Facing state budget cuts, Missouri’s public colleges and universities consider raising tuition

BY KATIE KULL
The Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY - Administrators at Missouri public colleges and universities say they are reluctant to consider raising tuition, but they might have no choice.

New Republican Gov. Eric Greitens proposed on Thursday a nearly 10 percent reduction in core higher education funding in his budget proposal for the coming year.

University leaders say that Greitens’ proposal to slash another $22 million on top of $68 million in cuts announced in January makes higher tuition almost inevitable.

“My understanding is that the governor doesn’t want us to go in that direction, but if we don’t want to lessen the services we provide, something’s gotta give,” said Robert Vartabedian, president at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph.

Missouri public universities haven’t had to increase tuition much for the past 10 years because of yearly agreements with lawmakers to keep tuition level in exchange for a steady funding stream.

Then-Gov. Jay Nixon signed a law in 2007 putting a cap on in-state tuition at 4-year schools, allowing increases only as large as the consumer price index, which was 2.1 percent in 2016. Universities are able
to apply for a waiver through the Department of Higher Education to raise tuition beyond that limit. The department hasn’t granted any waivers in the last five years, said spokeswoman Liz Coleman.

For students, the cap has offered stability, said Taylor Cofield, a senior at the University of Missouri’s flagship campus in Columbia studying political science and psychology.

“Having that starting point and being able to know exactly what I’d be paying for each semester is reassuring,” she said. Now that the university has sustained more cuts, she said she’s worried about the impact on students.

“Even if we are comparably cheaper it’s still not cheap,” she said. “It’s scary, especially if I potentially decide to continue my education at Mizzou.”

Leaders of the four-campus University of Missouri System won’t say that tuition will go up due to budget constraints, but they haven’t ruled it out.

**A statement from interim system President Michael Middleton said the cuts will make it “challenging” for the university to fulfill its core mission, and the system was looking for ways to make up for the losses.**

In recent years, the system has depended more on tuition than ever before. A finance report said that in 2008, tuition and fees covered 29 percent of the system’s budget; in 2016 it paid for more than half.

A task force charged with reviewing the University of Missouri system last year recommended that the Legislature remove the tuition cap. Although funding from the state has remained steady since 2008, universities have enrolled more students and expenses have gone up, the task force said. Without the ability to raise tuition, schools have had to make cuts and issue hiring freezes.

At a budget announcement Thursday in Nixa, Greitens said he was confident that schools could make up the cuts without making students pay. He encouraged schools to “tighten their belts” and find ways to be more efficient.

But university leaders say that’s easier said than done.

“I think there has to be awareness that after you cut so much, you can’t tighten that belt without strangling yourself,” said Wesley Payne, the president of Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff.

Between 2008 and 2016, tuition in Missouri rose just 9.5 percent. Only Ohio and Montana fared better, according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, a progressive think tank based in Washington, D.C.
Ravyn Highsmith, a junior at Missouri Western, said she was worried about a tuition increase. As a student paying for much of her education out of pocket, the relatively low cost was the biggest factor in her decision to attend school in Missouri.

“If they could raise (tuition) as high as they wanted to, I probably wouldn’t be able to be here,” she said.

The budget still must win approval in the House and Senate, and lawmakers say they will try to put some money back into higher education.

“(The cuts) are damaging to our economy and to our state as a whole,” said Rep. Kip Kendrick, a Democrat from Columbia. “In a 21st-century economy, higher education is vital. Businesses that look to set up shop in Missouri don’t just look at our tax structure or infrastructure — they also look at how educated our populace is, and so we need to properly fund schools to have quality education.”

Greitens' budget proposal slashes funding for University of Missouri

By MEGAN FAVIGNANO mkfavignano@columbiatribune.com | 815-1719

Gov. Eric Greitens called for further funding cuts to the University of Missouri System in his first budget proposal, introduced Thursday.

The newly elected governor proposed cutting $40.4 million from the university’s basic appropriation for fiscal 2018, adding to the financial woes the university already is experiencing. The flagship Columbia campus has been grappling with a revenue crunch caused by lower enrollment, and last month Greitens restricted $31.4 million in UM System spending for fiscal 2017, which ends June 30.

UM System Board of Curators Chairman Maurice Graham said the board does not yet know how Greitens’ budget proposal will affect next year’s tuition rates. Curators are set to discuss tuition at a board meeting next week.

“We are limited by statute to the amount that we can increase tuition, and certainly we’re going to abide by the law. And we also understand that we have an obligation to do everything we can to keep the cost of education at a reasonable level,” Graham said.
Greitens’ budget proposal earmarks $1.16 billion for all higher education funding, which is $159.2 million less than the fiscal 2017 appropriation. The $27.6 billion budget does not cut funding for state financial aid programs and slightly increases K-12 education funds.

The governor’s proposal gives $408.2 million to the UM System, the lowest appropriation since the 2014 fiscal year. Only five of the university’s previous 18 budgets had lower state appropriations. Graham described higher education as an imperative part of what the state provides for its residents.

“We understand that the legislature is dealing with a reduction in state income taxes. We also understand that the legislature has to consider a lot of other worthy aspects of our society other than higher education,” Graham said. “While we certainly want to receive as much as we can to carry out our mission, we understand the dilemma that the legislature finds itself in, too.”

UM System spokesman John Fougere said interim President Mike Middleton was not available to comment on Greitens’ recommendations. In a prepared statement, Middleton said he understands the governor has to make difficult decisions and that UM will discuss ways to address funding decreases.

“These 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,” Middleton said in his statement.

In the statement, Middleton also said he commends the governor for consolidating core funding into a single appropriation line.

On Thursday, Columbia campus interim Chancellor Hank Foley and Vice Chancellor for Finance Rhonda Gibler told the MU Faculty Council three new committees will examine university budgeting. Those committees were planned before the governor released his budget proposal. However, Ben Trachtenberg, law professor and faculty council chairman, said the administrators also spoke about Greitens’ budget.

“As proposed, the governor’s budget would effectively give us what we got for this year with all the withholdings built in,” Trachtenberg said. “In effect that’s a very serious cut.”

Trachtenberg said the university needs to figure out how to increase revenue. Christopher Dade, junior chemistry major and MU’s campus president of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, said he worries what the governor’s budget could mean for MU as a land grant university with a research focus.

“That was a big reason why I came to Mizzou,” Dade said. “There were undergraduate research opportunities I couldn’t find anywhere else.”

The Associated Students of the University of Missouri, a UM System student lobbying group, will discuss the governor’s budget at its board meeting next week, Dade said.
During a legislative forum Thursday night, multiple state representatives mentioned the impact the governor’s budget has on higher education.

“We’ve got to continue to shout and scream as loud as we can about the value of higher education,” said state Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia.

State Rep. Cheri Toalson Reisch, R-Hallsville, said she did not want the governor’s budget and cuts to higher education to harm MU.

“It’s the lifeblood of this city and this county and Mid-Missouri,” she said.

*Reporters Rudi Keller and Roger McKinney contributed to this story.*

**Students express concerns amid possible MU budget cuts**

By: Alyssa Toomey  
Posted: Feb 03, 2017 04:19 PM CST  
Updated: Feb 03, 2017 06:40 PM CST


As MU leaders brace for possibly millions of dollars in cuts, students are expressing concerns over the effects that will have on their tuition.

Yesterday, Gov. Eric Greitens released his plan for the 2018 fiscal year. The proposed budget will reduce funding for higher education by more than $100 million.

As ABC 17 News previously reported, Interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley believes the school will receive $22 million less in FY 2018, if the budget passes without change. Tuition makes up about 80 percent of MU's budget, which means students could feel the result of the state's budget cuts.
"That really sucks and I don't think they should've done that at all... a lot of kids that are here--we're really providing for ourselves so passing things like this--it just seems like it makes it harder on us," MU student Michele Akskalyan told ABC 17 News.

"Our government decides to misuse our taxes and then instead of doing it in a way that can benefit everyone, they pass the burden down to us and make people who haven't even gotten the chance to start going into the real world pay for their mistakes," MU student Sean Dorrance told ABC 17 News.

MU professor John Gahl, who is also on the MU faculty council, said our state has a law that puts a cap on raising tuition prices over .07%. The university can ask to increase it more, but he said, realistically, they can't increase it to the point where it has a negative effect on enrollment since enrollment at MU is down.

He added that budget cuts for higher education are not singular to our state.

"Approximately two thirds of the states in the union right now have similar problems with shortfalls. And so there's reductions that are going on everywhere," Gahl said.

During an MU Faculty Council meeting yesterday, Foley said controlling cost and boosting enrollment would help the school manage the shortfall. He also told ABC 17 News that he understood the governor's need to balance the budget and trusted Greitens' commitment to higher education.

Families using SNAP benefits could see decrease in ER visits

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


COLUMBIA — The ER could see a lighter workload as a result of increased funding for the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP).
According to a news release from the University of Missouri, the increase in benefits has directly affected families and hospitals of those who utilize SNAP services. Since 2000 extreme poverty has been reduced by 13.2 percent and childhood poverty has been reduced by 15.5 percent.

Colleen Heflin, a professor at the University of Missouri, and her team found that not only are poverty numbers dropping, but ER visits related to food insecurity are decreasing as well.

“We found that as the size of the SNAP benefit increased, that the probability of going to the ER decreased, which suggests that there is a protective benefit of SNAP benefits on health so this might suggest that we can even save money in the public health fund for Medicaid,” Heflin said.

The main cause of ER visits for people using SNAP benefits are people who suffer from hypoglycemia. According to the research conducted by Heflin and her team, the average medical cost associated with hypoglycemia was $1,186 per ER visit for individuals in extreme poverty.

Even a small increase in SNAP funding can cause a big decrease in ER visits, Heflin’s team found. A 100-dollar increase in benefits decreased ER visits by 13 percent.

“An increase from 575 dollars to 675 dollars is associated with a reduction of 30 out of every 100,000 visits,” Heflin said.

The research suggests that the increase can also help low-income families manage their food consumption over the month.

“Food insecurity rose during the great recession (2008) to about 14 percent nationwide, which is fairly common. There are a large number of households even in a thriving community like Columbia, that are having difficulties meeting their food needs,” Heflin said.

Heflin and her team are hopeful this can positively affect a number of different groups. The research has suggested to be beneficial in reducing ER visits, saving money for families because of this reduction, healthcare facilities, and taxpayers.
MU Researchers Find People Have Separation Anxiety with Their Smartphones

Generated from News Bureau release: iPhone Separation Linked to Physiological Anxiety, Poor Cognitive Performance, MU Study Finds


THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

The Coordinating Board for Higher Education is reviewing degree programs offered by the state’s public colleges and universities. The Missouri Department of Higher Education is leading the review, which officials hope to wrap up by this fall.
Zora Mulligan, Missouri commissioner of higher education, said that while the board conducts a statewide review of programs on a routine basis, doing so now is timely as state colleges and universities are receiving less state funding and struggling with low enrollment.

“We have an especially acute interest in it this year,” Mulligan said.

To complete the review, the department will work with the state’s 14 two-year colleges and 13 four-year universities. Mulligan said the review process gives the department an opportunity to look at all the programs available to students attending the state’s higher education institutions.

“And to help institutions come to difficult decisions about what to do with those that have low enrollment,” Mulligan said.

She said work for the review is underway. The last review was conducted in 2010. In 2011, the board adopted a process requiring a statewide program review every five years.

Op-Ed: Want to improve Mizzou? Look to Purdue

MICHAEL HIGHSMITH and MICHAEL MCSHANE

Last fall, at the same time the University of Missouri announced the first decline in enrollment in 15 years, Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., announced record-breaking enrollment. Tuition at Purdue has been frozen since 2012-13 and will remain unchanged through the 2017-18 school year. The cost of room and board actually has decreased since 2012-13.

T.S. Eliot said that “immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.”

The same can be true of universities. If Mizzou wants to be great, it can learn a lot from Purdue.

Under the leadership of President Mitch Daniels, Purdue has undertaken a series of projects designed to keep education affordable, research productive and the college experience relevant in the 21st century. In addition to more traditional reforms such as better budgeting and leveraging economies of scale to shave costs, Purdue continues to push the innovation envelope.

An easy way to lessen the burden of student debt is to reduce the amount of time that students must spend in the classroom. Purdue has experimented with competency-based education (CBE)
to achieve this. CBE is an accreditation system that grants students credit once they demonstrate mastery of a subject. Rather than waste time in the traditional 15-week classroom, students earn credit after demonstrating expertise in eight broadly defined primary competencies.

An expedited education can help more than just the student’s wallet, and Purdue’s Polytechnic Institute lets students work through a customized course of studies at their own pace. If they need to spend more time in a course that is especially challenging, they can. But if they can graduate faster, they face a smaller tuition bill and a quicker entrance into the workforce to earn income.

But that’s not all — Purdue also is experimenting with income share agreements (ISAs) to help students finance their education. Through the “Back a Boiler” program, students can commit a percentage of their income for a set amount of years to pay back their college costs instead of taking out a lump-sum loan.

ISAs protect students who find themselves graduating but unable to secure a high-paying job. If their salary is lower than expected, they aren’t buried in unmanageable debt. Likewise, if students are more successful after graduation, then the school (i.e., the initial lender) will make back more money. Inherently, ISAs incentivize lenders to maximize the value a student gains from his or her degree because both the school and graduates will benefit from post-graduation success.

Third, Purdue embarked on an unprecedented partnership with Amazon to provide products at a much lower cost to its students. In fact, Amazon’s first pickup store was launched on Purdue’s campus. Students are offered discounted products with expedited shipping, Purdue is given a percentage of the total profits to invest in scholarships, and Amazon is introduced to a fresh wave of users each year.

Eliot also said that “anxiety is the handmaiden of creativity.” As Mizzou reels from fears of enrollment decline and a tarnished reputation, it can redouble its efforts to innovate.

Michael Highsmith is a policy researcher at the Show-Me Institute, where Michael McShane is the director of education policy.
Travel ban suspended, but local immigrants not sure how it will affect them

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Feb 4, 2017

The government on Saturday suspended enforcement of President Donald Trump's travel ban and scurried to appeal a judge's order, plunging the administration into a crisis that has challenged Trump's authority and has left thousands of visa-holders wondering how they will move forward.

The stand-down, a day after a federal judge in Washington state temporarily blocked the ban, marked an extraordinary setback for the White House. Only a week ago, the president had acted to suspend America's refugee program and halt immigration to the U.S. from seven Muslim-majority countries that the government said raise terrorism concerns.

Late Saturday, visa holders from the seven majority-Muslim countries affected by the travel ban were hurrying to board U.S.-bound flights following a federal judge's order temporarily blocking the ban.

Those who could travel immediately were being urged to do so because of uncertainty over whether the Justice Department would be granted an emergency freeze of the order issued Friday.

As the White House worked to reinstate the ban, Trump mocked U.S. District Judge James Robart, appointed by President George W. Bush, as a "so-called judge" whose "ridiculous" ruling "will be overturned." He added in a subsequent tweet: "Because the ban was lifted by a judge, many very bad and dangerous people may be pouring into our country. A terrible decision."

Robart's ruling, which the White House said the Justice Department would challenge, led federal agencies to unwind enforcement of Trump's executive order.
The State Department, after initially saying that as many as 60,000 foreigners from Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia or Yemen had their visas canceled, reversed course on Saturday and said they could travel to the U.S. if they had a valid visa.

The department on Saturday advised refugee aid agencies that refugees set to travel before Trump signed his order will now be allowed into the United States. A State Department official said in an email obtained by The Associated Press that the government was "focusing on booking refugee travel" through Feb. 17 and working to have arrivals resume as soon as Monday.

The Homeland Security Department no longer was directing airlines to prevent visa-holders affected by Trump's order from boarding U.S.-bound planes. The agency said it had "suspended any and all actions" related to putting in place Trump's order, which the White House argued was "intended to protect the homeland."

The Justice Department was expected to ask the 9th Circuit to set aside Robart's ruling so the ban could go back into effect.

Columbia immigrants react

**MU students from the flagged Middle Eastern countries told the Missourian they had mixed reactions to the news.**

"It's temporary," said Homayoon Rafatijo, an Iranian doctoral student. "We don't know what we have to do."

Rafatijo came to MU from Tehran in 2013 with his wife. He said with the temporary suspension he still doesn't know if she would be allowed back in the country if she decides to travel.

Fawaz al-Bakri, a mechanical and aerospace engineering doctoral candidate from Baghdad, feels more hopeful.

"I believe American society is a global nation," he said.

His family, who he hasn't seen in five years, cancelled their travel plans after the ban came into action. However, he said, now they are considering coming to the U.S. to visit him.

Constitutional and legal challenges

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, criticized Trump for "attempting to bully and disparage yet another federal judge" and said he seemed "intent on
precipitating a constitutional crisis." Trump's rhetoric also could put government lawyers defending his order in a tough spot.

With legal challenges pending, two prominent Middle Eastern air carriers announced they would resume carrying passengers from the seven affected countries. Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways, national carrier of the United Arab Emirates, said U.S.-bound travelers from those countries with valid visas would be allowed to board.

In Egypt, Cairo airport and airline officials said they have received instructions from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to suspend President Trump's executive order.

Government-backed Qatar Airways is one of a few Mideast airlines operating direct daily flights to multiple American cities. Its U.S. destinations from its Doha hub include New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami and Washington.

At New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, volunteer lawyer Renee Paradis said most of the flights involving passengers from the affected countries were to arrive later Saturday.

"Anybody who comes here on a visa is supposed to be allowed in, so we would anticipate that somebody who is in the air would be able to land and enter," she said. "Of course, as with everything this week, it remains to be seen what happens on the ground."

The executive order has caused chaos within the government and the courts. Trump fired Sally Yates, an Obama administration holdover who was serving as acting attorney general, after she said the Justice Department would not enforce it.

*Missourian reporter Alejandra Arredondo contributed to this report.*
Mike Messer pumped his fist, adding a “Yeah!” to punctuate Thursday’s announcement that the Heart of Missouri United Way topped $3 million in fundraising for 2016.

Executive Director Andrew Grabau said the money will help 33 local not-for-profit agencies that receive United Way funding for programs focused on education, income, health and financial safety nets for people in emergency situations.

More than 80 percent of United Way-funded program recipients live below the federal poverty level, which is $24,300 for a family of four. Data show that a majority of single-parent homes and a high percentage of kids and minorities are living in poverty in Boone County.

Thursday’s celebratory event in the LeMone Lounge overlooking Faurot Field at the University of Missouri was also a precursor to the start of the 2017 fundraising campaign, which will officially launch this summer. Messer, a Shelter Insurance agent, and his wife, Sarah, were co-chairs of the 2016 campaign, which exceeded $3 million for the first time since 2012, the year the agency adopted a “community impact” model of funding programs largely aimed at kids and families in poverty.

The final tally was $3,007,000, the result of a third straight year of increased giving, topping the previous year’s $2.9 million.

Grabau said the funded agencies “provide effective solutions and measure impact to make sure we’re making a difference in our community.”

The 2016 community impact report listed a bevy of program results, including:

- 71 teen mothers who remained in or completed high school.
- 118 low-income children who received scholarships to early-learning programs.
- 94 percent of financial literacy training participants who reduced debt and/or increased their savings.
- Nearly 26,000 Boone County residents who received food assistance.
- And 512 adults and children who were given shelter during crises arising from abuse, neglect and assault.
More than 200 local businesses and some 8,000 individuals contributed to the 2016 campaign. The University of Missouri was the largest contributor, raising more than $500,000 among employees. Other businesses received special recognition, including Boone Hospital Center, which increased employee contributions by 73 percent, and Shelter Insurance, which has raised more than $1 million through employee donations in the past five years.

Grabau credited Shelter Insurance Co.’s President and CEO Rick Means for installing “a culture of philanthropy” among the company’s more than 1,100 local employees and agents. Shelter hosted the campaign kickoff and not-for-profit agency supply drive in September.

Means said the credit goes to “a great team of folks” at Shelter and the philosophy “to be good corporate citizens.”

Means lives in southwest Columbia and said he doesn’t see many examples of poverty as he drives along Vawter School Road, Scott Boulevard and Broadway to reach the Shelter Insurance office. Means said he encourages employees to take the time to see the needs in the community.

“We could ignore it, not recognize problems in our community,” he said.

Messer said he and his wife had an “amazing” learning experience leading the 2016 campaign and visiting funded agencies to see the work they do.

“Our eyes have just been opened to the incredible need in our community. We had no idea they were in such huge numbers,” he said. The Messers handed off the campaign chair titles to Realtors Allen and Bev Curtis of House of Brokers.

Bev Curtis echoed Mike Messer’s observation about the “eye-opening experience” of seeing the “incredible needs” of people who are struggling financially to afford child care, housing, health care and other essentials.

“We’re talking real people with real lives that have real need,” she said.
Hundreds rally against abortion at Midwest March for Life

By BRITTANY RUESS bruess@columbiatribune.com | 815-1722

JEFFERSON CITY — Hundreds of anti-abortion advocates stormed the state Capitol on Saturday to speak out against abortion and Planned Parenthood as part of the annual Midwest March for Life.

Starting at St. Peter Interparish School, people marched around the Capitol and held signs that read: “Real doctors do not kill babies,” “We march because they can’t,” and “Planned Parenthood lies to you.”

Inside the Capitol rotunda, event organizers estimated 800 people listened to speakers who celebrated the election of President Donald Trump and Gov. Eric Greitens, promoted crisis pregnancy centers and sometimes gave graphic details of abortion practices. Organizers said fewer people were in the Capitol than during the march because some had left the event after marching.

Columbia resident Jean Wolinski marched with her husband and a friend, Carol Fick. Wolinski said she prays in front of the Planned Parenthood clinic in Columbia, has participated in other rallies and has written letters to the governor, Congress and the president to vote in favor of anti-abortion legislation.

“I believe that life begins at conception, and I don’t want to see those babies killed,” she said. “We need to help the mothers, too, who are put in those situations, who are being encouraged to destroy their babies. We need to support them, too.”

Mizzou Students for Life, an anti-abortion student group at the University of Missouri, is starting an initiative to help pregnant women by ensuring the university meets Title IX requirements, said Kristen Wood, the organization’s president. She said that could mean advocating for lactation rooms, changing tables and student housing for mothers, adding the group wants to network with pregnant mothers to find out specifically what they need. Wood said there’s a common misconception that if a student faces an unplanned pregnancy, she cannot continue her education.

“We’re trying to end that stigma and make sure that Mizzou puts policies into place that would help people in that situation,” she said.
Members of the group are regular volunteers at crisis pregnancy centers in Columbia, particularly the My Life Clinic, which is located on Providence Road across from Planned Parenthood.

The clinic is one of 69 pregnancy centers in the state where Missourians can receive a tax credit for their donations. The Life Network of Central Missouri collects donations for My Life Clinic, which is the only Columbia clinic that qualifies for the tax credit program.

In their efforts to defund Planned Parenthood, anti-abortion advocates have turned attention to pregnancy centers such as My Life Clinic, where clients are offered free counseling, STD testing and a limited ultrasound exam.

Alison Dreith, executive director of NARAL Pro-Choice Missouri, said in a recent interview that crisis pregnancy centers will lie to women to prevent them from seeking abortions. She said a 2012 study completed by the organization showed that clients weren’t receiving medically accurate information. Dreith said pregnancy centers also are not held to the same standards as Planned Parenthood.

Planned Parenthood sought an injunction in December to stop state regulations that organization leaders believe are “medically unnecessary” and harm women wanting abortions. Speakers on Saturday claimed Planned Parenthood facilities operate in disgusting and unsafe conditions. Elise Higgins, interim director of public policy and organizing for Planned Parenthood, told the Tribune in December that the center’s practices follow standards set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

In an email Tuesday, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services spokesman Ryan Hobart said crisis pregnancy centers are not regulated by the department.

During the 2015 legislative session, lawmakers approved a bill that changed provisions to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, including redirecting 2 percent of those federal dollars to the state’s alternatives-to-abortion program.

The alternatives program received more than $1.5 million in the 2015 fiscal year, with $2.1 million appropriated for 2016, and former Gov. Jay Nixon recommended $3.6 million for the program in the 2017 fiscal year. Gov. Eric Greitens has recommended no funding to the program in his proposed fiscal year 2018 budget but included increased spending for foster care and adoption resource centers.

Rep. Diane Franklin, R-Camdenton, who was presented an award for her anti-abortion legislation and advocacy, said in an interview that pregnancy centers provide women and men the most comprehensive health care.

“If they can go down a path where they receive that, then that’s what we’re interested in doing — having healthy folks in Missouri, healthy babies born in Missouri,” she said.
Bill seeks to end tenure system in Missouri

No MU Mention

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — A Missouri lawmaker wants to eliminate tenure for professors at all the state's two- and four-year public colleges and universities.

Rep. Rick Brattin, a Harrisonville Republican, says ending tenure would save public money, give the schools more flexibility and make higher education similar to other industries.

The Kansas City Star reports the proposal would end tenure-track hiring next year. But it would not take tenure away from those who already have earned it.

Critics say ending tenure would cause the best professors to leave Missouri and put schools at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting faculty.

Brattin's bill is similar to a bill proposed this year in Iowa, which would eliminate the tenure system at public institutions.
State Support Up 3.4%

No MU Mention

Editor’s note: Report lists Missouri’s total state support as $1.1 billion for 2016-17, a 5.2% increase compared to last year and a 16.7% increase from five years ago. Nationwide, funding was up 3.4% over the past year and 16.2% from five years ago, the latest Grapevine survey found.

By Rick Seltzer, February 6, 2017

State support for higher education is rising moderately this fiscal year, with more than three-quarters of states posting increases on the way to countrywide percentage growth in the low single digits.

Support across all states rose by 3.4 percent from the 2015-16 to 2016-17 fiscal years, according to preliminary data gathered in the latest Grapevine survey, which was released today. That’s an increase of approximately $2.75 billion, driving total state support to nearly $83.6 billion.

“We had a modest increase across most states,” said James Palmer, a professor of higher education at Illinois State University and Grapevine editor. “It’s an indication, I think, that there’s a willingness across states to fund and increase funding for higher ed.”

The broad trend does not match much faster rates of increase seen before the financial crisis of a decade ago, Palmer said. But it does reflect a shift from the widespread cutbacks that states carried out in the lean years after the financial crisis.

Even though the broad trend was upward, funding levels played out differently in individual states. Most notably, Illinois remains mired in a multiyear budget standoff that has drastically affected public funding for higher education. Lawmakers have put only makeshift funding in place for the current fiscal year after allocating stopgap funding last year. Last year’s stopgap funding for higher ed in Illinois, roughly $817 million, was the equivalent of just 17 percent of funding that had been allocated in the last year Illinois had a full budget, the 2014-15 fiscal year, according to Palmer. Stopgap monies allocated so far for the current fiscal year, $1.4 billion, are higher but still only equal to 29 percent of 2014-15 levels.
The situation in Illinois is still evolving, so more money could be on the way for the current fiscal year. But the last two years have been unsettled enough -- and unusual enough -- that the Grapevine report also breaks out across-the-board funding changes for the 49 states other than Illinois. Across those states, state funding rose 2.7 percent this year to $82.2 billion.

Signs of the financial strain are showing at Illinois universities. Those that lack nonstate resources have been particularly hard hit, such as Chicago State University, which last year declared financial exigency and later controversially parted ways with its president after only nine months. Observers at the time wondered about the university’s ability to survive, pointing out that its cafeteria had been closed for weeks and its library had limited hours.

The large University of Illinois System has also been affected, prompting leaders there to support a proposed deal that would limit tuition and increase emphasis on in-state students in exchange for predictable funding over five years.

“I think this is unprecedented in the history of the Grapevine project,” Palmer said, noting the project goes back to the 1960s. “I think the Illinois situation is an anomaly. The fact that we haven’t had a full state budget for two years is indicative of the fiscal impasse that the state finds itself in.”

When last year’s Grapevine report was released, Illinois wasn’t the only state without a budget. Pennsylvania hadn’t finalized one, either. But Pennsylvania has since broken its budget stalemate, leaving Illinois standing alone as its budget impasse drags on through its second year.

The more than three-quarters of states -- 39 in total -- that posted increases in higher education funding in 2016-17 raised it by significantly different amounts. The smallest increase was 0.2 percent in Colorado and Wisconsin. The largest was 10.5 percent in Hawaii.

Meanwhile, 10 states reported decreasing funding: Alaska, Connecticut, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oklahoma, West Virginia and Wyoming. West Virginia was home to the smallest decrease, 0.4 percent. Wyoming had the biggest decrease, 8.8 percent.

This year the survey also measured higher education funding from Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C., for the first time. In Puerto Rico funding rose by 0.2 percent. Funding in D.C. rose by 6.6 percent. Changes in state funding were significantly less varied than they were last year, when increases ranged from 0.1 percent in Kentucky to 16.2 percent in Oregon and decreases ranged from 0.1 percent in New Jersey to 14 percent in Arizona.

Over all last year, the Grapevine report found 39 states increasing state funding and nine reporting decreases. Countrywide state support for higher education rose 4.1 percent between 2014-15 and 2015-16, it found. Many of the states experiencing declines in funding this year are energy-rich states that depend on taxes or fees tied in some way to the oil and gas industry, Palmer said. The oil and gas sector has been struggling amid low prices recently.

*Story continues.*