Higher education hit with biggest cuts under Greitens' proposed budget

JEFFERSON CITY — The budget for fiscal year 2018 proposed by Gov. Eric Greitens on Thursday cuts higher education by about $159 million.

The University of Missouri System's state funding would be cut by about $40 million in Greitens' budget, compared to the amount appropriated last year.

Dan Haug, the state's acting budget director, said higher education takes the single biggest financial hit in the proposed budget.

MU officials said that they are creating three committees to find ways to generate additional revenue, looking at allocation of resources, capital finance, and tuition and fees.

Greitens, speaking at a press conference in Nixa, Missouri, said there will be "less money for professors, colleges and universities than they expected" and said higher education institutions "can tighten their belts" and work on greater efficiency.

Of the $159 million cut in higher education funding, $116 million comes from state general revenue. The remainder of the cuts come from funding for projects such as cooperative programs between campuses.

Dan Haug, acting budget director, said the budget cuts represent a total of about 10 percent from this year's appropriation. That equates to a continuation of the cuts in higher education made by Greitens and former Gov. Jay Nixon during the past year, plus a cut of about an additional 2 percent. Haug said that all institutions are treated the same in the budget, so all face the same percentage cut.
Greitens, speaking from a public school in Nixa, also cut the elementary and secondary education budget by $23 million in general state funds. However, the overall budget estimate for elementary and secondary education rose by $36 million because the governor's budget predicted an increase in federal funds.

State Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, R-Jackson, said the proposed cuts caught her by surprise.

"I knew it was going to be high, but that's unreasonable," said Lichtenegger, chairwoman of the House Committee on Higher Education. "There is not a university or community college in the state of Missouri that is a public institution that has not tightened their belts to the fullest extent already."

Lichtenegger said that to combat such cuts, universities and community colleges across the state will be forced to raise tuition. The end result of the cuts will make it harder for Missourians to attend colleges and universities, which means a less skilled workforce.

Lichtenegger also warned that the funding cuts could endanger MU’s standing with the Association of American Universities. "If we lose this status, this is a huge economic engine in this state and economically if people think we're in trouble now, we're really going to be in trouble," she said.

John Fougere, UM system spokesman, said in a prepared statement that the cuts will "make it challenging for the University of Missouri System to meet its critical statewide mission of educating our state’s future workforce, performing lifesaving research, and helping move Missouri’s economy forward."

Fougere did not get into specifics about how the system will deal with the cuts. "We will be discussing short and long-term strategies going forward among the university’s leadership about specifics to address the decrease in funding, as we have in the past in these circumstances," he said.
Last year, lawmakers broke down the UM system and dictated cuts by campus. This year, the governor's recommendation reverts to past practice, which lists the system's funding as a whole, leaving it to UM leaders to allocate.

**MU tackles revenue problem**

MU Interim Chancellor Hank Foley said at an MU Faculty Council meeting Thursday that the university must generate more revenue to compensate for the proposed cuts.

MU will assemble three committees to find ways to generate more revenue, Rhonda Gibler, vice chancellor for finance, told the council. The committees will discuss allocation of resources, capital finance, and tuition and fees. The committee formation dates are to be determined and no members have been nominated.

Foley and Gibler said it is imperative to take action on compensating for cuts before the new fiscal budget comes into effect in July.

"We have to find a different model," Gibler said. "We are at a point of urgency, folks, that if we can’t rally around and do that now, I don’t know what other circumstances will inspire us to do so."

Foley said MU needs to control costs and drive up enrollment.

MU could tap into its reserve funds to deal with the cuts, but Foley said he was reluctant to fully endorse the idea, because different departments have different amounts of reserve funds.

"These three committees (MU is) forming will be very vital," said John Gahl, chairman of the council’s Fiscal Affairs Committee.

Lawmakers took varying views of the governor's proposed cuts.

Lyle Rowland, R-Cedar creek, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Appropriations — Education, said that he hadn’t had time to study the cuts as of Thursday afternoon.
"I’m going to try to protect education as much as possible," Rowland said. "I’m going to try and put money in where I can."

At the same time, he said the cuts to higher education weren't unexpected.

"I figured we would have a pretty healthy cut taken the fact that we just don't have any revenues coming in," Rowland said.

State Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, called the proposed higher education cuts significant.

Kendrick blamed "special interest tax cuts" for contributing to the lack of funding. Special interest tax cuts refer to breaks for certain companies or industries.

"We can’t fund our priorities," Kendrick said. "Higher education, K-12 education, should remain a priority. We can’t fund them when there’s no money coming in."

Kendrick said the university is already going through difficult financial times.

The proposed cuts could "lead to increased costs in tuition, it’s going to lead to layoffs, maybe some elimination of programs as well," Kendrick said. "It’ll affect our entire economy in mid-Missouri and it’ll affect the entire economy across the street."

Chuck Basye, R-Rocheport, said he would hate to see tuition increases or layoffs result from the funding cuts. But he said that cuts must be made.

"We have a requirement by the constitution to balance the budget, and there are these limited areas we can reduce spending," Basye said. "And unfortunately, education is one of them."

Martha Stevens, D-Columbia, said corporate tax cuts have left the state facing tough budget decisions, but that she will advocate for more money for education.
The governor's proposed budget for elementary and secondary education is being reviewed by Columbia Public Schools District’s chief financial officer, who will assess the overall local impact, the district's spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark said.

The district is relatively unaffected by the $8.6 million in busing cuts statewide that Greitens announced in January, Baumstark said, but the long-term trend is more worrisome.

"We budgeted very conservatively with regard to transportation, because that is typically an area withheld," Baumstark said.

But continued cuts have taken a toll. Columbia Public Schools spends more than $12 million on transportation but is reimbursed for only $2 million by the state, Baumstark said. That difference means the district has to pay for transportation out of its operating fund.

Greitens’ budget will now be sent to House appropriations committees, where lawmakers will craft what will become the final budget by the end of the legislative session in May.

Missouri governor outlines $27.6 billion budget plan

NIXA (AP) — Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens outlined a $27.6 billion budget plan Thursday that would slightly increase funding for public K-12 school districts while continuing cuts to public colleges and universities that have been made because of tight state finances.

The Republican governor’s proposal for the 2018 budget year was posted online shortly before he delivered a speech about it at a school in the southwest Missouri town of Nixa. Greitens said in a letter accompanying the spending plan that “our budget is broken” and urged lawmakers to work with him to “tighten our belts, be smart and wise with our tax dollars, and work our way out of this hole.”
He told students in Nixa, “We’ve ensured that our K-12 classrooms are protected,” and added that it “wasn’t an easy decision” to recommend less money than colleges had desired.

Greitens recommended more than $159 million in cuts to the Department of Higher Education budget compared to fiscal 2017 appropriations. Operations funding for four-year colleges and universities was cut by about $43 million from the fiscal 2017 appropriation. Greitens' budget includes no funding for the University of Missouri's Cooperative Medicine Program in Springfield. The budget proposes $40.4 million in cuts to the UM System, marking the lowest state funding since fiscal 2014.

Revenue this fiscal year has come in below what the last governor and legislature estimated, and Missouri’s corporate income tax revenue was down by more than 25 percent through the first half of the budget year. Part of that might be attributable to a tax law change approved by the legislature that allows multistate corporations to allocate their profits differently.

But Greitens also cited “special interest tax credits” that sap money from the state and increasing spending demands for health care, which he blamed on the federal health care law enacted under President Barack Obama. Missouri did not expand eligibility for Medicaid as envisioned under the federal health care law, but Medicaid costs have risen nonetheless.

Greitens already has cut roughly $146 million to balance this year’s budget. His predecessor, Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon, cut about $200 million before leaving office.

The 2018 budget is to take effect July 1. Greitens’ plan would continue at least part of the cuts made to higher education institutions by providing them less money than they were originally supposed to receive this year.

The budget plan would provide $3.3 billion of basic aid to public elementary and secondary schools, an increase of about $3 million but still well short of what’s called for under state law. It recommends no pay raise for state workers but does propose to fully fund the state’s payments to its main employee retirement fund.

Greitens was breaking with decades of tradition. Past governors have typically released their budget plans while delivering their annual State of the State speech at the Capitol. But Greitens did not do so when he gave his address on Jan. 17. Greitens’ delay in releasing his budget puts lawmakers on an accelerated timeline to review his proposal by the May 5 deadline.
Greitens releases budget recommendations, Democrats respond
By: Lauren Petterson

JEFFERSON CITY - Governor Eric Greitens released his proposal for Missouri’s 2018 fiscal year budget on Thursday in Nixa. His Facebook page livestreamed the announcement.

Acting State Budget Director Dan Haug briefed the media on some of the top issues in the budget.

The budget listed maintaining funding for K-12 classrooms, fighting the opioid epidemic, and protecting victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, amongst other issues, as major programs for the 2018 fiscal year.

Greitens plan cuts $572 million and 188 state employees from the budget.

“The fact is, in this budget, we also had to make some tough choices,” Greitens said. “We had to decide about our priorities, and this wasn’t about politics, it was just about math."

“When we took office, we discovered that politicians had promised people over $700 million that we didn’t have in the bank account,” Greitens said.

Some Democrats, including House of Representatives Minority Leader Gail McCann Beatty (D-Kansas City), are not happy with the cuts in the budget. Higher education funding took the largest hit in the proposal.

"There’s a fear that, you know, the colleges are gonna be forced to raise tuition and that our students are no longer going to be able to afford tuition," McCann Beatty said.

Rep. Kip Kendrick (D-Columbia) said his constituents will be affected by higher education funding cuts. He said the University of Missouri and Moberly Area Community College will take a significant hit.
“The University of Missouri is facing tough budget times right now with decreases in enrollment, and they’ve seen these state cuts aren’t necessarily anything new, but I think that the size of the state cuts this year are significantly going to put University of Missouri and MACC in a difficult position moving forward,” Kendrick said.

Greitens said universities affected by higher education funding cuts will have to work to "do more with less."

“There is for example, in our budget, going to be less money for professors, colleges and universities than they expected. Now that wasn’t an easy decision. I looked at the numbers and in the last four years, higher education has gotten a total increase of over $100 million. So, I’m confident that this year, they can tighten their belts just like the rest of us and help us focus on excellence and get back to basics. And I know college administrators and university presidents can work with us to save tax payer money,” Greitens said.

Although Greitens' plan listed "maintaining funding for K-12 classrooms" as a priority, McCann Beatty said children will still be affected by the budget changes.

"While the governor says we have not made cuts to the classroom, those dollars have to come from somewhere. We have to get the kids to school. And so I think it will ultimately, it’s going to trickle down to the classrooms,” Beatty said.

Kendrick said the next step is finding ways to restore areas of the budget that Greitens wants to cut.

“We need to do the best we can moving forward to make sure that we can stop additional tax cuts and stop special interests tax cuts that make it difficult to help out middle class families,” Kendrick said.

The budget now goes to the legislature for review.

MU leaders brace for possible multimillion dollar loss

The University of Missouri faces another multimillion dollar loss in revenue, if the governor's proposed budget for the state passes without change.

Gov. Eric Greitens released his plan for the 2018 fiscal year, which lasts from July 1 of this year to June 20, 2018. The budget will reduce funding for higher education by more than $100 million, carving out $1.15 billion for two- and four-year colleges around the state.

"I'm confident that this year, they can tighten their belts, just like the rest of us, and help us focus on excellence and get back to basics," Greitens said at a news conference Thursday morning.

Interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley said he expects if the budget passes as it is, the school would receive $22 million less in FY 2018. The UM System would get $40 million less compared to last fiscal year, as well. Foley told the MU Faculty Council Thursday they would need to approach next year's budget differently than in years' past.

MU is still grappling with another $20 million in withholdings from the governor in January, equal to about one month's payment from the state to the school. Lagging enrollment also caused the school to cut five percent of its budget this year.

Foley said controlling cost and boosting enrollment would help the school manage the shortfall. Tuition makes up around 80 percent of the school's budget, and changes within the school's marketing and recruiting will hopefully give them that boost, Foley said. The school is still trying to ease concerns over campus safety for prospective students, said interim Vice Chancellor Jennifer Hollingshead, the head of the school's marketing efforts.

Foley and Vice Chancellor of Finance Rhonda Gibler suggested a more involved review and crafting of the next budget. Gibler suggested three new committees look at the school's finances, dedicated to tuition and fee structures, allocation of resources and capital project finance.

Faculty members asked Foley for greater transparency not only in the school's overall budget, but within individual departments. Foley said each dean, including the several new ones, needed to be on board with the plan, and go over budgets with faculty and staff in their departments. Foley said he doubted he would ask each department to find 5 percent to cut this year, as they did for the current budget.

Foley told ABC 17 News after the meeting he understood that the governor needed to balance the budget, and trusted Greitens' commitment to higher education.

Boone County's state elected officials, who represent an area in which the university is by far its largest employer, also talked about the higher education hits in Greitens' budget proposal. Rep. Kip Kendrick (D - Columbia) said cuts to higher education resonate deeply in his district, which covers the campus and northern half of Columbia.
"It also hits the students very hard as well," Kendrick said. "This is going to be increased cost in tuition not just here at the University of Missouri, but all around this state."

"This is the first step in the process as it relates to the budget. It will change a lot between now and late April, early May," Sen. Caleb Rowden (R - Columbia) said. He told a crowd at the Daniel Boone Regional Library that elected officials needed to make the case to other lawmakers on the benefits the university gives across the state.

GOV. GREITENS REJECTS NIXON'S PICKS FOR UM BOARD OF CURATORS VACANCIES

ANDREW KESSEL

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System Board of Curators is five voting members short, but Gov. Eric Greitens isn't going along with his predecessor's picks to fill the seats.

On Tuesday, Greitens withdrew the nominations of John Sundvold and student representative Patrick Graham, UM System spokesman John Fougere confirmed. Sundvold and Graham were two of the four members appointed by former Gov. Jay Nixon last year.

Greitens’ decision comes on the heels of the resignation of Nixon's two other appointees, Tom Voss and Mary Nelson, in January, Fougere said.

Graham, an MU student who acted as a non-voting member separate from the nine curators, said he submitted his own resignation letter Wednesday, prior to the governor's withdrawal. In doing so, Graham said, he, along with Voss and Nelson, give themselves the chance to be renominated for the board in the future.

The withdrawals and resignations come even though all four appointees had served on the board for several months. In 2016, Senate Republicans threatened to reject any curator nominees from
Nixon, whose second term ended in the fall. But Nixon made his appointments while the General Assembly was in recess, so all four were allowed to immediately join the board.

But their time was running out. When the new legislative session began on Jan. 4, the Senate had 30 days to act on Nixon's nominations. But if lawmakers didn't act and let the deadline pass, their nominations would be null, Graham said, barring them from renomination.

This isn't the first time Graham has had to resign a nomination. He was originally chosen by Nixon in April, but it appeared the Senate wasn't going to confirm him, he said. Taking his name off the table allowed for his appointment during the June recess.

Now, the Board of Curators is down to six voting members — at least five have to be present for a valid vote to occur — even though two members' terms have expired. Curators Pamela Henrickson and Donald Cupps have remained on the board thanks to a state law that allows them to serve until their successors are named, Fougere said.

This means that when the curators meet next Thursday and Friday, there will be enough members present for a vote even if Greitens hasn't made any nominations. But unless he does, there won't be a student representative.

"It's looking like there won't be a student at the meeting, which is unfortunate," Graham said, "because it's very important, especially right now, that we have a student at the table."

Greitens withdraws two nominations to UM Board of Curators

The University of Missouri Board of Curators is facing five vacancies, and Gov. Eric Greitens has yet to make any appointments to the short-handed board.
On Tuesday, Greitens withdrew the nominations of Patrick Graham and Jon Sundvold, both of whom had been appointed by former Gov. Jay Nixon. Graham, an MU senior, was the board’s non-voting student representative.

Last week, Tom Voss, who also had been nominated by Nixon, resigned from the board, and Mary Nelson resigned Jan. 9.

The withdrawn nominations and resignations come as the nine-member board is struggling with vacancies. Currently, there are only six curators, two of whom are continuing to serve even though their terms have expired. At their Feb. 9 meeting, the curators are expected to address Greitens’ $31.4 million cut from campus operations and system administration and whether to increase tuition in response.

Nixon appointed Sundvold, Voss, Nelson and Graham in June after Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard, R-Joplin, said he would not consider any of Nixon’s appointments during the 2016 legislative session.

The Missouri Constitution required the nominations of Sundvold, Voss and Graham to be confirmed by the Senate or withdrawn by the end of this week or they could not be appointed to the board in future.

Voss, who was appointed to a term ending in 2021, said Nixon asked him to serve on the board to help select a new system president, and that has been accomplished.

“I believe that I added value by my participation,” Voss wrote in his resignation letter. “However I have not yet been confirmed by the Senate and likely will not be confirmed before the 30-day deadline. Therefore I resign my position effective Jan. 27.”

Voss said Thursday he’s open to being renominated to the position but that he does not expect to be and has received no word from Greitens.

Graham, a senior from Lee’s Summit, said he actually submitted a resignation Monday, before Greitens withdrew the nomination, as a precaution to keep from being barred from the board in the future. He said student leadership plans to send three candidate names to the governor for consideration.

He said he wants Greitens to have a lot of options for a new student representative because February’s meeting traditionally is when tuition and fees are set for the coming year, a crucial issue for students.

Greitens spokesman Parker Briden did not respond to emails requesting information about the governor’s schedule for making the appointments.

The nine-member board needs five members to constitute a quorum. UM System spokesman John Fougere said there would be six voting members present for the February meeting in Columbia because two other curators, Pam Henrickson and Don Cupps, will continue to serve on
the board until successors are appointed and confirmed. The terms for Henrickson and Cupps expired Jan. 1.

Board of Curators short five members
By Emily Gallion

The nine-seat UM System Board of Curators will go into their first meeting of the calendar year short five members, the Columbia Tribune reported Jan. 26.

The terms of three members, Pam Henrickson, Jon Sundvold and Donald Cupps, expired Dec. 31, and two others, Mary Nelson and Thomas Voss, resigned. Nelson, Voss and Sundvold were all appointed by former Gov. Jay Nixon in June.

The curators next meet Feb. 9 at MU. Five curators must be in attendance to reach quorum. UM System spokesman John Fougere said in an email that Henrickson and Cupps would remain active until their replacements are confirmed, so six members will be in attendance. Sundvold was a recess appointment who was not confirmed by Senate.

Nelson and Voss both cited personal reasons for their resignations. Nelson was the only black member of the board.

Fougere said that while the agenda has not been finalized, topics for discussion will include an update on the UM System budget, revisions to University Collected Rules and Regulations that relate to diversity, equity and inclusion, and an overview of the UM System Review Commission report.

Columbia residents pack library for legislative town hall meeting
BRAD BERGNER/MISSOURIAN STATEHOUSE CORRESPONDENT

COLUMBIA — Residents packed the Friends Room of the Columbia Public Library on Thursday night, filling the seats, standing against the back walls and crowding inside the doorways for a town hall meeting with Columbia-area state legislators.

The legislators took questions from the audience and discussed bills proposed during this year's legislative session. Scott Christianson, a member of the League of Women Voters, moderated the discussion.

**Gov. Eric Greitens' Budget**

Kendrick was the first to raise discussion of Greitens' budget recommendations for fiscal year 2018, which were released Thursday morning. Greitens proposed cutting higher education funding by $159 million, with about $40 million in cuts directed to the University of Missouri System and its affiliated programs.

"The governor's proposed budget was a few weeks later than normal, but I suppose you have to take your time when you're finding $500 million to cut," Kendrick said.

In past years, the governor has released his budget on the night of the State of the State address, which was on Jan. 17 this year.

Kendrick pointed to various expenses that have driven Missouri's budget upward in recent years.

"Increased costs in Medicaid is also driving the budget up. Special interest tax cuts over the years have put us in a very difficult position," Kendrick said.

The cuts for higher education hit Columbia and Boone County "very hard," Kendrick said. He said students and the middle class would bear the brunt of the cuts.

Rowden echoed Kendrick's sentiments, calling the governor's budget disappointing.

"It's a bad budget year," he said.
Still, Rowden said he intends to fight the proposed cuts.

"Budgets are about priorities," he said. "I don't think there's a greater priority than higher education."

**LGBT rights**

While taking a question about legal protection for LGBT workers, Rowden said: "I don't think that LGBT individuals should be fired for being gay."

He went on to say that he would support legislation protecting LGBT workers "as long as it's done properly and as long that it doesn't swing the pendulum too far."

The remarks caused a stir in the audience, and those gathered began shouting in protest. Some questioned: "What's too far?"

In response, Rowden said: "I understand that most people in this audience probably don't agree with what I'm going to say. I'm going to ask everyone in this room to be respectful as well."

**Guns on campus**

Legislators shared their opinions of House Bill 593, which would mandate that Missouri businesses and college campuses allow firearms on their property. Kendrick and Reisch agreed that campus administration should decide whether to allow guns on campus.

"I think on university campuses, that should be left up to the individual curators and administration on each campus," Reisch said.

Stevens had a different opinion.

"The administrators don't want it, security doesn't want it," Stevens said. "I am absolutely against guns on campus."

Audience members applauded after Stevens spoke.
Right to Work

Lawmakers were split along party lines on the topic of 'right to work' legislation, mirroring the full legislature's vote on the issue. A 'right to work bill,' which would eliminate mandatory union fees, passed in the House on Thursday morning, which was its final step before being sent to the governor. Greitens is expected to sign the bill into law.

Missouri Democrats opposed the measure.

"'Right to work' bills are about corporate interests, plain and simple," Stevens said.

Rowden voted in favor of 'right to work' but noted that its legislative process has been arduous.

"It is an issue that has been over-politicized on both sides," Rowden said.

Basye said he was proud to cast his vote for the bill this week.

"I campaigned on right to work for my re-election, Basye said. "I think its very important to get new businesses in our state in the areas that drastically need jobs."

Town hall meeting with state legislators attracts large audience

The League of Women Voters held its biggest town hall in recent history on Thursday evening to discuss legislative priorities and ask questions to Missouri state legislators. Legislators in attendance included Reps. Cheri Reisch, R-Hallsville; Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia; Martha Stevens, D-Columbia; Chuck Basye, R-Rocheport; and state Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia.

According to Lauren Williams, the adult and community services manager of Daniel Boone Regional Library, around 260 people attended the event, so some people had to stand in the halls outside of the room. Topics covered ranged from gun rights to the budget proposed by Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens on Thursday.
“We had a very big turn out, far bigger than we’ve ever had,” LWV Voter Service Chair Carol Schreiber said. “As far as the issues, we want that to be the public. I thought that the fact that some of the Republicans and Democrats were on the same page for some of the issues was good. We don’t hear that much.”

Education funding was one of the major issues spoken about at the town hall. Greitens had suggested cutting more than $159 million in higher education funding in his budget proposal Thursday, which caused concern for many higher education supporters.

“It hits Boone County and Columbia very hard; any time there [are] these major cuts to education and higher education, it hits our economy,” Kendrick said. “Also it hits the students very hard as well. This is going to be increased cost in tuition, not just here at the University of Missouri but all around the state. We’re seeing massive student loan debt for an entire generation.”

Both Republican and Democratic legislators seemed to agree that the budget cuts are a problem. However, they had different outlooks on the future of higher education.

“We’ve got to continue to shout and yell and scream as loud as possible about the value and the importance of higher education,” Rowden said. “Continuing to tell the story statewide in the rural communities, from north Missouri to southwest Missouri, about what specifically the University of Missouri does for our state and the things that are important and the things that move us forward. We’re going to do everything in our power over the next few months to make sure that we do whatever we can to bring some of those dollars home.”

Another issue that raised concern was concealed carry gun laws, specifically on campus and in private businesses.

“I would support a business owner’s right to not allow that in their establishment,” Basye said. “I am a huge second amendment supporter. Talk about higher education and carry on campus, I know that is not a popular subject by a lot of people, but I know some professors that feel exactly the opposite. They feel they should be able to protect themselves.”

Other topics discussed included racial bias among law enforcement, LGBTQ rights, union rights and photo identification laws.

“I came today because I really want to see our representatives listen to us, and these are one of the few chances we [have],” CoMo for Progress organizer Kate Canterbury said. “That’s why I love town halls and I really admire all the people coming today, because some of our representatives are too afraid to face the people that voted for them.”
When SNAP benefits go up, these ER visits go down

Generated from News Bureau press release: Increased Food Assistance Benefits Could Result in Fewer ER Visits

In 2014, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a federal program to address food insecurity in the United States, provided $70 billion in nutrition support to 46.5 million families and children living in 22.7 million American households.

Now, a new study shows that SNAP benefits may also help reduce visits to the emergency room, saving money for families, health care facilities, and taxpayers.

SNAP benefits reduced the incidence of extreme poverty by 13.2 percent and child poverty by 15.5 percent between 2000 and 2009, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

“According to prior research, the average medical costs associated with hypoglycemia requiring medical treatment was $1,186 per ER visit with costs often paid by Medicaid for individuals in extreme poverty,” says Colleen Heflin, professor of public affairs at the University of Missouri.

“Public safety net programs do not operate in silos; health cannot be addressed without attending to proper nutrition. Understanding how programs interact can improve policy programs while controlling costs.”

For the study, published in the journal Public Health Nutrition, researchers used data from the Missouri SNAP and Medicaid programs to identify the benefit size of SNAP and the timing of ER claims.

They then analyzed the relationship between receipt of SNAP benefits and use of health care. The analysis found a strong relationship between the size of the SNAP benefit and ER visits for
hypoglycemia—a $100 increase in SNAP benefits decreased the likelihood of an ER visit for hypoglycemia by about 13 percent.

“This research suggests more generous SNAP benefits could help low-income families manage their household budgets,” says Leslie Hodges, a doctoral candidate in the Truman School of Public Affairs. “The SNAP program could help families avoid fluctuations in the quality and quantity of food that might result in low blood sugar severe enough to require treatment at the ER.”

The US Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, supported the work. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agency.

MU professors state concerns over possible repeal of ACA

Generated by an MU News Bureau press release: Popular Provisions of Affordable Care Act in Danger if ‘Fundamental Bargain’ is Broken, MU Expert Says
By Sylvia Maehr

When the Affordable Care Act was passed in March 2010, Catherine Armbrust was able to afford health insurance for herself and her late husband for the first time in 15 years.

Armbrust is an adjunct professor in the art department and the director of the George Caleb Bingham Gallery. As an adjunct professor, she is considered a part-time employee of the university, so she is not provided insurance through MU.

"I was extremely grateful when it became available and took advantage for myself and for my late husband,” Armbrust said.

She use the preventative care visits for women, which include mammograms and other exams, prescription assistance and visits to the doctor that she believes have saved her life and could have saved her husband’s.

In spring 2015, Armbrust came home to find her husband dead from a heart attack after exercising. The irony of the situation, she said, is that he had an appointment the very next day to address issues pertaining to his heart.
"We had been so used to not having insurance that it was sort of an oddity to take advantage of it," she said. "I had been encouraging him to make a doctor's appointment because we could now do that. In my thoughts, the ACA could have saved him."

The Patient Freedom Act was introduced by U.S. Sens. Bill Cassidy and Susan Collins in January and is a possible replacement for the ACA. The bill keeps numerous aspects of the ACA intact, including provisions that do not allow insurers to deny coverage based on a preexisting condition and allowing children to remain under their parents’ insurance until age 26. However, Armbrust is concerned that the replacement plan is inadequate.

“I understand that there are quirks and issues with this system that can probably be worked out,” she said. “I think the best case scenario is that they have a satisfactory replacement that they implement immediately upon the repeal of the ACA.”

Associate law professor Sam Halabi worked with those who negotiated the ACA in Congress and worked with aspects of former President Barack Obama’s transition into office. Halabi said his position has been almost exclusively academic and he never gave legal advice regarding the ACA. He believes the repeal process will prove difficult.

“I think that it is going to provoke deep divisions within the GOP,” Halabi said. “I think that it is going to be very difficult to come up with a compromise that involves a repeal.”

The current proposal circulating in the Senate involves giving health savings accounts to those who use the ACA, which would substitute for the care that ACA provides. Health savings accounts were created so that “individuals covered by high-deductible health plans could receive tax-preferred treatment of money saved for medical expenses,” according to the Treasury Department’s website. They can be used for out-of-pocket medical, dental and vision care, but cannot be used to pay health insurance premiums.

Halabi believes the primary issues with the ACA come from its cost and the individual mandate it imposed.

“It's interesting that that was such a call to opposition, because the idea of an individual mandate really started with conservative think tanks and policy analysts who thought that you could replicate something like automobile insurance, where you have the mandate to purchase it through legal compulsion,” Halabi said.

The issues with cost came from the idea that the ACA would place a financial burden on both the states and taxpayers. However, opposition to the individual mandate has been focused on more than issues over cost, Halabi said.

Halabi said anything that can be marketed as a repeal of the ACA will reflect positively on the Republican party and President Donald Trump.

“I think the GOP can do very little policy and statute-wise and come away with a political win,” he said. “ … For uninsured individuals who have obtained insurance through the affordability
made possible through tax subsidies, the best case scenario is either those systems are kept in place, or they are replaced with something else that would provide similar coverage.”

Dr. Karen Edison, director of MU’s Center for Health Policy, said making predictions about what the GOP will do is premature.

“It really depends on what they have planned and that is just beginning to take shape,” Edison said in an email.

SEC distributes record revenues, $40.4 million per school

By Dave Matter

The rich keep getting richer in college athletics. The Southeastern Conference announced Thursday that approximately $584.2 million of revenue was divided among its 14 schools for the 2015-16 fiscal year. The average amount distributed from the conference office outside of bowl money was just more than $40.4 million per school.

Missouri's SEC share was $39,382,365, which ranked 11th in the league ahead of Alabama, Ole Miss and Kentucky, according to tax returns obtained by USA Today.

The SEC's total revenue for 2015-16 increased from $475.8 million distributed in 2014-15. The per school distribution average increased nearly 24 percent from $32.7 million in 2014-15.

That total includes $565.9 million distributed from the conference office plus $18.3 million retained by schools that participated in 2015-16 football bowl games to offset bowl expenses. The distribution comes from revenue generated from television contracts, bowl games, the College Football Playoff, the SEC football championship game, the SEC men’s basketball tournament, NCAA championships and a supplemental surplus distribution.

Missouri, with its football team going 5-7 in 2015, was not among those schools that retained bowl revenue.

“Each of our institutions sponsor from 16 to 22 intercollegiate athletics teams and offer their student-athletes in those sports the highest level of commitment to their athletics and academic experience,” SEC commissioner Greg Sankey said. “This distribution from the SEC helps our universities’ athletics programs continue to fully support broad-based opportunities for thousands of female and male student-athletes in all sports.”
The league distribution accounts for a large chunk of Mizzou’s total operating revenue. As reported by the Post-Dispatch last week, Mizzou hauled in $33.5 million in media rights revenue with the bulk of that total coming from the SEC’s media package. MU also earned $8.4 million earmarked as conference distribution.

Mizzou’s 2015-16 revenues increased 6.6 percent to a school record $97.3 million, but that’s well below the league’s rate of increase for distributed revenue, which underscores MU’s sagging figures for ticket sales.

“This revenue distribution provides SEC institutions the flexibility to invest in unique and significant ways that provide positive outcomes across their respective campuses,” Sankey said. “Besides providing superior support in coaching, equipment, training, academic counseling, medical care and life-skills development for student-athletes, athletics programs in the SEC have been known to provide significant financial support to the academic side of their institutions, whether in the direct transfer of funds, in assistance with the construction and renovation of academic facilities or in support of academic scholarship opportunities or academic programs.”

How does SEC revenue distribution compare to other power conferences? Last year, the average Big 12 payout was $23.4 million among its 10 members, though unlike the SEC, Big 12 schools retain their third-tier media rights, such as revenue generated by Texas’ Longhorn Network and Oklahoma’s Sooner Sports Network.

Last year, the Big Ten distributed $32.4 million to its 11 longest-standing members and a lesser amount to newer members Nebraska, Maryland and Rutgers.

The Pac-12 reportedly distributed $25.1 million to its schools last year, while the average ACC payout was $26.4 million.

New MU Institute for Korean Studies is one of the First in the Nation
By Magdaline Duncan

When Harrison Kim started working at MU in 2014, he and Sheena Chestnut Greitens, an assistant professor, immediately began talking about founding an institute to support and highlight the research MU faculty and students had already been doing about the Korean peninsula. Their idea came to fruition last month, with the creation of the MU Institute for Korean Studies.

“We realized that the University of Missouri has some really unique comparative advantages when it comes to Korean studies, and that goes all the way back to President Truman, the Korean
War and President Truman’s legacy on campus,” IKS co-director Greitens said. “We have access to one of the best documentary collections on the Korean War anywhere in the world in the Truman Library, not too far away, and even some interesting collections in MU’s different libraries.”

MU has a long-standing relationship with Korea. At the urging of President Truman in the 1950s, a free-tuition program for Korean students began. Now, it’s one of MU’s oldest international relationships and one of the university’s largest international alumni chapters.

“MU, as a result, has a huge alumni community and affiliate network in Korea, and is really well-regarded in Korea as being one of the great American public research universities,” Greitens said. “So we realized that we have these great and relatively unique resources and we thought it would be great to build on those.”

While the majority of Korean studies programs focus on language and culture, IKS places its focus on social sciences, such as political science, law, economics, policy and history, as well as tourism, hospitality management and agriculture.

“Part of what was exciting about putting the pieces together to create IKS is that we have the opportunity to become a nationally and internationally recognized center pretty quickly, in the next few years,” Greitens said.

Due to the cloistered nature of North Korea, the bulk of the studies and research involve South Korea. However, MU is one of the few American universities that has already begun a relationship with North Korea, and in the past has invited North Korean scientists to train on campus.

“Currently, United States and North Korean relations are not good, so even though we’d like to have North Korean scientists come to campus and be educated, it has not been done for the past 10 years,” IKS executive director Seungkwon You said. “So we’d like to be, in that regard, front-runners to normalizing a relationship with North Korea.”

IKS co-director Kim said he hopes global issues will be highlighted and contextualized through the study of the Korean peninsula.

“What are we going to do as a country and as responsible citizens about refugees, immigration, economic inequality, government power, despotism, authoritarianism, human rights abuses?” Kim said. “And hopefully our institute will question and create dialogue. I personally don’t think that these problems are solely on North Korea; these problems are global problems that we all face together.”

Although IKS hopes to encourage exchanges with Korea, they are leaving that aspect up to the Asian Affairs Center, which they work with as partners.

“The Asian Affairs Center handles exchange, promotion, support of events, summer trips, scholarly exchange and much of the cultural events related to Korea,” Kim said. “The Asian
Affairs Center will always handle that aspect. They have years of experience and knowledge in that area, an incredible network of people, and [for] the institute, our main focus is research.”

Although MU currently offers only a minor in Korean studies, the institute hopes to expand to eventually be able to offer a major, as well as get a physical center and hold annual conferences.

The institute will be holding its grand opening on Feb. 9 in Jesse Wrench Auditorium, featuring speaker Grace Jo, a North Korean refugee.

Athletes and Activism

By Jake New, February 3, 2017

From the protests at the University of Missouri over racial representation to the women’s volleyball team at West Virginia University Institute of Technology declining to stand during the national anthem, college athletes have embraced a renewed role in campus activism in recent years.

It may come in the form of a football team threatening to boycott a game over racial inequality or a quarterback posting a photo of himself online wearing a hat emblazoned with the words “Fuck Trump.” Either way, such protests often spark debates about free speech, with colleges and teams caught in the middle. That debate was a common theme at last month’s National Collegiate Athletic Association meeting in Nashville, Tenn., with college presidents, athletes and NCAA leaders all weighing in on the topic. The consensus: let the players speak.

“From the Vietnam War to the present, student-athletes have felt compelled to use their platform to express opinions about social issues,” Kevin Rome, president of Lincoln University, said during a panel discussion at the meeting. “Whether by wearing black armbands or kneeling during the national anthem, student athletes should not lose their constitutional rights.”

When Tim Wolfe announced his resignation as the University of Missouri System’s president in November 2015, the decision came after weeks of demonstrations over the president’s handling of a string of racist incidents on campus. Student and faculty groups had been calling for Wolfe’s resignation, and a graduate student went on a weeklong hunger strike, vowing he would not eat until Wolfe was “removed from office or my internal organs fail and my life is lost.”

Then at least 30 members of the university’s football team linked arms with the hunger striker and gave an ultimatum: if Wolfe didn’t resign, they would boycott all football-related activities.
That included a game scheduled just days later. While it would be an exaggeration to attribute Wolfe's resignation -- and that of the Columbia campus's chancellor, R. Bowen Loftin -- largely to the players' actions, their well-publicized strike certainly helped tip the scales and highlighted what kind of economic power athletes hold. At a meeting of the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics in May, Arne Duncan, a former U.S. secretary of education, asked if college players would consider organizing similar boycotts over athletics issues like concussion policies or name, image and likeness rights.

Rollins Stallworth, a former Stanford University football player and chair of the Pac-12 Conference’s Student-Athlete Advisory Committee, revealed that two of Stanford’s team captains boycotted football-related activities in 2015 during summer workouts after the university was late in providing players with scholarship money for participating in the camp. The protest was not nearly as dramatic as the strike at Missouri, Stallworth said, but “seeing the effect of two of our teammates doing that and what goes on in the locker room, the discussion that happens, you can see the potential that could happen.”

During the NCAA’s annual meeting last month, the chair of the Division I Board of Directors and the chairs of the Division II and Division III Presidents Councils all said they supported athlete protests and activism, particularly those involving social justice issues.

“Athletes have a prominent role,” said Alan Cureton, chair of the Division III Presidents Council. “On the 10 o’ clock news, it’s news, weather and sports. Not news, weather and opera. Athletes have a platform. We have an opportunity to be a voice for those who do not have a voice. We have an opportunity to speak up for those who can’t speak up. The platform allows athletes to say, ‘This is what I believe in.’”

That stance isn’t shared by everyone. Critics of the protest at Missouri were so worried that similar boycott attempts would take place elsewhere in the state that one Missouri lawmaker introduced legislation that would have stripped athletes of their scholarships if they boycotted games. Last year, a state senator placed a hold on the University of Arkansas' budget request after six members of the women’s basketball team knelt during the national anthem to protest police shootings of African-Americans.

In August, Jim Mora, head football coach at the University of California, Los Angeles, publicly admonished his quarterback for wearing the “F*%$ Trump” hat. When asked by a reporter how he would handle one of his players protesting racial inequality by not standing during the national anthem, Clemson University's head football coach, Dabo Swinney, criticized athletes who do not stand for the anthem and said, “Some of these people need to move to another country.”

Speaking at the NCAA meeting, Rome, of Lincoln University, was critical of such responses. “Restrictive policies are not the answer,” he said. “Sometimes the answer is to just not make an issue out of it.”

College sports reformers, meanwhile, have been encouraged by the protests and have said a boycott of a bowl game -- which are typically among the most watched and most lucrative games
in a program's season -- would be one of the most impactful ways athletes could protest their treatment or take a stand for social justice issues. They seemingly got their wish in December, when the University of Minnesota football team said it would boycott the Holiday Bowl.

The focus of the protest, however, was not exactly what the reformers had in mind. Story continues.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

Trump Can’t Cut Off Berkeley’s Funds by Himself. His Threat Still Raised Alarm.

No MU Mention

By Karin Fischer February 01, 2017

Back in October, when President Trump vowed to "end" political correctness on college campuses, it was unclear how the then-presidential candidate planned to go about doing that.

On Thursday, he dropped a hint: He threatened to cut off federal funding to the University of California at Berkeley after violent protests there prompted campus leaders to call off a talk by a far-right provocateur.

Milo Yiannopoulos is a Breitbart News editor and Trump supporter who has for months traveled to campuses to give talks that often draw protests and have sometimes resulted in violence. He was once permanently banned from Twitter for his role in a harassment campaign against the actress Leslie Jones, and he has drawn heavy fire for his insulting comments about feminists, Black Lives Matters protesters, Islam, and other topics he considers part of leftist ideology.

Mr. Yiannopoulos was scheduled to speak on Berkeley’s campus late Wednesday, as part of his "Dangerous Faggot" tour, and more than 1,500 students gathered outside the venue to peacefully protest. Then about 100 additional protesters — mostly nonstudents, Berkeley officials said — joined the fray and hurled smoke bombs, broke windows, and started fires. The violence forced the campus police to put Berkeley on lockdown and led university leaders to cancel the event.

The following morning, a political commentator suggested on Fox & Friends First that President Trump should take away Berkeley’s federal funding. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Trump decided to weigh in.
Not surprisingly, Mr. Yiannopoulos liked that idea. On Facebook Thursday, he linked to a Breitbart article about the federal money Berkeley receives, adding, "Cut the whole lot, Donald J. Trump."

Others were quick to condemn the president’s threat. U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee, a California Democrat whose district includes the Berkeley campus, tweeted back: "President Trump doesn’t have a license to blackmail universities. He’s the president, not a dictator, and his empty threats are an abuse of power."

Withholding Federal Funds

The idea of punishing colleges for free-speech controversies was originally Ben Carson’s idea, said Jonathan Zimmerman, a professor of the history of education at the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Carson, a neurosurgeon and former Republican presidential candidate, said in October 2015 that he would have the U.S. Department of Education "monitor our institutions of higher education for extreme political bias and deny federal funding if it exists."

Terry W. Hartle, a senior vice president at the American Council on Education, took the question mark on the end of Mr. Trump’s tweet literally. The president might have been asking, Could I withhold federal funds from Berkeley? Mr. Hartle said.

Yes, the federal government has the authority to withhold federal funds like financial aid from colleges that engage in certain activities, Mr. Hartle said. And it has the authority to attach conditions to the money it gives out. The Solomon Amendment, for instance, requires colleges to admit ROTC or military recruiters to their campus or risk losing money.

But Congress would have to act to give the government the ability to take away federal funds for controversies involving the First Amendment, Mr. Hartle said.

The government also couldn’t pull funding from Berkeley by retroactively saying the institution’s federal money is contingent on protecting free speech, said Alexander (Sasha) Volokh, an associate professor of law at Emory University.

"If the funding comes explicitly with strings attached, which is that you must adequately protect free speech on your campus if you want these funds, and if the university takes these funds knowing the condition, that’s one thing," he said.

The U.S. Supreme Court has weighed in several times on strings attached to federal funding, Mr. Volokh said, and has determined that such conditions must be clearly stated in advance and related to the matter being funded.

For instance, he said, the court said it was OK for the government to tie federal highway funds to a requirement for states to adopt a drinking age of 21, because highway safety could be affected by the drinking age. But the National Institutes of Health probably couldn’t attach a requirement for free-speech protection to a grant for researching Ebola, he said.
Moving forward, Mr. Trump could tell federal research agencies that some of their contracts with colleges and researchers should now include stipulations about free speech, Mr. Volokh said. "I have the feeling that Trump had something much blunter in mind," he said.

Story continues.