpetuating lies. Both political parties share the blame, though, he said.

"Both parties have lied," he said. "Obama has lied ... Hillary Clinton has lied, but Fox news and conservative news outlets have elevated the lies to life."

But politicians have always lied, Pitts said. The bigger problem is the public's willingness to go along with it.

"Lies are a way of life and no one seems to care," Pitts said repeatedly. "There is a casualness to all of this that should appall us but does not."

Instead of critically thinking about what we hear, Pitts said, the American public actively seeks out information that reinforces individuals' already-formed beliefs, fueling anger. That affirmation is comforting, even if it's not true, Pitts said. He categorized such behavior as "intellectual vandalism."
"People are not driven by facts. Facts do little to change minds," he said.

Pitts said the internet and social media accelerate the spread of lies, because people often share information online that is not factually-based. Political parties thrive when people rely on non-fact-based statements, because in doing so it reinforces biases and creates blame.

Fixing widespread dishonesty starts with the audience, Pitts said. Readers and viewers need to use critical thinking to hold politicians and the media accountable.

"We can't change media. We can change the audience," he said. "It always comes back to education. People need to be taught why and how to question."

The Happiest Song of All Time, Identified by University of Missouri Research


The State of Undergraduate Education

The Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education releases its first report, using data to lay out a broad picture of students at today's two- and four-year colleges.

No MU Mention
More Americans are attending college than ever before -- nearly 90 percent of millennials who graduate from high school attend college within eight years. But a far smaller proportion of Americans actually have a college degree: only 40 percent of students complete a bachelor's degree in four years and 60 percent graduate in six years. At two-year colleges, 29 percent of students graduate in three years.

Those are the findings of a report released Thursday morning by the Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education, an initiative from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences begun last November. The commission was tasked with assessing the future undergraduate education by analyzing facts and data rather than relying on anecdotes, and it was funded with $2.2 million from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

“Our ambition is to help the American population, the American people, to appreciate what college education means now in the United States, which is something much broader and more complex than what a number of us might have thought a few years ago,” said Michael McPherson, co-chair of the committee and president of the Spencer Foundation.

The committee's first report, "The Primer on the College Student Journey," examines the current state of undergraduate education, compiling numbers on everything from college preparedness to student loans and providing some analysis. The data comes from a range of sources, including the National Center for Education Statistics, along with think tanks, nonprofits and academic studies.

“Heart an early point, it was agreed that an important thing to do was get a baseline for the state of undergraduate education so we could get a common set of facts,” said McPherson.

This report will inform the committee’s work moving forward, and the committee plans to publish another report next summer on the state of higher education for the next 20-25 years.

The report published this morning is also a trove of data on higher education. Among the takeaways from the report:

- When it comes to college attainment, gender matters. In 2015, 50 percent of women aged 25-29 had a bachelor's degree; 41 percent of men did.
- Race and ethnicity matter, too. Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of Asian students aged 25-29 had earned an associate degree or higher. That percentage was much higher than for white (54 percent), black (31 percent) and Hispanic students (27 percent).
- Many high school graduates are unprepared for college; half must take remedial classes. Remedial classes don't always work, though -- just 28 percent of two-year college students who took these courses actually earned a degree in 8.5 years.
- Students are borrowing more. In 2000, about 50 percent of students took out loans; that number had increased 10 percentage points by 2012.
- A small number of college graduates default on their loans -- 9 percent. But many more people default if they attended college and did not graduate -- 24 percent. That is why
“borrowers at greatest risk of defaulting are typically those who take out the smallest loan amounts,” the report said.

Rather than take the conventional four-year track to graduation, many students followed what the report called "a multidirectional transfer swirl."

Approximately one-third (35 percent) of first-time students either transferred or were simultaneously enrolled in two institutions over six years. Although traditionally people might consider transferring to mean moving from a two-year institution to a four-year institution, some students made lateral transfers -- that is, 15 percent of those enrolled at two-year institutions enrolled at another two-year college; 17.2 percent of students at four-year universities switched to two-year colleges; and 17.9 percent of students at four-year institutions transferred to a different four-year.

Socioeconomic status was another big indicator of what type of college students attended.

Those numbers are reflected in statistics from the high school graduating class of 2004: of the 40 percent that enrolled in four-year institutions, 39 percent were in the top socioeconomic quartile and 12 percent were from the bottom quartile. In contrast, among students who chose two-year institutions, 27 percent were from the bottom quartile and only 18 percent from the top.

Socioeconomic status also indicated whether students were likely to attend college at all. By 2014, just about half (52 percent) of low-income high school graduates immediately enrolled in college; 81 percent of high-income graduates did the same. Add in financial aid, and the relationship of low-income students to college becomes even more complex. Approximately 85 percent of dependent students -- that is, students younger than 24 who rely on their parents for financial support -- with an income below $30,000 receive tuition subsidies that actually cover the entire cost of their tuition and fees.

Despite these financial resources, many lower-income students opt out of going to college because they are not aware of these opportunities. All they see is the sticker price, an expensive prospect.

The report also explored the rising price of college.

At public four-year institutions, students pay 73 percent more in net tuition -- the price they pay after scholarships, grants and loans -- than they did 20 years ago. In fact, they pay 55 percent more than they did only six years ago.

The price tags at private four-year colleges are rising, too -- students pay 32 percent more than they did two decades ago, and 10 percent more than they did 10 years ago - - but the steep increase in price of public colleges is the most significant change.

That dramatic change is often attributed to education-related spending such as faculty and instruction, according to the commission report. In fact, the report concluded, those rising prices are generally thanks to decreased funding from state governments and declining public subsidies.
Even so, the fact that more than 85 percent of students who graduate from high school have some sort of higher education experience before they turn 30 is encouraging to McPherson.

"One thing that really did hit me hard was how pervasive the college experience is in the American population," he said. "That is like nothing in American history."

Pressure to Build the Class: 2016 Survey of Admissions Directors

No MU Mention

The pressure on college admissions offices to produce a new class is getting more intense, according to the 2016 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College and University Admissions Directors. And the percentage of colleges that met their goals by May 1, the traditional date by which colleges aim to have created their class, is down.

The last year has seen many changes in college admissions -- a new SAT, the launch of a new college application to rival the Common Application, a shift in the calendar of applying for financial aid and a proposal by Hillary Clinton to make public higher education free for most Americans. A U.S. Supreme Court ruling upheld the consideration of race and ethnicity by colleges in admissions decisions. And the Obama administration gave new momentum to a push to have colleges stop routinely asking about applicants’ criminal backgrounds.

Meanwhile concern about the debt faced by students and defining the value of higher education continued to grow.

On most of these issues, admissions directors appear divided -- sometimes along public and private college lines. The new version of the SAT has some fans but also appears to still have many skeptics -- especially of the writing test. And the new application from the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success appears to have a lot of work to do at winning over college admissions leaders.

Most admissions directors seem convinced that the Supreme Court decision gives them the protection they need to consider race and ethnicity in admissions. Few feel the need to do the kinds of studies the court suggested may be necessary to defend such policies.

And in a potentially notable finding, a significant minority of college admissions directors now say (in contrast to past surveys but consistent with the views of many
advocates for Asian-American applicants) that their colleges generally admit only Asian applicants with higher grades and test scores than other applicants.

The results come from answers from 339 admissions directors (or officials with equivalent titles). Those responding were given complete anonymity, but their answers were coded by institution to provide for analysis by sector.

**Meeting the Targets**

This year, only 37 percent of admissions directors said they had met their student enrollment goals for the fall class by May 1. That’s down from 42 percent a year ago -- a figure that was the same last year for public and private colleges.

This year, the proportion of private colleges that met their goals by May 1 was only down one percentage point -- to 41 percent. But the percentage of public colleges and universities meeting the May 1 deadline was down dramatically -- to 29 percent. Digging into the data, the decline is almost entirely due to the community college sector. It is important to note that community colleges don’t focus on the May 1 deadline to the same degree as other sectors and routinely recruit new students throughout the summer. Still, a year ago, 20 percent of community colleges were reporting that they had met their targets by May 1. This year the total is only 9 percent, which does not bode well for community colleges that have been fighting enrollment declines. And that’s not the only evidence that many community colleges are struggling with enrollment -- 88 percent report that they are down compared to two years ago.

All of the data on meeting targets of course run counter to the hysteria in much of the news media suggesting that it’s nearly impossible to get into college. As surveys by the National Association for College Admission Counseling have shown, the vast majority of colleges admit the vast majority of applicants -- and the pressure is on those admissions directors who can’t be sure of meeting their goals.

Consistent with the continued pressure on admissions directors, the proportion who said they were “very concerned” about meeting their goals this year rose to 54 percent from 51 percent. And the percentage reporting that they weren’t worried at all fell from 7 percent to 5 percent.

**A New Application**

A year ago, the big buzz at the NACAC annual meeting was the announcement of the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success, a group of elite public and private colleges that aimed to make the application process more personal, more open to the needs of individual students and colleges and more educational. At the NACAC meeting, coalition members heard plenty of skepticism and vowed to explain in the months ahead just what their effort entailed and why it would help colleges and students.

To judge from the Inside Higher Ed survey, the coalition still has a lot of work to do. Among the findings:

- Only 29 percent of admissions directors agree or strongly agree that the Common Application needs to have more competition, compared to 49 percent who disagree or strongly disagree. This finding suggests that the Common Application has repaired much of the damage from its technology meltdown two years ago that left many
colleges frustrated to be stuck without what they considered viable alternatives to the Common App.

- Only 23 percent of admissions directors agree or strongly agree that the “digital locker” -- an online tool the coalition is creating to let high school students save materials throughout their high school careers -- is a good way to prepare for college and the admissions process. Thirty-eight percent disagree or strongly disagree.
- Only 8 percent of admissions directors agree or strongly agree that the coalition has done a good job of explaining its process to colleges and their applicants -- compared to 68 percent who disagree or strongly disagree.
- And only 15 percent of admissions directors agree or strongly agree that the coalition application would encourage more applications from minority and disadvantaged applicants (a rationale offered by many coalition supporters). Fifty-seven percent disagree or strongly disagree.

Annie Reznik, executive director of the coalition, said she wasn't surprised by some of the negative reactions, even if she thought they might not reflect the work the group has been doing. "Any new initiative brings hesitancy and skepticism," she said via email.

And much of the initial public discussion, she said, didn't focus on efforts by member colleges to increase outreach to disadvantaged students. Numerous efforts have been started in recent months by the group and by its member colleges to increase college awareness in low-income areas and to talk to more students about the importance of college. In time, she said, people will see that the coalition is about these efforts, not just the application.

Much has been misunderstood about the locker, she said, but that is proceeding with positive results. "Many individuals external to the coalition have identified additional, excellent uses for this student space," she said. "Some ideas include: supporting a portfolio grading system using the locker, encouraging students to save pieces from an English class's personal writing unit in their lockers, collecting letters of recommendation from service work that could be shared with a teacher or counselor, scanning a copy of a student's hard-earned compliment card for providing great service at work."

The story continues: https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/pressure-build-class-2016-survey-admissions-directors?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=00a3f1d133-DNU20160922&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-00a3f1d133-197333609&mc_cid=00a3f1d133&mc_eid=364d27fdb7