



MU News Bureau

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Mizzou chancellor says he is repaying his 'debt' to higher education

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS • Alexander Cartwright is convinced he owes higher education something.

Everything, actually.

His gratitude helps shape his approach to his new role as chancellor of the University of Missouri-Columbia. It has also helped him develop a demeanor that people who work closely with him say counters a perception that universities are ivory towers run by out-of-touch leaders.

Cartwright's "unassuming nature puts people at ease," said David Steelman, a former Republican legislator and current chairman of the University of Missouri Board of Curators.

"He's never the one in the room making you feel like he's the smartest," Steelman said.

A native of the Bahamas, Cartwright moved to Tipton, Iowa, at age 17 with his mother and stepfather. He opted to get his GED rather than figure out what grade he would be in in the United States.

He picked up a job working second shift at a hydraulics factory in nearby Moscow, Iowa, then decided to take classes at a community college and eventually transfer to a university.

Growing up in the Bahamas, he saw accounting and banking as lucrative careers, so that was his initial plan. It was his boss at the factory who mentioned that he would make a good engineer.

“I didn’t even know what engineering was, but I always liked math,” he said. The rest is history.

Cartwright was a low-income student, eligible for federal need-based financial aid and working through college. His jobs included cleaning a hog confinement building while taking community college classes.

There’s a soft spot in his heart for Mizzou’s new affordability initiatives, such as grants to cover tuition for low-income students.

He considers himself lucky, landing in the right place at the right time and finding his way as a first-generation college student.

See salaries for employees at University of Missouri-Columbia

“I left a lot of people back in the Bahamas who were equally talented and capable, but they didn’t get the opportunity,” he said. “Every day that I wake up, I feel lucky. ... That doesn’t happen for everybody, but the more that we can (create opportunities), the better.”

‘Not an ivory tower’

Affordability concerns often fuel a negative narrative about higher education. Mizzou’s new leader understands that.

Cartwright is hopeful that Mizzou can show people the value of not only the flagship institution, but also of higher education in general. Part of that includes the university’s \$1.27 million rebranding effort.

“If we’re going to change the narrative of people feeling whatever they feel about higher education ... they need to get to know us better,” he said. “We don’t want to be an ivory tower. We’re not an ivory tower, and we need to be engaged in the community. That’s our goal.”

It’s a challenge for all colleges, but particularly for Mizzou, which is still rebuilding after a series of protests centered on issues of race on campus toppled Cartwright’s predecessor and another top administrator in 2015.

That era, which led to declining new-student enrollment, is coming up less frequently in conversations as the chancellor travels the state and the country.

“This perception that it’s elitists, snobby individuals who don’t understand the plight of everyday Americans — a guy like Chancellor Cartwright can break down those barriers,” state Sen. Caleb Rowden, a Republican from Columbia, told the Post-Dispatch.

Cartwright’s low-key demeanor is easy to relate to, according to Rowden. That could work well for him and for Mizzou when the Legislature begins work this week, the state senator said. The Legislature has, in recent years, been one of Mizzou’s biggest critics.

Cartwright wants to retire at Mizzou.

That could be another decade for the 52-year-old. He’s trying to be realistic about it.

“It is a long, long time,” he said. “I want to be chancellor as long as I feel like I am making a difference at this institution and I’m making it better.”

For Mizzou, that means moving up the ranks in the Association of American Universities, a prestigious group for research institutions, and “being a bigger leader in the state,” he said.

His road to being the top leader at a public, flagship university was nontraditional. So was his journey into academia. He laughs a little when he thinks about it now.

After taking classes at the community college in Iowa and working on the side, Cartwright had a pretty focused goal: get a job that made him more money than his second-shift hustle.

After getting his bachelor's degree from the University of Iowa, Cartwright had planned to get a master's in business until a few mentors guided him toward research and ultimately graduate school at the same institution.

"I was always pretty focused on getting a job, if I'm being honest," he said. "It's hard not to be when you grow up without a lot of resources."

Instead of heading into industry, Cartwright shifted to teaching and research. As an electrical engineering professor, Cartwright climbed the ranks for almost two decades at the 64-campus State University of New York. He ended his time there as the provost. Another engineer, University of Missouri System president Mun Choi, lured him to Mizzou in August.

The advice and opportunities he encountered along his path feed into what he hopes to bring to Columbia.

"I feel that I have this big debt that I have to pay to higher education," he said. "I would not be here without higher education. I'd like to be sure that I repay that in as many ways, to as many students, as possible. ... Anything I'm doing I have to make sure it's pushing toward that goal."

About Chancellor Alex Cartwright

Age • 52

Residence • The Chancellor's Residence on Mizzou's quadrangle.

Family • He and his wife, Melinda, have a son, Andrew, a junior at Cornell University, and a daughter, Alyssa, a graduate student at Stanford University.

Education • Bachelor's degree and doctorate in electrical and computer engineering from University of Iowa.

Nationality • Born in Bahamas; became U.S. citizen 1989

Hobbies • Cartwright used to play a lot of pool, winning a championship in the Bahamas and joining a team in Iowa. Pool, he says, is similar to being a college leader. “I don’t think of the next shot, I’m thinking nine shots — how do I get to the very end.”

What he's listening to • A big music fan, Cartwright is listening to the "Hamilton" soundtrack a lot. His music tastes vary, from '80s hits to Kendrick Lamar to Chris Stapleton.

Netflix finds • Cartwright is currently watching Stranger Things 2 in short increments while riding his exercise bike at home.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

State board approves college budget recommendation, tying dollars to performance

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS • Money is tight at Missouri’s public colleges, and it could get tighter.

The state’s Coordinating Board for Higher Education approved a plan Tuesday that will tie [10 percent of the state money all schools receive to their performance](#) in educating students.

The issue was unanimously approved alongside a recommendation to ask for [the same state funding](#) level Missouri's colleges received in the current budget year after a 9 percent cut.

Higher Education Commissioner Zora Mulligan called the situation "challenging" but said the accountability would show that schools are "good stewards" of state money at a time when the [public perception of higher education isn't always positive](#).

"We as a board are caught between advocacy and credibility, I believe," said Mike Thomson, a coordinating board member and former Republican state representative from Maryville, Mo. He said this move would "get (the governor and Legislature's) attention that we're trying to move in the right direction."

Outside of affordability, a common criticism is that colleges have bloated administrations. Last year's 9 percent cut in state funding led to hundreds of layoffs at colleges across Missouri, as well as elimination of some programs.

"If cutting higher education were going to turn the public's opinion around, it would already be turned around," Paul Wagner, executive director of the Council on Public Higher Education in Missouri, told the coordinating board Tuesday. His organization represents the state's 13 public universities.

Leaders from the University of Missouri system, Truman State University, the University of Central Missouri, Harris-Stowe State University and Missouri State University all spoke up. Most publicly supported the performance funding model, but all expressed concern about the budget request.

Gov. Eric Greitens' staff has indicated the governor supports tying education outcomes to core funding. For the past several years, Missouri has had performance-based funding, but only for new dollars.

The goal is to hold schools accountable on issues such as keeping tuition affordable, graduating students on time and producing students who land good jobs after they leave.

If a school [doesn't hit its measures](#), the department hopes that money lost through the formula will go to help that institution improve.



[MU on list of universities that don't track student suicides](#)

COLUMBIA (AP) — Close to half of the nation's largest public universities do not track suicide deaths among their students, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.

Through public records requests, the AP asked the 100 largest public universities in the U.S. for annual student suicide statistics over the past decade. Suicide rates for those that provided data ranged from 0.27 suicides per 100,000 students to 8 per 100,000, but because of the inconsistency in responses the AP is not publishing figures for colleges that provided data.

These schools either did not have any statistics available or said their suicide statistics were not consistently collected:

1. Arizona State University-Tempe
2. California Polytechnic State University-San Luis Obispo
3. California State Polytechnic University-Pomona
4. California State University-Fullerton
5. California State University-Fresno
6. California State University-Long Beach
7. California State University-Northridge
8. California State University-Sacramento
9. Central Michigan University
10. East Carolina University

11. Indiana University-Bloomington
12. Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis
13. Iowa State University
14. Metropolitan State University of Denver
15. Middle Tennessee State University
16. Oklahoma State University
17. Old Dominion University
18. Purdue University
19. Rutgers University-New Brunswick
20. San Diego State University
21. San Jose State University
22. Texas A&M University
23. Texas Tech University
24. University of Alabama
25. University of Texas-San Antonio
26. University of Arkansas
27. University of Central Florida
28. University of Cincinnati
29. University of Colorado-Boulder
30. University of Georgia
31. University of Kentucky
32. University of Maryland-College Park
33. University of Massachusetts-Amherst
- 34. University of Missouri-Columbia**
35. University of Nevada-Las Vegas
36. University of New Mexico
37. University of Oklahoma-Norman
38. University of Oregon
39. University of South Florida
40. University of Wisconsin-Madison
41. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
42. Weber State University

Similar stories have run nationwide.



Crews respond to leaking pipes in multiple Mizzou buildings

By ELIZABETH DUESENBERG

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Crews responded to leaking pipes on Tuesday in multiple University of Missouri buildings.

A spokesperson for the university said the leaks were caught early and they have not caused significant damage.

Leaking pipes were found in Lafferre Hall, Mizzou North and Memorial Union.

The spokesperson said as the weather warms up there may be additional line breaks.