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Missouri curators to discuss likely tuition boost

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COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - University of Missouri curators have scheduled a virtual meeting Friday morning to discuss a likely tuition increase at the four-campus system.

The video teleconference comes in advance of a late January meeting in Columbia where the curators are expected to approve the system's first tuition increase in three years. School officials have said they hope to keep the increase below 10%.

Tuition for the coming academic year is typically set in the spring. But university leaders want an early start because Missouri law requires a waiver from the state to raise tuition beyond the Consumer Price Index inflation rate.

Students who live in Missouri and take a standard 15-credit course load now pay \$3,684 in tuition each semester. A 9% increase would translate into a \$332 boost per semester.



Nixon, school leaders have private talks

Small increases in tuition a goal.

By Janese Silvey

JEFFERSON CITY — Presidents of all of Missouri's four-year public colleges and universities spent an hour behind closed doors with Gov. Jay Nixon yesterday afternoon, 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 peek at 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 next 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.

"Everybody understands the budget constraints," Owens said. "The governor and all of the institutions want to have high-quality education and to work together to strike the right balance between quality and affordability."

Owens said Nixon did not make any offers regarding tuition or funding, nor did the schools 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," 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. Additionally, chancellors from all of UM's four campuses, including MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, were present, as was Nikki Krawitz, vice president of finance and administration. After talking to Nixon, the group reconvened without him at the Burch & Associates office a few blocks from the Capitol. Jerry Burch is a lobbyist for Missouri

State University, but Owens said the meeting place was simply a convenient spot to gather, not an indication that UM administrators met with Burch.

Deaton, saying he was running late for another meeting, referred questions to Owens after the meetings. Walking out of the latter conference, UM-Kansas City Chancellor Leo Morton said: "We're working together to see how we can keep higher education affordable."

Although Owens declined to specify how much Nixon might propose to cut from higher education, the university's tuition discussion will continue tomorrow. The UM Board of Curators will meet via teleconference at 9:30 a.m. to start talking about how much tuition should increase next school year. Although administrators have not announced numbers, they said at the December meeting their goal is to keep any increase below 10 percent.

Under a state statute, universities must get permission to increase tuition beyond the consumer price index or be subject to a state funding withholding. Former UM President Gary Forsee said late last year that the UM System plans to seek that waiver.

In a statement the UM System sent after yesterday's meetings, Owens said for the past two years 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 while 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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Students may see higher housing costs

By Janese Silvey

Thursday, January 13, 2011

The University of Missouri System isn't yet saying how much tuition might increase next school year, but MU students living on campus should brace for some housing increases.

Administrators are proposing the predominant room and board plan at MU increase 4 percent, from \$7,925 a year to \$8,240 a year. That's for a renovated traditional double room and 14 meals a week.

Students have the option to tweak their meal plans.

Those wanting fancier rooms, such as suite-style single dorm rooms, should expect a 5 percent increase over this year, according to information heading to the UM Board of Curators tomorrow.

Curators are meeting in a teleconference at 9:30 a.m. A chart of proposed room rates can be found on the system's UM InfoPoint site through www.umsystem.edu.

The increase in housing rates at MU is expected to generate about \$1.2 million in new revenues, which helps offset utility increases and pay back capital improvement bonds, said Nikki Krawitz, UM vice president of finance and administration.

Curators are expected to hear proposed tuition increases at the Jan. 27-28 meeting at MU. Tomorrow's board packet does not shed any light on how much administrators will recommend.

The UM System is facing a \$64.4 million funding gap if the state reduces its funding by 5 percent, or \$18.4 million, but administrators said in the board documents they "have no intention of trying to close that gap with a tuition increase."

A 1 percent tuition increase would net \$4.4 million after financial aid, and a 10 percent increase would generate about \$44 million. Administrators last month said they would try to keep tuition increases lower than 10 percent.

The funding gap is based on a budget that includes \$30 million for a 2 percent increase for merit-based salary and wage and related benefit increases as well as a 3 percent increase in fixed benefit costs.

Leona Rubin, chair of MU Faculty Council, said, considering salaries have been frozen for the past several years, the increase sends a positive message.

At the same time, she said she worries about how the university will offset possible losses in state revenues.

Expected increases from growth in enrollment alone, without considering tuition increases, next year are expected to boost revenues by \$14.4 million across the four campuses.

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Calling Kit Bond? He's not answering

By Janese Silvey

Posted January 13, 2011 at 2:25 p.m.

"Calling Kit Bond," reads the headline of George Kennedy's column in the Columbia Missourian.

Actually, I've tried. He's not picking up.

I'll explore this more in Sunday's Tribune, but Bond's name has been popping up as a potential contender for the UM System president's job. Rep. Chris Kelly said he'd be a "tremendous advocate" for the university. He obviously spent years helping the university secure federal earmarks. He's respected among Missouri's Republican state lawmakers.

Others, in passing, have questioned whether they want a politician at the helm of the four-campus system. You'll recall Kenny Hulshof was rumored to have been on the short list last time around (for the record, and a Sunday spoiler, Hulshof is not interested this time).

Bond's been rumored before, too. In 2007, he was quick to deny any interest in the job. But that was then, when he was still active in the Senate.

I've tried to track the former Senator down to give him a chance to again deny that rumor before it takes on a life of its own (might be too late, anyway) but he hasn't returned messages.

Curator Chair Warren Erdman -- a former Bond aide -- said he won't speculate about individual people at this point, vowing to let a search process lead to any conclusions.

But people will speculate. So, Sen. Bond, your name is out there. If you're not interested in the UM System presidency, call me; otherwise you're going to be hearing your name a lot throughout the presidential search process.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

GEORGE KENNEDY: Calling Kit Bond — your favorite university needs a new leader

By George Kennedy

January 13, 2011 | 1:25 p.m. CST

When Kit Bond retired from the U.S. Senate, you could hear around the university a chorus of praise but an undertone of foreboding. Whatever his shortcomings as a statesman, he was certainly the university's best friend in Washington. One reckoning I've read credits him with \$400 million in federal largesse.

Then another blow. President Forsee announced last week his resignation after a three-year run that has earned almost universal praise. His rationale for quitting is beyond dispute, but his timing — just as the legislative session opens — wasn't great.

So the lame duck Board of Curators, with three members serving expired terms and a fourth already gone to Florida, is launching both an expensive and time-consuming presidential search and an almost certainly losing struggle to preserve what's left of the institution's state funding.

The curators haven't asked my advice, but here it is anyway: Hire Kit.

Oh, I know he's already taken another job with a big law firm. Not an obstacle. That kind of position will always be available to an honorably retired senator. (I have a friend who used to say he was going to name his next child "Former U.S. Senator" as a guarantee of social prominence and financial success. A real one has no shortage of opportunities.)

I also know he's not an academic. Doesn't matter. Neither was ex-President Forsee. A university has deans and provosts to do the academic stuff. Presidents and chancellors are primarily salesmen. Their real job is to sell their institution to the public, the legislature and other potential benefactors, governmental, corporate and individual.

If you see a similarity between the job description of a successful university president and that of a successful politician, it's because the skill sets are virtually identical. To be good at either job, you have to be able to win friends, neutralize enemies and, above all these days, raise money – lots and lots of money.

In some ways, Kit's a more obvious choice than Gary Forsee was. After all, Mr. Forsee had just been fired from his corporate job. The voters fired Kit once but quickly realized their mistake and didn't repeat it. Mr. Forsee had been a sufficiently loyal and successful alum that the Rolla campus gave him an honorary doctorate. Kit, whose degrees are from Princeton and Virginia, already has a building named for him on the flagship campus. That ties him with Richard Jesse.

Did I mention the \$400 million?

Of course, there's always the possibility that Kit would turn us down. The prospects don't look all that pleasing, with budget cutters in charge in Jeff City and a senior senator who regards pork as just the other white meat.

In case that happens, I have another suggestion.

Elson Floyd, whom I think of as the first of our new-breed university presidents, had some good ideas he didn't stick around long enough to implement. One that should have special appeal in tough budget times was to combine the jobs of president and chancellor of the MU campus.

That brings me to Brady Deaton. He's a fine chancellor, and he'd be a fine president. Everybody likes Brady. Beyond his obvious strengths as administrator and fundraiser, he offers another big advantage. He's already here. No need to spend thousands of dollars and months of time, neither of which we can afford. And think of the savings: one salary, one residence, no moving costs.

There'd be some whining, no doubt, from partisans of the satellite campuses. They'd get over it. Brady's bigger handicap is our institutional inferiority complex. If he's all that good, we wonder, why is he still here? Maybe he won't be, once the top job again goes to somebody else.

There you have it – two eminently reasonable nominations. No need to thank me, Curators, though I would consider a finder's fee.

BOONVILLE DAILY NEWS

Farming method to lower greenhouse gases is here

By University of Missouri

Boonville Daily News

Posted Jan 13, 2011 @ 03:29 PM

Columbia —U.S. agricultural practices create 58 percent of nitrous oxide in the world, which is the third most prevalent greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.

Scientists believe nitrous oxide contributes to global warming about 300 times more than carbon dioxide. New practices and products have been introduced to address this issue, but farmers do not have the time or profit margins to experiment with ideas that may ultimately hurt the “bottom line.”

Now, researchers at the University of Missouri have found methods to help farmers reduce those emissions while also increasing corn grain production.

At the University of Missouri Greenley Research Center in northeast Missouri, Kelly Nelson, a research agronomist and associate professor in the MU Division of Plant Sciences, monitored fields of poorly drained claypan soil that were planted with corn after soybean.

One field was “strip tilled” with nitrogen fertilizer placed in a band in the soil, while another field was left untilled with a surface application of nitrogen fertilizer.

The research team found that strip tillage and banded fertilizer significantly reduced the amount of greenhouse gases emitted per bushel of corn grain production, when compared to that of surface applied no-till treatments.

Strip tillage is the practice of tilling a field in strips up to a foot wide and eight to nine inches deep, rather than tilling the entire field, so that crop residues can be left on the surface of most of the field. By planting corn into those strips, and adding fertilizer during the process, farmers can use less energy, reduce soil erosion and conserve soil moisture in a large area of the field.

Additionally, the nitrogen stays deep in the soil, where it is less susceptible to environmental loss.

“This tells us that more efficient fertilizer use is needed to maintain productivity and profitability,” said Nelson. “We saw grain yields increase, and this is important when it comes to nitrous oxide emissions and the amount of food produced.”

Peter Motavalli, associate professor in the MU Department of Soil, Environmental and Atmospheric Sciences, directed the research focused on measurements of soil nitrous oxide emissions.

He says the results are another piece of information that can help farmers select management options that may increase agricultural production and economic returns while also reducing environmental impacts with use of nitrogen fertilizer.

The research was conducted during above average rainfall growing seasons from 2008 to 2010 in poorly-drained soils so the results of between 2.4 to 3.8 percent cumulative loss of the applied fertilizer N as nitrous oxide N are probably relatively high for conditions in Missouri.

“The main goal for our team has been to identify agricultural practices that maintain or increase production while reducing the environmental impact,” Motavalli said.

“There hasn’t been much data on greenhouse gas emissions for Missouri, and we hope to provide information on how much nitrogen is being lost as nitrous oxide with different agricultural practices so growers can make informed choices depending on their farm operation and environmental conditions.”

Nelson, Motavalli, and Pat Nash, an MU graduate student, presented the results of their three-year study, “Use of Strip Tillage to Increase Corn Production and Reduce Soil Nitrous Oxide Emissions,” at the national meetings of the American Society of Agronomy in November and at the Missouri Crop Management Conference in December.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Gov. Nixon announces increased scholarship amounts for students

NO MU Mention

By Caitlin S. Miller

January 13, 2011 | 5:36 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Gov. Jay Nixon announced Thursday that the Missouri Department of Higher Education will increase scholarship amounts for students this academic year, according to a news release.

The news release stated that the new scholarship amounts will affect Missouri students under the Access Missouri program. These amounts include:

- An increase from \$275 up to a maximum of \$470 for qualifying students at public community colleges.
- An increase from \$950 to a maximum of \$1,010 for qualifying students at four-year public institutions.
- An increase from \$1,900 to a maximum of \$2,160 for qualifying students at private institutions.

According to the news release, these amounts reflect the maximum award a student would receive for both semesters of the 2010-11 school year. The fall 2011 scholarship amounts will be determined after the budget for the next fiscal year has been decided.

The Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority might fund the Access Missouri scholarships, according to a previous Missourian article.

Under the Access Missouri program, 46,000 Missouri students would receive scholarships for the spring 2011 semester, the release stated. This year, the state is expected to invest about \$58.7 million in Access Missouri.

“I am pleased my administration will be able to increase Access Missouri awards for this school year to help more students afford to earn their degree,” Nixon said in the release.

The release stated that Nixon has worked to make higher education a priority, which will be beneficial for many Missouri families. He said he plans to continue to prioritize funding for Missouri’s A+ Scholarship Program, in which the government covers the cost of tuition and other fees for students attending public community colleges for two years. These students must meet certain academic, service and conduct requirements, the release stated.

In addition, Nixon placed a two-year freeze on tuition at all Missouri public colleges and universities, the release stated.

“By giving more students access to higher education, we’re ensuring that Missouri has a workforce to compete for generations to come,” Nixon stated in the release.