Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens said Monday he will cut $146.4 million from the state budget because of lower-than-expected revenues and a poor state economy.

More than half the cuts will come from the Department of Higher Education, which oversees the state’s public colleges and universities.

“We must come together, tighten our belts, be smart and wise with our tax dollars, and work our way out of this hole by bringing more jobs with higher pay to the people of Missouri,” Greitens said in a statement.

Greitens said he would not take any money from K-12 education, although the restrictions announced Monday include an $8.6 million cut from the transportation budget of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The budget cuts also include reductions to adult literacy grants and teacher development.

But the biggest cuts by far were made to colleges and universities — almost $79 million in spending for public post-secondary schools was chopped. Included in the reductions is a $55.9 million cut to “core funding” of four-year schools, and $11.9 million in similar cuts for community colleges.

Additionally, Greitens reduced spending for capital projects at several state universities.

The budget cuts $3.3 million in spending for the University of Missouri-Kansas City’s Free Enterprise Center. UMKC officials could not be reached for comment Monday.
Missouri Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick of Shell Knob, a Republican and chairman of the House Budget Committee, said the higher education cuts mostly roll back additional spending approved by the last legislature, when the state thought it had more money.

“They may call it a cut, and it is a reduction to what was appropriated,” he said. “It’s not ideal for them, but he had to make decisions, and the fact that we’re already halfway through the fiscal year doesn’t make those decisions any easier.”

In an emailed statement, University of Missouri System interim President Michael Middleton said the universities understand the budget challenge.

“We are committed to working closely with our new governor and General Assembly in making the case for the University of Missouri System’s enormous positive impact on all of Missouri’s citizens and economy,” the statement said.

The Greitens reductions include a $3 million cut in the state’s tourism advertising budget, and $1 million in election costs. The budget cuts $500,000 from the state’s contribution to Amtrak. It reduced spending by $200,000 for Area Agencies on Aging, and $130,513 from obesity intervention.

The state will also hold on to more than $1 million in tax revenue from the athletes and entertainers tax.

Greitens, who took office a week ago, revealed his plan to cut the budget in a video posted to Twitter. A statement from his office said Greitens “will detail his plans to reduce government waste and grow the economy” in his State of the State address Tuesday night.

However, he’s breaking from tradition and won’t outline his budget proposal for next fiscal year in the speech. The Missouri House budget leader has said he expects a budget from Greitens in early February.

In his statement, Greitens said he did not cut programs “essential to public safety,” and said there would be no reductions to pensions and health care obligations.

“The restrictions were targeted, to the extent possible, at rolling back earmarks, new spending items, programs with no established track record of success, and services that are duplicated elsewhere in government,” the governor’s office said in the statement.

The reductions, though, were not a great surprise. Lawmakers have said for weeks the budget would have to be reduced because anticipated revenues were not materializing.
The governor said he and the legislature will have to cut spending by $700 million over the next 18 months to balance the state’s books.

The cuts are on top of about $200 million in spending restrictions made by Greitens’ predecessor, Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon.

Higher education takes bulk of cuts as Greitens withholds $146 million from state budget

Gov. Eric Greitens cut $83.8 million from college and university budgets Monday, wiping out state funding increases, cutting into core funding and eliminating budget lines for special projects.

The cuts will add to the budget woes at the University of Missouri, where lawmakers cut $3.8 million from system administration in the current budget and a precipitous drop in freshman enrollment forced a 5 percent cut to general fund budgets on the Columbia campus.

Instead of receiving a $9 million increase in state aid to help mitigate a $36.3 million decline in tuition revenue, cuts Greitens imposed Monday will reduce the campus budget by an additional $13.7 million. Overall, the university will bear $31.4 million of $146.4 million in budget restrictions announced by Greitens.

In a video news release, Greitens said lagging state revenue will force $700 million in budget cuts over the coming 18 months, with $146.4 million in immediate restrictions for the year ending June 30.

“The budget we’ve inherited from the previous administration is not balanced,” Greitens said.

In March, interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley announced a 5 percent cut to general fund spending and a campus hiring freeze. He also told administrators to plan for additional cuts of up to 2 percent for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 fiscal years.
MU laid off 37 employees and cut an unknown number of part-time adjunct and full-time nontenured faculty as a result of Foley’s directive. The campus budget of about $1.2 billion used reserve funds and the anticipated new state aid to reduce the impact of lower tuition revenue.

Christian Basi, campus spokesman, referred reporters to the system administration for comment on Greitens’ decision.

A prepared statement from UM System spokesman John Fougere did not indicate where the university would cut spending to cover the shortfall.

“We certainly understand that our state leaders have to make difficult decisions in challenging budgetary times,” the statement read. “We are committed to working closely with our new Governor and General Assembly in making the case for the University of Missouri System’s enormous positive impact on all of Missouri’s citizens and economy.”

Last week, lawmakers and the new Republican administration announced revenue estimates for the remainder of the fiscal year and fiscal 2018 that showed tax receipts were well behind estimates made when the current budget was written. In his release, Greitens blamed “a bad business climate and costly Obamacare” for forcing the cuts.

The cuts to higher education mean four-year campuses and two-year community colleges will not receive one of the 12 equal payments from the state each fiscal year, acting state Budget Director Dan Haug said. The cut to operating funds is about $67.7 million of the total taken from higher education.

Cuts to operating funds at the other campuses will range from $3.9 million at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla to $5.7 million at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Extension services will lose $2 million and multi-campus programs will see state aid cut by $560,000.

Other higher education cuts include:

- $4 million for expanding MU medical school residency programs in Springfield.
- $2 million to expand collaborative dental and pharmacy programs in Joplin between UMKC and Missouri Southern State University.
- $1.6 million for engineering education programs offered by Missouri S&T in Clay County and in collaboration with Missouri State University.

Greitens did not cut funding for public school classrooms, but withheld $8.6 million from school transportation funding. Other large cuts include $4.4 million for the Missouri Technology Investment fund, $3 million from tourism advertising and $3.8 million for biodiesel production incentives. The new spending restrictions are in addition to $200 million in withholdings Gov. Jay Nixon imposed before his term expired Jan. 9.

State colleges and universities are determining what they will do in response to the cuts, said Paul Wagner, executive director of the Council on Public Higher Education.
“We had a pretty good idea that something like this was going to be happening,” Wagner said. “We will be discussing at our next meeting what steps we will need to take to protect the classrooms and do the best thing we can for students.”

The cuts could mean a mid-year tuition increase, he said. Whether that will be necessary will become clear when Greitens makes his formal budget proposal in February, Wagner said.

“Once we see the governor’s budget for 2018 we will have a fuller sense of what we are doing for a two-year period and that will inform our decisions as well,” he said.

Higher education is always a target when governors look for places to cut, Wagner said.

“Decision makers simply don’t have a lot of options when it comes to restricting state spending in the middle of the year,” he said. “Higher education presents a more flexible option, and that is what governors have tended to choose.”

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Gov. Greitens cuts $146 million from Missouri budget, with higher education taking brunt

By Kurt Erickson St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1 hr ago

NO MU MENTION

JEFFERSON CITY • Gov. Eric Greitens cut $146 million from the state budget Monday in response to a lingering slowdown in state revenue.

Missouri’s new chief executive took aim at spending on state universities and transportation programs as part of his budget-cutting maneuver. His predecessor, former Gov. Jay Nixon, had already pared more than $200 million from the state’s $27 billion spending blueprint before leaving office last week.
The move came the day before Greitens delivers his first State of the State speech since being elected as a political newcomer in November.

Greitens, a Republican who was sworn into office on Jan. 9, is expected to outline his policy goals for the upcoming legislative session in the 7:30 p.m. speech on Tuesday.

But he is departing from tradition and not planning to outline an overall spending plan for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Those details, including a plan to close an estimated $456 million gap in revenue, likely will come in early February.

Democrats say the lack of an overall budget plan is troubling.

“It’s not as if the governor and his staff have not been aware of these issues for two months,” said Assistant House Minority Leader Gina Mitten, D-Richmond Heights. “One would think the governor would be focusing on being fiscally responsible.”

As for Monday’s action on the current year budget, aides said Greitens had been reviewing the spending plan since before Thanksgiving.

Higher education bore the lion’s share of the burden, with funding cuts topping $82 million. Harris-Stowe State University lost $101,400 for graduate programs. A cybersecurity training program at Southeast Missouri State University lost $101,400.

“No single penny will be taken out of K-12 classrooms,” Greitens said in a social media video accompanying the announcement.

But Greitens did cut $14 million on programs affecting schools, including $8.6 million for busing and $194,000 for teacher training and development programs.

“You elected me because I’ll always tell it like it is, and more hard choices lie ahead. But as Missourians, I believe that we must come together, tighten our belts, be smart and wise with our tax dollars, and work our way out of this hole by bringing more jobs with higher pay to the people of Missouri,” Greitens said.
Few details

The restrictions were targeted at rolling back earmarks, new spending items, programs with no established track record of success, and services that are duplicated elsewhere in government, a news release noted.

Additional details were not immediately available on the reductions. Greitens announced his decision by social media and a news release. His aides did not immediately return messages seeking clarification on some of the cuts.

The cuts address projections showing the state on track to end the fiscal year $39 million in the red, which would violate the state Constitution’s balanced budget provision.

Although individual income tax collections have been steady in the current fiscal year, corporate income taxes have lagged behind estimates. The decrease doesn't necessarily signal a downturn in business activity, but reflects a 2011 law that jump started a phase-out of the corporate franchise tax.

For calendar year 2016, revenue from corporate income taxes declined by 26.5 percent from 2015, a $64 million decrease in tax revenue.

Greitens said it was the first step in what could be $700 million in cuts to the state’s $27 billion spending plan. He did not address the possibility of seeking a tax increase to close the gap, but he and GOP lawmakers have consistently dismissed that as a possibility in the past.

Tuesday’s speech will be streamed live on the governor’s website — governor.mo.gov — as well as on the House and Senate websites.

Work ahead

Greitens, a political newcomer, laid out the tenets of his approach to governing in his Jan. 9 inaugural speech. The former Navy SEAL wants to make individuals less reliant on government to solve their problems.
Greitens is expected to focus his efforts on many of the issues he made promises about during his run for office against Democratic Attorney General Chris Koster.

Key among those were making Missouri a so-called “right-to-work” state, in which workers could not be forced to pay union dues.

He also said he wants to clean up the culture of Jefferson City, by banning gifts from lobbyists to lawmakers and imposing term limits on all statewide offices.

Greitens also has signaled support for reforming the state’s legal system to make it harder for plaintiffs to win large awards. The Maryland Heights native, 42, also is pushing plans to reduce regulations on businesses.

Lawmakers have already put many of his pet projects in the legislative pipeline, hoping to overcome years of rejection from Nixon, a Democrat who blocked high-profile GOP initiatives with his veto pen.

As an example of work already underway by lawmakers, a House committee will discuss proposals Wednesday that would create a Blue Alert System, which would assist in the identification and location of any person suspected of killing or serious wounding a law enforcement officer.

Sen. Andrew Koenig, R-Manchester, agreed that the delay by Greitens in unveiling an overall budget plan was unfortunate. But he said the Republican majority will work well with the new governor.

Koenig, a former member of the House who won a seat in the Senate in November, said he’s hopeful the governor focuses on reducing what he calls “corporate welfare.” Koenig said he was encouraged when Greitens announced he opposed tax credits for a proposed new soccer stadium in downtown St. Louis.
Koenig is less enthusiastic about a Greitens initiative that would lengthen the waiting period for lawmakers to become lobbyists. The Legislature last year imposed a six-month cooling-off period. Greitens wants the waiting time to match the number of years a lawmaker has served in the House or Senate.

“We already fixed that problem,” Koenig said, suggesting that Greitens wait for a year to see how the current ban works before pushing for his own proposal.

**MISSOURIAN**

Greitens cuts nearly $150 million from budget, largest cuts from higher education

DYLAN JACKSON, 13 hrs ago

**NO MU MENTION**

JEFFERSON CITY — Newly elected Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens announced $146 million in cuts Monday, with the largest cuts coming from higher education.

"As we're looking at the current budget, we're going to have to cut over $700 million over the course of the next 18 months," Greitens said in a video posted to his Twitter account.

The cuts are the first attempt by his administration to address the estimated $456 million budget gap for fiscal 2017, adding to the $200 million in holds former Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon made shortly before leaving office. The fiscal year ends June 30.
Higher education makes up more than half of the total cuts, coming in at over $80 million, including $56 million in core funding for public universities and $12 million for community colleges. Transportation and biodiesel incentives also took large hits.

Greitens made clear that K-12 schools were not subject to cuts.

"Not a single penny would come out of our K-12 classrooms," Greitens said — though there are several cuts that impact schools, such as a $100,000 cut to teacher development.

Greitens’ office could not be reached to provide further details Monday.

The announcement comes ahead of Greitens' State of the State speech Tuesday, where he is planning to announce legislative goals for the year. But a specific budget plan won't likely be announced until early February.

Greitens and legislators alike don't necessarily know where the rest of the needed cuts will come from, but Greitens has made it clear that he would not raise taxes.

House Minority Leader Gail McCann Beatty criticized Greitens for focusing much of the cuts on education.

“Weakening public education won’t grow Missouri’s economy or create jobs,” said McCann Beatty, D-Kansas City, in a news release.

Currently, Missouri's revenues are estimated to be growing at 3 percent, short of the 4.1 percent Nixon's administration forecasted when drafting the fiscal 2017 budget, according to previous Associated Press reports. Compounding the low revenues is an income tax cut passed in 2014 which is slated to cost the state $620 million over five years, beginning on July 1.

"You elected me because I’ll always tell it like it is, and more hard choices lie ahead," Greitens said in the video. "But as Missourians, I believe that we must come together, tighten our belts, be smart and wise with our tax dollars, and work our way out of this hole by creating a thriving and prosperous economy again."
Gov. Greitens cuts $146 million; colleges take hit

NO MENTION

JEFFERSON CITY (AP) - Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens is cutting $146 million of spending from the budget, including tens of millions of dollars to public colleges and universities.

The Republican governor said the cuts announced Monday are necessary to keep the budget in balance because of lower than expected tax revenues and rising costs in certain programs such as Medicaid.

The cuts come just one week after Greitens took office and a day before he is to deliver his first State of the State address. They come on top of about $200 million of spending restrictions made by former Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon.

The latest cuts include $56 million from the core budgets of public universities, nearly $12 million from community colleges and almost $9 million in busing aid for public K-12 school districts.
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Lawmaker proposes eliminating tenure for public university professors

A state lawmaker who last year proposed yanking scholarships from athletes engaging in game boycotts has a new idea — eliminating academic tenure for new faculty at public universities.

A bill filed by state Rep. Rick Brattin, R-Harrisonville, would end job protections created to protect faculty from politicians or donors who dislike their academic work or public activities. Brattin said Thursday that he wants professors to focus on teaching and engage in research that promises tangible benefits for the state.

“I think we need to focus on the fact that our professors are hired to educate our students to achieve success, and I don’t think that includes having these sorts of protections so they can go off on the deep end on certain issues,” Brattin said.

In December 2015, Brattin proposed, then quickly withdrew, a bill revoking the scholarships of athletes after members of the University of Missouri Tigers football team announced a boycott of athletic activities in support of campus protests by Concerned Student 1950.

The bill raised free speech and NCAA compliance issues and was widely criticized before Brattin backed down.

Brattin also sponsored the 2015 law designed to protect free speech on campus by designating all outdoor areas as public forums.

Brattin’s new bill also would require public colleges and universities to add economic information about degree programs to course catalogs. The required data would include the estimated cost of obtaining the degree, jobs that the degree prepares students to perform and employment data such as income and the percent of graduates working in a field related to the degree.

Too many students are graduating with degrees that do not have “real world applicability,” Brattin said. “The intent is to try and show factual evidence that this degree is tied to this job market.”

Academic tenure was developed in the early 20th century to protect faculty from pressures by donors and politicians who targeted professors for unpopular views or research.
At the University of Missouri, a newly hired associate professor has as long as six years to qualify with a combination of research, teaching skills and public service. In the 2015-16 academic year, the Columbia campus had 863 tenured faculty and 259 tenure-track faculty out of 1,973 full-time faculty. The portion of faculty with tenure has declined from 69.5 percent in 2006 to 56.8 percent in 2015.

The UM System, through spokesman John Fougere, declined to comment on Brattin’s bill.

Eliminating tenure in Missouri would make faculty recruitment “significantly more difficult” and damage academic freedom, said Ben Trachtenberg, the law professor who chairs the MU Faculty Council.

A tenured faculty member, with job security, can shed light on problems or engage in unpopular research without fear, Trachtenberg said.

“Tenure is one of the ways we help run a very strong university system here that benefits Missourians tremendously,” Trachtenberg said. “It is possible we are not communicating how much good we are doing and how tenure is an important part in achieving those successes.”

Brattin first proposed the requirements for economic data in 2015, adding the tenure prohibition when he filed the bill in December.

The data he is seeking might not be the best measures of the value of a degree, but universities should be prepared to discuss what information should be provided, Trachtenberg said.

“Behind these kinds of discussions is a desire of people around the state to know what the university is up to and how Missourians get value for their money, and that is a discussion the university should be happy to have,” he said.
NO MENTION

College Scorecard Screwup
Final Friday release by the Obama administration’s Education Department corrects a substantial error in loan repayment rates on consumer web tool.
By Paul Fain

January 16, 2017

The U.S. Department of Education has fixed a mistake in the data for its College Scorecard that substantially inflated loan repayment rates for most colleges. On the last Friday afternoon of the Obama administration, the department issued a statement describing the "coding error" that led to the undercounting of borrowers who failed to pay down any of their undergraduate student loan balance.

The erroneous repayment rates appeared in the College Scorecard -- a consumer tool the feds released in 2015 in lieu of a failed effort to create a college ratings system -- and in a data attachment to the Financial Aid Shopping sheet.

"After discovering the coding error, the department worked to get accurate, refreshed data out as soon as possible, not waiting until the next annual Scorecard update to do so," wrote Lynn Mahaffie, a veteran department official. "To ensure we’d gotten it right, we added a number of quality assurance activities
and reran some of the tests we’d done before, testing the applied software logic and revised rates, and benchmarking the rates against other available data.”

Observers gave the department credit for fixing the mistake before the Trump administration takes over, but some said the embarrassing flub shows the difficulty of what the White House has tried to do with accountability through data. The department defended its Scorecard, saying the web tool provides more and better data for students and families than was previously available.

The coding error does not affect any other department-calculated loan repayment rates and should not have an impact on other calculations on the Scorecard. Higher education advocacy groups and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle have called for the feds to rely more heavily on loan repayment rates than on default rates as a higher education accountability metric. They argue that colleges should be judged on whether students they educate are able to make progress paying down their debt, rather than just tracking percentages of borrowers who default.

The Scorecard's repayment rates, however, offered a distorted picture before the newly made fix. Several experts who crunched the numbers found a roughly 20 percentage point decline in the overall national rate.

"It turns out that the changes in loan repayment rates are very large," Robert Kelchen, an assistant professor of higher education at Seton Hall University, wrote on his blog. "Three-year repayment rates fell from 61 percent to 41 percent; five-year repayment rates fell from 61 percent to 47 percent; and seven-year repayment rates fell from 66 percent to 57 percent. These changes were quite similar across sectors."

Also crunching the numbers and finding similarly large corrections were Kim Dancy, a policy analyst with the education policy program at New America, and Ben Barrett, a program associate there.
"The new data reveal that the average institution saw less than half of their former students managing to pay even a dollar toward their principal loan balance three years after leaving school," they wrote in a blog post. "Even more borrowers are not making progress on their loans than previously thought."

The department's error had less of an impact on repayment rates across longer time horizons, Dancy and Barrett said, meaning the corrected rate dropped less for borrowers who entered repayment seven years ago than for those who entered three years ago.

Besides older cohorts of borrowers having more years in the work force to make payments, they wrote that perhaps increasingly popular income-driven repayment plans are allowing newer cohorts to make lower payments on their student debt that don't drive down the principal of loans.

The department said the coding mistake did not substantially affect how colleges stack up against one another on repayment rates.

More than 90 percent of institutions on the Scorecard did not move away from their previous repayment-rate standing as being either above or below average, or roughly at the average mark, according to the department.

As Kelchen noted in his blog entry, the department also last week announced that it was expanding publicly available student aid data in an effort to increase transparency. The new access should help researchers spot discrepancies in federal data sets, the department said.

In the meantime, Kelchen said the coding fix makes a big difference in the picture the Scorecard paints about the number of borrowers who are making at least some progress repaying their federal loans.
"This change is likely to get a lot of discussion in coming days," he said, "particularly as the new Congress and the incoming Trump administration get ready to consider potential changes to the federal student loan system."

Area high school students are seeking a deeper social justice conscience

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
mdwilliams@kcstar.com

Truman High School debater Lorinda Ruz gets passionate talking about what she’s learned regarding civil rights and social justice from school.

“There’s no way,” Ruz said, “that anyone can be in debate and not be aware of all the current events.”

Conversations — one after another — about race and gender relations, poverty, living wage and climate change, rolled rapidly off the 16-year-old junior’s tongue with ease.

“You have to have a good repertoire about social issues and human rights to write arguments,” Ruz said.

Besides, in today’s digital world where social media puts social injustices — in full-blown action — in everyone’s face, many teens find themselves compelled to get grounded on the issues that Martin Luther King Jr. stood for, issues that will reverberate around the nation Monday in celebration of King.

“I believe it’s important and good to know about civil rights, the movement and civil disobedience so we know what we should fight for and how we can go about doing it,” said Shaniyah Higgins-Graves, a 17-year-old senior at Central Academy of Excellence in Kansas City.
Higgins-Graves, also a debater, said she doesn’t think school teaches kids enough on the subjects. She gained much of her knowledge while protesting for a living wage with the community activist group Stand Up KC after working at a McDonald’s restaurant near 63rd Street and Troost Avenue.

Educators at Central see the value in helping their students gain more knowledge about not only civil rights history and the racial injustices that plagued communities 60 years ago, but about “how all that impacts them today,” said Lee Allen, vice principal.

“We are trying to teach students how to stand up and speak for themselves and their community,” he said. “We are working hard and moving in that direction, but I’m not sure all that many students know how to effectively engage in that yet.”

At Truman High in Independence, where 30 percent of students belong to a minority group, Ruz said being in advanced classes makes it easier to bare your social soul. Teachers give students a lot more room to hash out sensitive issues in open discussions during class time, she said.

Another Truman debater, 17-year-old Patricia Davila, chimed in. “The first thing we talked about in Contemporary Issues (class) was civil rights from the ’60s to present.”

Truman students said that in every class except math, issues about social justice and the fair treatment of others come up. Students talk, and teachers mediate those discussions.

Some of those feelings played out for Ruz earlier this school year after the state of Missouri made it mandatory for students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance every morning before the start of class.

Ruz is among the students who took issue with the mandate. In class and on social media, she said, students expressed themselves. Some were for the idea, others opposed it. Some decided they would follow the lead of NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick, who in peaceful protest refused to stand during the national anthem.

“I didn’t like the idea of being made to say it, but I decided I would stand and say the pledge,” Ruz said. “But I couldn’t say the last line, ‘liberty and justice for all.’ It bothered me to have to say that when I know those words are not true.”

Silence, she said, was her own form of civil disobedience.

Civil disobedience takes a different form for two teachers at Shawnee Mission East.

David Muhammad, who is black and Muslim, and Samantha Feinberg, who is white and Jewish, for the past three years have taken a group of inquisitive students from the predominantly
white, mostly affluent high school on a bus tour into Kansas City’s predominantly black neighborhoods.

Feinberg said the tour was their way of bucking the commonly accepted thought that segregation in housing and neighborhoods came by choice, and “that’s just the way it is.” She said that she and Muhammad wanted to bust that thought with their students by telling them and showing them how segregation was engineered in Kansas City.

The Troost Avenue Bus Tour leaves Prairie Village, heading east and crossing what historically has been considered the racial divide in the Kansas City area.

The tour is preceded by a lot of study and teacher/student discussion about engineered segregation, systemic oppression and the post-World War II block-busting efforts that kept black citizens from moving into certain Kansas City neighborhoods.

“We ask students to examine the structure that helped create segregation, the structure that has allowed it to proliferate and the structure that exists every day to reinforce it,” Feinberg said.

On the tour, set for Monday, Shawnee Mission East partners with Wyandotte High School, a far more diverse school in Kansas City, Kan.

This will make the second year that Lauren Cole, a 17-year old Shawnee Mission East senior, has gone on the bus tour. Several years ago, Cole helped form the Diversity Committee Union to talk through issues about race relations in their school and surrounding community.

Cole, whose Jewish grandparents came to the United States from Nazi Germany in 1938, said she has always been curious about social justice issues. “The tour gave me a opportunity to step into a social justice program and to learn about segregation right here,” she said.

Diego Galicia, a Shawnee Mission East senior, lived on Kansas City’s East Side while in elementary school. But he didn’t recognize the existence of a racial and economic divide in the city until he moved across the state line and came to Shawnee Mission East. “There is almost no diversity in this school,” he said.

And Lydia Wickey, 17, who was born in Guatemala and adopted by a white family, said until she went on the bus tour and joined Shawnee Mission East’s diversity club, “I never even thought of myself as a minority.”

**But now after learning a bit more about the issues, Wickey is quick to speak up when discussions touch on Black Lives Matter, the 2015 race-related protests at the University of Missouri or politicians talking about religious groups.**
“I don’t want to be a part of the background anymore,” she said. “I don’t want to ignore the injustices anymore.”

It’s how a lot of young people feel, important for so many of us. It’s said Cole. “This is so about our future. It’s like to stay woke.”

MU officials urge students to check forecast before returning

Watch the KMIZ story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=ba758662-1893-4b80-9a09-d19ec6b3b6ca

COLUMBIA - University of Missouri officials continue to monitor the forecast and urge students to check the weather in preparation for the beginning for the semester on Tuesday.

“Depending on the route they are taking, ice could still be a significant factor on Monday,” said Gary Ward, vice chancellor for operations. “Some roads might be fine while others could be hazardous. Students and parents should check the road conditions along their travel routes before making a decision to come to campus.”

Classes are scheduled to begin Tuesday. Students who have difficulty returning campus will need to contact their professor to find out what they missed, according to a news release.