MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

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Columbia campus to take $20 million hit from governor’s cuts, MU leader says

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Cuts Gov. Eric Greitens made to education will cost the University of Missouri in Columbia $20 million, interim chancellor Hank Foley said Wednesday.

Foley discussed the cuts in a note to MU faculty and staff.

He said the lost dollars include money intended for the School of Medicine class expansion and a Springfield Clinical Campus project.

“Simply put, because of these cuts, we will have about $20 million less to spend this year than we budgeted for last summer,” Foley said.

MU is not alone — Missouri universities must absorb a $55.9 million cut, while community colleges will see $11.9 million chopped from their core funding.

For the University of Missouri-Kansas City, that will mean a $5.8 million reduction in its core operating budget.

Colleges have said it’s too early to determine whether the cuts will cost jobs or lead to tuition increases around the state.

Foley said MU leaders are working on this financial challenge “and discussing ways to best fill this gap before the end of the fiscal year.”
University of Missouri leaders working on response to state budget cuts

University of Missouri administrators are considering ways to close the budget hole created by new state withholdings but haven’t reached any decisions yet, interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley wrote in an email distributed Wednesday to faculty and staff.

MU lost almost $20 million in state support Monday when Gov. Eric Greitens announced he was withholding $146.4 million in general revenue spending, including $83.8 million from college and university budgets. The MU cut includes $13.7 million from operating funds, $4 million to expand medical residency programs in Springfield and $2 million for extension programs.

“I am writing to let you know that the senior leaders of the campus are working on this challenge and discussing ways to best fill this gap before the end of the fiscal year,” Foley wrote. “As soon as we have a plan, we will share it broadly and transparently.”

Greitens’ actions will reduce state funding for the UM System administration by $789,000 on top of a $3.8 million cut imposed by lawmakers. Interim President Mike Middleton has not decided how to spread out the system cuts, spokesman John Fougere wrote in an email Wednesday.

Greitens’ withholding will also take $3.9 million from Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, $4.8 million from the University of Missouri-St. Louis and $5.7 million from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Foley was not immediately available for comment on his email. To close a projected $36.3 million shortfall in tuition revenue for the current year, in March Foley ordered a 5 percent cut in general fund budgets for all campus divisions told them and to expect further cuts in the next two years. That cut, plus small tuition increases for out-of-state and professional students, was designed to cover all but $10 million of the deficit, with the remainder made up from campus reserves.

The campus imposed a hiring freeze, MU laid off 37 employees and cut an unknown number of part-time adjunct and full-time non-tenured faculty as a result of Foley’s directive.

Greitens’ action Monday took away a $9 million boost in state aid and means MU will receive less in state support than it did during the 2015-16 school year. Ongoing state revenue shortfalls make increases for the coming fiscal year unlikely.
University officials are closely monitoring indicators for enrollment next year, Foley wrote. This year’s freshman class was more than 20 percent smaller than the incoming class for 2015 and without a strong recovery, overall enrollment at MU is expected to decline for at least two or three years.

About 58 percent of the core operating budget comes from tuition payments, Foley wrote in the email.

“While finances are a challenge, we are hardly alone,” he wrote. “Budget cuts are happening to public higher education institutions across the country. But with challenge comes opportunity, and we are committed to coming together to define that which is essential to our mission.”

Foley promised to keep faculty and staff informed on plans for absorbing the revenue loss.

“I know that times of uncertainty can be a cause for anxiety,” he wrote.

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Sweet potatoes are undergoing a modern renaissance in this country.

While they have always made special appearances on many American tables around the holidays, year-round demand for the root vegetables has grown. In 2015, farmers produced more sweet potatoes than in any year since World War II.

**War Effort**

"A lot of things were hard to get during World War II, and potatoes were easier to raise than some of the other vegetables," my grandmother Joyce Heise tells me.
She grew up outside of Philadelphia. Her grandfather farmed potatoes, and their orange sister tubers, sweet potatoes. "And then some things were rationed so you had to do with what the best you could," she says.

Regular potatoes and sweet potatoes were a staple in American victory gardens and on dining tables. Why? They were cheap and really easy to grow. Back then, we didn't have sweets like we do now. So sweet potatoes satisfied that sweet tooth at a discount for Americans strapped for sugar and cash.

By the end of the war, U.S. farmers were growing more than 3 billion pounds of sweet potatoes. But when soldiers returned home, people went back to work and the economy hummed.

"It became cheaper to buy russet potatoes than, you know, to grow your own sweet potatoes," April McGreger says. She grew up on a sweet potato farm in Mississippi and wrote about the history of the root vegetable in her book *Sweet Potatoes*.

"At around the same time, we really had this sort of movement away from small farming families in the U.S. into working people in more industrialized jobs," she says. "That means people purchasing more of their food instead of growing it."

Industrialization of farming and the rise of processed foods left sweet potatoes in the dust. U.S. production dropped by a billion pounds within two years after the war and it bottomed out in 1980, with less than 1 billion pounds total, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**Fad diets and trendy restaurants**

Fast-forward to the 2000s when the sweet potato began its ascension. One big reason: the fad diet. For anyone on the South Beach Diet, Paleo diet or Atkins diet, the hearty sweet potato was a godsend. Even TV personalities like Dr. Oz highlighted the magic of the vegetable.

"All these diets that have tons and tons of followers are really touting sweet potatoes as being this 'super food,'" McGreger says.

As Americans were encouraged to cut sugar intake and eat more fiber and antioxidants, the sweet potato – chock full of vitamins — began to show up on plates again. With a long growing tradition and a climate suitable for cultivation, sweet potatoes are local to just about every farmer in the U.S. That makes them ripe for diners that care about eating local. Schools started serving them for breakfast and lunch. Top chefs incorporated them as a quintessential Southern food.

"Sweet potatoes are the darling of this local, farm-to-table eating movement," McGreger says. "They're a local ingredient that can be accessed 12 months out of the year."

**Decline Of Tobacco, Global Demand**

In 2000, Americans ate about 4 pounds of sweet potatoes per person. Today, it's nearly double that, at 7.5 pounds per person.
McGreger says farmers noticed – especially tobacco farmers.

"Right now, the largest producer of sweet potatoes is North Carolina," she says. "Those are tobacco farmers that have switched to sweet potatoes because it's a relatively good cash crop to replace tobacco."

Outside the country, global demand increased as well.

"In the last 10 years there has been a tremendous increase percentage wise of sweet potato exports," says David Trinklein, an associate professor of plant sciences at the University of Missouri. "A lot of them going to Europe."

Trinklein says the majority is going to Northern Europe and Great Britain where it's too cool to grow sweet potatoes. Today, U.S. sweet potato farmers export about 11 percent of the total supply.

Hungry Europeans, hungry Americans, health-conscious eaters, local foodies. Add up all of these factors, and U.S. farmers produced 3.1 billion pounds of sweet potatoes in 2015. And it may not stop there.

"I think if they can develop new ways to market it, to eat it," Trinklein says, "there very well could be an increase."

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**St. Louis senator calls for sanctions against Russia for election interference**

By Austin Huguelet St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 16 hrs ago

JEFFERSON CITY • Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, D-St.Louis, has spent much of her time at the capitol targeting priorities like improving education in urban schools, reducing racial bias in policing and seeking redress for North St. Louis County residents living near nuclear waste.

But on Wednesday, she had Russia in her sights.
With even President-elect Donald Trump acknowledging last week that Russia hacked the Democratic National Committee during the run-up to last year's election, Chapelle-Nadal wants state and local governments to pull taxpayer money out of there.

Her bill would prohibit state and local governments from investing in Russian companies or contracting with companies who do business there. It would also require divestment of current holdings and cancellation of existing contracts.

"Missouri taxpayers should not be forced to send their hard-earned dollars to a country that undermines and attacks America," she said. "You don't invest in someone who hacks your elections and your democracy."

According to the Joint Committee on Public Retirement, at least $17.6 million in state money is currently tied up in Russian companies between the state employee pension fund and the University of Missouri System's retirement fund, at least $17.6 million in state money is currently tied up in Russian companies.

The state treasurer's office, MOSERS and the University of Missouri System were not immediately available for comment Wednesday.

President Barack Obama has already issued federal sanctions against Russia for its efforts to influence the 2016 election, but Chappelle-Nadal is far from the first Missouri politician to wade into foreign policy in recent years.

State Treasurer Eric Schmitt filed a bill last session as a senator to ban investment in countries the State Department says sponsor terrorism. The bill, a state-level response to Washington rancor about the Iran nuclear deal, died in the Senate.
Missouri Democrat wants state to cut financial ties to Russia over hacking scandal

JEFFERSON CITY - With President-elect Donald Trump conceding last week that Russian operatives carried out cyber attacks in the U.S. during the presidential election, a Democratic state senator thinks it’s time for the state to cut all investments with the Russia.

Missouri Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, a University City Democrat, filed a bill Wednesday that would prohibit state and local government agencies from contracting with or investing in individuals, partnerships, corporations or other organizations doing business with Russia.

She pointed to data from the Joint Committee of Public Employee Retirement to show the state employee retirement system has about $15 million invested in Russia. Another $2.7 million is invested in Russian stock holdings by the University of Missouri retirement system.

“Missouri taxpayers should not be forced to send their hard-earned dollars to a country that undermines and attacks America,” Chappelle-Nadal said.

State Treasurer Eric Schmitt pledged during the campaign last year to block any state investment dollars from going to companies that conduct business with countries designated as “state sponsors of terrorism” by the U.S. Department of State.

Chappelle-Nadal’s legislation would apply only to public investments and would not have any impact on private businesses.

Reached for comment on Chappelle-Nadal’s legislation, Schmitt’s spokesman said the treasurer is “focused on strictly enforcing our state’s long-standing terror-free investment policy which is guided by the Department of State’s list of designated state sponsors of terrorism.”
Petition aims to cancel show with white tigers

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=f0cbb137-6123-4c4e-82d8-3077ec643941

COLUMBIA - A Columbia man started a petition against a magic show featuring rare, white tigers at the University of Missouri's Jesse Hall. Alfredo Martin, the man behind the petition, is concerned the tigers are forced to travel on a bus, perform unnatural acts and interact with humans. He says this is not what they are made to do.

He also raised concern about how the magician, Jay Owenhouse, treats his tigers.

"The Humane Society even said his treatment of the tigers is 'substandard.' This just isn't what tigers are meant to do," he said.

His petition is directed at the Director of the University Concert Series at MU.

According to MU spokesman Christian Basi, Jesse Hall does not discriminate based on subject matter, content or practice, against any act wanting to rent the auditorium.

"Regardless, the magician and Jesse Hall are profiting from the show and the unnatural treatment of those majestic creatures. It's so wrong and it is abuse," said Martin.

Basi said if petitioners wanted to stop the event, they would need to contact the magician himself. The university will not cancel events based on what takes place in an act.