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Nixon meets privately with college presidents

By Jignese Silvey

Presidents of all of Missouri's four-year public colleges and universities spent an hour behind closed doors with Gov. Jay Nixon on Wednesday, then spent another hour in a closed meeting at a lobbying firm in downtown Jefferson City.

Few details were released afterward. Steve Owens, interim president of the University of Missouri System, said Nixon gave them a sneak peak of his budget proposal - which won't be made public until next week's State of the State address - and encouraged them to keep tuition increases low this coming school year.

"He asked us to do everything we could to keep downward pressure on tuition," Owens told the Tribune after the meetings. That fits with the university's own goal to keep tuition as low as possible while maintaining quality of education, he said.

Owens said Nixon did not make any offers regarding tuition or funding, nor did institutions agree to anything.

For the past two years, public colleges and universities have kept in-state undergraduate tuition flat in exchange for a state budget proposal that somewhat shielded higher education from cuts. Last year, higher education took a 5 percent hit in the state budget, but some said that number would have been much higher without Nixon's tuition deal.

Nixon's 2 p.m. meeting was "private," his spokesman Scott Holste told the Tribune when a reporter asked for access. Asked what the meeting was about, Holste said "a wide range of higher education topics."

Dozens of university officials were there, although only presidents were in the first half of the discussion in Nixon's chambers. After talking to Nixon, the group reconvened without him at the Burch & Associates lobbying firm's office a few blocks from the Capitol.

Deaton, saying he was running late for another meeting, referred questions to Owens after the meetings.

Although Owens declined to specify how much Nixon might propose to cut from higher education, the university's tuition discussion will continue later this week. The UM Board of Curators is meeting via teleconference at 9:30 a.m. Friday to start talking about how much tuition could increase this coming school year. Although administrators have not announced

numbers, they said at the December meeting their goal is to keep any increase less than 10 percent.

Under a three-year-old state statute, universities must get permission to increase tuition beyond the consumer price index or else be subject to a state funding withholding.

In a statement the UM System sent after the meetings, Owens said the four campuses have “exercised prudent expense controls — no salary increases, a hiring freeze and reduced expenses in areas such as travel, supplies and equipment.”

But, he said, the university has added 17,000 students over the past decade at the same time state support per student has dropped 28 percent.

“The university is below 2001 funding levels in nominal dollars, and at a mid-1990s funding level in inflation-adjusted dollars,” Owens said in the statement. “We are therefore at a point where we must also be concerned about the quality of the education we provide as the state’s research university.”

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Nietzel says he isn't candidate to head University of Missouri system

Mike Nietzel, former president of Missouri State University, said he does not expect to be tapped as a candidate for president at the University of Missouri System.

"I haven't been approached nor do expect to be," Nietzel told the News-Leader in an email message. "I am not a candidate to be a president anywhere."

Gary Forsee, who took the reins of the UM system in February 2008, resigned from the president's position Friday to care for his wife, who was diagnosed with cancer in December.

His departure has sparked speculations who could be the next UM president.

Jim Cofer, who served as vice president for finance and administration for the UM system between 1998 and 2002 before taking a president's job at University of Louisiana at Monroe, expressed his desire to stay with Missouri State.

"I am very happy at Missouri State. We have a great faculty, fully engaged and wonderful students, hard-working and dedicated staff all in a great community," said Cofer, who became MSU president in August.

"And, we have a board that is committed to the good work yet to do. This is a great time to be at Missouri State University.

Nietzel now is a professor of psychology at Missouri State and an advisor to Gov. Jay Nixon on higher education and workforce readiness.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UM Board of Curators to meet Friday morning

By [Caitlin S. Miller](#), [Raha Obaei](#)

January 12, 2011 | 5:01 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA – The UM System Board of Curators is holding a special meeting at 9:30 a.m. Friday in a public session to address multiple issues, but no decisions are expected to be made.

According to a news release, those issues include tuition and other enrollment fees, enrollment management, financial aid, 2012 fiscal year student activities, facility and health service fees and residence hall and family student housing rates.

The UM System may not increase tuition beyond the state rate of inflation without requiring a waiver application approved by the Department of Higher Education.

Although no actions regarding tuition are scheduled for Friday's meeting, the approval of tuition and fees is expected at the Jan. 27-28 meeting.

Media will be in attendance via a TelePresence Center in Ellis Library Room 106A.



Schaefer gets appropriations post

By Rudi Keller

JEFFERSON CITY — State Sen. Kurt Schaefer was appointed chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

Schaefer, who was vice chairman of the committee last year, will lead the panel as it seeks to match spending with an expected \$500 million to \$700 million shortfall in general revenue.

The appointment was widely anticipated, and a news release announcing it was prematurely released by the Senate Communications staff last week.

Schaefer also will have seats on the Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy and the Environment Committee and the Education Committee.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Mayer names committee chairs in Missouri Senate

By TONY MESSENGER > tmessenger@post-dispatch.com > 573-635-6178
www.STLtoday.com | [1 Comment](#) | Posted: Wednesday, January 12, 2011 10:37 am

JEFFERSON CITY -- Missouri Senate President Pro Tem **Rob Mayer, R-Dexter**, released the list of powerful chairmen of committees today, putting to an end the Capitol parlor game of who the next round of leaders would be.

The biggest prize -- or most talked about, at least -- went to **Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia**, who will lead the appropriations committee that plays a major role in passing the state's next budget. The naming of Schaefer probably bodes well for the University of Missouri -- in his hometown.

Of course, with the number of cuts likely coming down the pike this year, including to higher education, Schaefer has some heavy lifting in front of him.

Here's the full list of chairmen (also linked [here](#)):

Senate Committees and Chairmen are (in alphabetical order):

1. Administration: Sen. Robert N. Mayer, R-Dexter
 2. Agriculture, Food Production and Outdoor Resources: Sen. Brian Munzlinger, R-Williamstown
 3. Appropriations: Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia
 4. Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy and the Environment: Sen. Brad Lager, R-Maryville
 5. Education: Sen. David Pearce, R-Warensburg
 6. Financial and Governmental Organizations and Elections: Sen. Kevin Engler, R-Farmington
 7. Fiscal Oversight, Ways and Means: Sen. Chuck Purgason, R-Caulfield
 8. General Laws: Sen. Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield
 9. Governmental Accountability: Sen. Jim Lembke, R-St. Louis
 10. Gubernatorial Appointments: Sen. Robert N. Mayer, R-Dexter
 11. Health, Mental Health, Seniors and Families: Sen. Luann Ridgeway, R-Smithville
 12. Jobs, Economic Development and Local Government: Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Glendale
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13. Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence: Sen. Jack Goodman, R-Mt. Vernon
 14. Progress and Development: Sen. Victor Callahan, D-Independence
 15. Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions and Ethics: Sen. Tom Dempsey, R-St. Charles
 16. Small Business, Insurance and Industry: Sen. Scott Rupp, R-Wentzville
 17. Transportation: Sen. Bill Stouffer, R-Napton
- Veterans' Affairs, Pensions, Urban Affairs and Emerging Issues: Sen. Jason Crowell, R-Cape Girardeau



Panel looks to tweak formula

Changes could save \$65 million.

By Ruth Keller

CITY — The state could save more than \$65 million annually on public schools by changing the way money is distributed to small school districts and districts with declining attendance, a Kansas City-area senator said yesterday.

Another \$14 million could be saved by eliminating the premium allocation to districts that provide summer school, said Sen. Victor Callahan, D-Independence, during discussions of the education working group of the Senate's Rebooting Government effort.

Most of the four-member group's time was devoted to ideas concerning elementary and secondary education. **Higher education was discussed as well, but not with the in-depth attention given to public schools. Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education Paul Wagner said the program reviews being conducted at state colleges and universities will be considered by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education at its meeting next month.**

"I have been pleasantly surprised by the cooperative effort of our institutions," Wagner said.

Lawmakers are faced with a budget gap in the coming year that is estimated to be between \$500 million and \$700 million. General revenue has declined \$1.3 billion in the past two years, to about \$6.7 billion this year.

The education discussion yesterday was designed to consider proposals that will be forwarded to the entire Senate for consideration.

Callahan said there are three provisions in the foundation formula, the state's basic aid program for local schools, that lawmakers should consider changing.

One requires the state to not reduce aid to districts with fewer than 350 students below the amount they received in the 2005-06 school year. Another keeps state aid near the levels a district received in the 2005-06 school year -- known as a "hold harmless" district -- if the revised formula enacted in 2005 would otherwise require a cut. And the third allows districts to average attendance over three years to mitigate the effect of declining pupil counts.

Changing the aid to small districts provision would save \$6.5 million. The other two would generate larger savings, \$31.9 million if "hold harmless" districts were limited to receiving two

times the amount the formula would otherwise provide and another \$30 million by using two-year attendance counts, Callahan said.

“As we have finite dollars to stretch the formula, are these luxuries we can’t afford?” Callahan asked.

Eliminating those provisions would give the state’s 522 school districts — half of which have fewer than 608 students — an incentive to consider consolidation to cut costs, several lawmakers said.

Deputy Commissioner of Education Ron Lankford said consolidation and reorganization of school districts has been available for years but is usually unpopular in rural areas that see local schools as part of their community identity.

“People want to maintain their school districts,” he said.

Nothing in state law prevents smaller districts from sharing a superintendent, Lankford said. And with the standards for central office administrators based on teacher numbers and the standard for principals based on student population, “there is capacity for that to be an option,” he said.

Sen. Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield, said studies have shown that the “sweet spot” for efficiency in school districts is 7,000 pupils. Of the 522 districts, she noted that only 54 have 4,000 or more.

The issue is not just money, Cunningham said. Only half of Missouri students are testing as proficient in core subjects, she said, and 40 percent of college students need remedial help. She suggested that rural districts could become charter districts, allowing them to escape teacher tenure rules. More flexible attendance rules to overcome district boundaries set decades ago also could help, she said.

Cunningham questioned the decision to cut funding for the on-line Virtual School, calling it “a move away from the delivery system of the future.”

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri loan agency might again fund Access Missouri scholarships

NO MU Mention

By The Associated Press

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JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri's college loan authority has set aside about \$30 million in case it's needed to help pay for state scholarships next school year.

The Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority provided a similar amount to the state this school year to offset part of Gov. Jay Nixon's cut in the Access Missouri scholarship program.

Agency Executive Director Raymond Bayer Jr. said Wednesday the loan authority board has reserved an additional \$30 million for the scholarship program during the 2011-12 school year. He says Nixon's administration has indicated the money might be needed.

The Access Missouri program is the state's primary scholarship based on financial need.

Because of funding cuts, students this year are receiving less than the amount called for under state law.