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Education digest

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY > Five schools in Missouri and Illinois make list • Three Missouri schools and two in Illinois were listed among the 100 best values in public colleges by Kiplinger's Personal Finance, in a list released Tuesday. For the 10th time since Kiplinger's first analysis in 1998, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill tops the chart.

Making the list in Missouri were Truman State University, which ranked 31st; the University of Missouri-Columbia, which ranked 75th; and Missouri University of Science and Technology, which ranked 86th. The University of Illinois ranked 45th, with Illinois State University ranking 95th.

The average annual in-state sticker price of a public college is \$16,140 — some \$20,000 less than for private colleges. Among the public schools on Kiplinger's top 100 list, one-fifth of them charge less than the average cost.

The annual public school rankings are online at www.kiplinger.com/tools/colleges.

Mediacom subscribers left with a blank screen

By Eve Edelheit

January 4, 2011 | 5:43 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Early on Tuesday morning Mediacom subscribers were left looking at a blank screen on channels 5, 7 and 85. As the contract negotiation extension deadline ended, KOMU programming was pulled from the lineup for Mediacom customers.

Missouri joins four other states across the nation with network blackouts in 2011, according to a press release by the American Television Alliance.

Both Mediacom and KOMU, an NBC affiliate, are consistent in saying that negotiations are continuing about programming compensation but that KOMU programs will be out during these conversations. Now, after several proposals have been rejected by both parties, Mediacom is coming forward about issues that occurred during the negotiation process.

"We did not want to accept a one-year agreement with KOMU," Mediacom spokeswoman Phyllis Peterssaid. "We offered arbitration twice, and it was rejected both times by KOMU."

Matt Garrett, KOMU's director of audience development, has been at the Columbia television station offices for much of the past two days.

"We were still talking early this morning and offered another proposal but have yet to hear back from Mediacom," Garrett said.

Garrett has been one of a few KOMU staff members answering phone calls and questions from viewers. Garrett said the phones have been consistently ringing all day, with the most prevalent questions regarding where to get local news.

The Mediacom support staff has been fielding questions on its forums and Twitter account since the drop occurred. The Twitter account MediacomSupport has answered all tweets

regarding the programming change with, "We apologize and are working quickly to reach an agreement with KOMU as soon as possible."

Customers are not satisfied by this response. Columbia resident Amanda Vandertuig is one of the many Twitter users who tried to communicate with MediacomSupport.

"It's your job to fix the problem," VanderTuig said. "It's my job to watch television."

VanderTuig has been a Mediacom customer since 2004 and said she is planning to change to CenturyLink if an agreement isn't reached soon.

Columbia resident Richard Lebens went to the Mediacom office in Columbia on Tuesday afternoon to find out more information on the situation.

"It's silly, because it seems like they will come to an agreement," Lebens said. "I just want to have my NBC."

In an effort to appease Mediacom customers in Columbia, the cable provider is offering a yearlong deal for a free digital cable box. This box will give subscribers access to the NBC shows offered on the company's on-demand video service. Mediacom is also working on filling the three empty channels.

"These channels will not necessarily be replaced with broadcast programming," Peters said. "There's a chance for high-quality family programming, but nothing has been finalized."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Council votes to oppose EPA plan for Hinkson Creek

By Nick Schnell

January 4, 2011 | 9:50 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — EPA recommendations calling for significant reductions in storm-water runoff to control pollution in Hinkson Creek were rejected on a 5-2 vote by the Columbia City Council after a 2 1/2-hour public hearing Monday night.

The resolution opposing the EPA plan appeared on the council agenda after criticism from First Ward Councilman Paul Sturtz and from Ken Midiff, chairman of the Osage Chapter of the Sierra Club. Both have asserted that Mayor Bob McDavid and city staff took an official stance on the issue without adequate input or involvement from the council.

They also criticized the city's arrangement with David Shorr, a Columbia attorney who has represented the Central Missouri Development Council and is a former director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. Sturtz said the council should have been told that Shorr was representing the city; Midkiff said he has seen no evidence that Shorr actually is operating with any sort of contract.

At the beginning of the hearing, Columbia Public Works Director John Glascock gave a 15-minute PowerPoint presentation outlining city efforts that he argues have contributed to the health of the stream over the years. He displayed aerial images of Hinkson Creek outlining the impaired areas — locations of the watershed that the Department of Natural Resources has identified as contributing to pollution in the creek — and listed a timeline of events that led to the city's position.

Glascock said that the city, Boone County and MU are committed to reducing pollution in Hinkson Creek but previous studies of water quality in the stream are flawed.

Since 1998, Hinkson Creek has been listed on the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' list of impaired streams. After several attempts by that department to develop a plan for cleaning up the creek, the EPA took responsibility.

The EPA has proposed a plan known as a total maximum daily load, which seeks to bring pollution in the creek down to acceptable standards.

The EPA's most recent recommendation calls for Columbia to reduce the amount of stormwater that runs into Hinkson Creek by 39.6 percent, according to [a previous Missouriian article](#).

Glascoek ended his presentation by proposing more studies and the pursuit of "more modest goals," which include starting reductions of stormwater runoff at a much lower percentage and finding money to implement a comprehensive stormwater utility plan and long-term monitoring of the creek.

Sixth Ward Councilwoman Barbara Hoppe peppered Glascock, his staff and Boone County stormwater coordinator Georganne Bowman with questions about whether they had factored the work of the Hinkson Creek Watershed Restoration Project into their position. She said the group, which includes representatives of the city, the county and MU, has done volunteer work on behalf of the stream and has monitored water quality in the creek.

City Manager Bill Watkins summarized Glascock's comments, calling Hinkson Creek "a math issue." The cost of meeting the EPA's stormwater detention requirements, he argued, would be significant.

City estimates have placed the cost at up to \$300 million. Even a modest estimate of \$100 million, Watkins said, would require the diversion of years of sales tax revenue.

Sturtz praised the staff's presentation but said the council should have been informed much earlier.

"I refuse to vote on this as if this conversation was had a few months ago," he said.

After the city staff's presentation, Midkiff spoke to what he called "the other side of the story." A vocal proponent of the EPA recommendations, Midkiff said the EPA's use of stormwater as a surrogate for "unknown" pollutants is valid. Stormwater runoff, he argued, is a "chemical stew" full of herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, anti-freeze, grease and warm water.

"If not stormwater, then what?" he asked.

Several other speakers followed, including Don Stamper of the Central Missouri Development Council. He called the city, county and MU's opposition to the EPA plan "a wise decision."

Sturtz said he was impressed with the amount of expertise the hearing brought to the discussion.

“The kind of conversation we’re having tonight is something to be proud of,” Sturtz said. But he said he found it “insulting” that the council was being asked to vote on a policy opposing the EPA plan after city staff and Shorr already had done so.

Hoppe said the city is partially to blame for the situation it’s in.

“I feel the city has dragged its feet” on the stormwater issue, she said.

Council members Jason Thornill, Gary Kespohl, Daryl Dudley and Laura Nauser of the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth wards joined McDavid in favoring the resolution opposing the EPA plan. McDavid said the debate was essential but emphasized that he believes the EPA plan is “not reasonable.”

“I think it has a breathtaking lack of science, and I cannot support it,” McDavid said.

In the end, only Sturtz and Hoppe opposed the resolution. Midkiff said that he expected that result, and he would e-mail the EPA on Tuesday to push for a scheduled approach to meeting its requirements.

The EPA is under a Jan. 31 deadline to complete its recommendation. Both the city and Midkiff have suggested they’re willing to go to court over the matter.



Vote backs mayor in EPA opposition

TMDL will be set this month.

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, January 4, 2011

A split council voted last night to support Mayor Bob McDavid and city staff in opposition to an EPA plan to control pollution in Hinkson Creek.

The council listened to about two hours of public testimony including more than a dozen people. Most asked the council to back off from opposing the Environmental Protection Agency's proposal to use stormwater control as the main element of a plan to reduce pollution from sediments, chemicals and sewage.

The EPA is seeking a 39.6 percent reduction in runoff reaching the creek between Interstate 70 and Providence Road to reduce the Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL, of pollutants.

The discussion was sparked when First Ward Councilman Paul Sturtz objected to a letter McDavid wrote to the EPA saying the city opposed the TMDL requirement. The council had never voted on the EPA plan, and Sturtz said McDavid did not have the authority to speak for the city.

On a 5-2 vote, with Sixth Ward Councilwoman Barbara Hoppe joining Sturtz in the minority, the council approved McDavid's actions opposing the EPA proposal. The EPA Region 7 office in Kansas City is expected to issue a final TMDL directive to the city, county and University of Missouri on Hinkson Creek by the end of the month.

Hoppe said the city and developers have not done enough to control stormwater, especially on construction sites. She showed pictures and video of chocolate-colored water running from the site of the Maguire Boulevard construction project. The plastic silt fencing used on construction sites doesn't work, Hoppe said.

"They fail repeatedly," she said. "It is a total farce."

But McDavid said studies showing that Hinkson Creek is impaired and does not support the full range of aquatic life are too old and don't give the city credit for stormwater controls imposed in recent years.

"I think the Hinkson Creek TMDL proposal is not reasonable," McDavid said as he prepared to vote. "I think it has a breathtaking lack of science."

Public Works Director John Glascock gave the council a presentation claiming the city would have to acquire 300 to 1,800 acres for detention and treatment of stormwater if the proposed TMDL rules go into effect.

“We can go in and capture the water and still not attain the goals,” he said.

City Manager Bill Watkins said the potential costs for the city are huge, potentially in excess of \$100 million.

McDavid’s letter in opposition to the TMDL was made public by Ken Midkiff, former director of the National Clean Water Campaign for the Sierra Club and Conservation Chair of the Osage Group of the Sierra Club. He found the letter among documents provided by the city under an Open Meetings and Records Law request.

Midkiff was given 15 minutes to explain why the city should not oppose the TMDL standard. He told the council that runoff contributes in several ways to the pollution in the creek. Runoff is an appropriate way to control pollution because Columbia has developed rapidly, increasing the amount of runoff reaching the creek, he said.

“The city and the county have allowed acres and acres of impervious surfaces at retail outlets, shopping malls and subdivisions and have ongoing projects to add more impervious surfaces,” he said. “The University of Missouri has several building projects; all of these are surrounded by impervious parking lots. In short, the three entities are now reaping what they have sown.”

Many stormwater controls are inexpensive, Midkiff said. Individual homeowners could be encouraged to install rain barrels or rain gardens to capture runoff from their property, he said.

Inflated cost estimates and arguments about the science are tactics designed to abandon responsibility for pollution in Hinkson Creek, he said.

Speaking in support of affirming the city’s opposition to the TMDL standard, Don Stamper, executive director of the Central Missouri Development Council, said builders want cleaner streams, but the Hinkson Creek proposal could shut down construction and isn’t guaranteed to fix the problems, he said.

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Study finds bright spots for rural health care

By Andrew Denney

Tuesday, January 4, 2011

The new federal health care law could bring positive changes to Missouri's rural counties, where the number of doctors and income levels are low, and the number of those who lack health insurance is high, a rural policy think tank announced in a new study.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, signed into law March 23, could improve rural residents' access to primary care physicians, the Rural Policy Research Institute — which is staffed with researchers from the University of Missouri and other Midwestern schools — stated in a Dec. 15 report.

In addition, the law could increase incentives for preventive care and improve access to health insurance in rural areas, where many people have jobs at small businesses without the means to provide affordable health care plans for employees. But, the study concluded, the changes should be monitored to ensure rural areas do not fall victim to "unintended consequences" of the legislation.

Brian Dabson, an MU professor and president and CEO of RUPRI, said as provisions of the law take effect, loopholes will be exposed and possibly exploited. Also, certain parts could be threatened with repeal as a new wave of Republican lawmakers take control of the U.S. House of Representatives and the party swells its ranks in the U.S. Senate.

"Who knows how all the working parts will work together as this is implemented?" Dabson said.

The RUPRI study also noted hurdles related to less broadband connectivity in rural areas, a lower volume of patients in health care facilities and a relative lack of not-for-profit organizations that could provide assistance with accessing health care.

Also, the state of public health in rural America could present a challenge. Generally speaking, rural counties contain declining and aging populations. According to a study by the Lyons, Neb.-based Center for Rural Affairs, a higher percentage of rural children are obese and less physically active than children in urban areas.

Manual labor jobs that once sprung abundant in rural areas — farming, fishing, forestry and mining — have become more mechanized and less physically intense, and many of the crops harvested there are absorbed into industrial operations.

Compared with city dwellers, said Jon Bailey, director of research and analysis at the Center for Rural Affairs, "rural people have less access to fresh fruits and vegetables."

Keith Mueller, a University of Iowa professor and chairman of the RUPRI Rural Health panel, said misconceptions about the law could also make it difficult for rural inhabitants to be receptive to its potential benefits. He said Medicaid had been a tough sell for rural America, but selling the so-called "Obamacare" program could be even tougher because of its portrayal as a government takeover of health care.

"That creates a challenge for those of us who are trying to plow the middle ground and say, 'This is what the reality is,'" Mueller said.

According to 2007 U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Bureau of Economic Statistics estimates, about one-quarter of Missouri's residents live outside metropolitan areas. According to a 2008 profile of Missouri conducted by RUPRI, 102 counties in the state — including Boone — contain areas considered to have a shortage of available primary care physicians. In 27 of those counties, the entire county was considered to have a shortage. In Boone County, 16.2 percent of adults do not have health insurance, according to the MU Center for Health Policy.

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Kick your resolution off with healthy Tex Mex stuffed peppers

Posted in [Healthy eating](#)
by [Lorain County Moms](#)

Family Features

According to the National Pork Board's "Healthy Habits 2011" survey, while 60 percent of dieters have made a health-related resolution, sticking to that goal will be harder than quitting smoking or even winning the lottery.

Luckily, finding nutritious foods, like pork, which taste great and can help you feel fuller longer, is a delicious recipe for long-term diet success. However, the survey also showed that seven out of ten people are not aware that incorporating lean pork into their diet can decrease distracting thoughts about food.

"One of the keys to weight management is managing hunger," said Dr. Heather Leidy, currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology at the University of Missouri. "There is a growing body of evidence that suggests increasing the amount of lean protein, like pork, in your diet can help decrease distracting thoughts about food to help you achieve long-term healthy eating goals."

Here are a handful of tips to help you control your appetite:

- Choose cuts of pork that come from the loin — including chops and roasts — and 96 percent lean ground pork, which are the leanest cuts of pork available.
- Think about meal frequency. A recent study, published in the journal "Obesity," suggests that sitting down to eat a real meal three times a day may be a better strategy for weight loss than grazing on several smaller "mini-meals."
- In addition to protein, look for foods high in fiber like fruits, vegetables and whole grains to help keep you fuller.