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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

MU chancellor pledges more communication

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS | Posted: Friday, July 8, 2011 7:24 am | No Comments Posted

COLUMBIA, Mo. • University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton says he'll work to improve his communication with faculty.

Deaton was responding to a faculty evaluation that gave him high marks overall, but said he could improve his communication skills.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that Deaton said in addition to sending more email updates to faculty about campus, state and national issues, he'll also attend more faculty meetings, meet with the MU Faculty Council once each semester and host an annual town hall meeting with faculty, staff and students.

That's in addition to the two faculty meetings he already hosts every year and his routine meetings with Faculty Council's executive committee.

The faculty evaluation was conducted this past school year and is Deaton's first evaluation since he took the position in 2004.

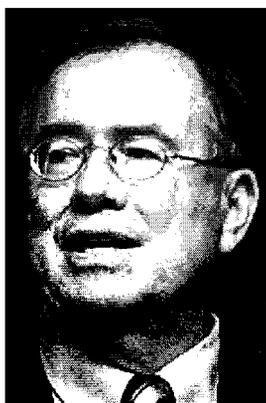
MU chancellor responds to feedback

Talking to faculty more is one goal.

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Thursday, July 7, 2011

University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton says he will increase the number of email updates he sends to faculty and attend more meetings in an effort to improve communication on campus.



Brady Deaton

The pledge comes on the heels of a faculty evaluation, conducted this past school year, that gave Deaton high marks overall but flagged some areas of concern. It was his first evaluation since he took the position in 2004.

Faculty members graded Deaton in several key areas. The communications section stands out because approval of his communication skills on several levels hovers around 50 percent. In other categories, such as his basic understanding of the university and overall performance, he received higher marks.

“Generally, I am pleased with the results of the evaluation,” Deaton said in a letter sent to faculty yesterday. “The area that stood out for me that requires additional attention is that of more communication with the faculty.”

In addition to sending more updates to faculty about campus, state and national issues, Deaton said he will attend more college and divisional faculty meetings, meet with the full MU Faculty Council once each semester and host an annual town hall meeting with faculty, staff and students. That’s in addition to the two faculty meetings he already hosts every year and his routine meetings with Faculty Council’s executive committee.

Deaton also scored his lowest on budget and resource management. Those results are trickier to evaluate because in some cases the majority of faculty members said they didn't have enough information to grade Deaton on how he allocates funding.

Those instances "concern me more than anything," said Clyde Bentley, the MU Faculty Council vice chairman who spearheaded the survey.

"If you don't have enough information to make a decision, that's a good sign of a communication breakdown. ... He could be doing the best job in the world, but if no one knew about it, it wouldn't matter for something like this."

Of 1,968 faculty members eligible to take the survey, 417 did so — a disappointing turnout, said Sudarshan Loyalka, chairman of the faculty affairs committee on Faculty Council. "Twenty-one percent is very low," he said.

Loyalka blames not only a fear among some that their identities could be revealed but also a perception that evaluation results don't make a difference. "This is indicative of not only disengagement but certain cynicism in faculty that what they say and do does not matter."

The survey shows Deaton is viewed favorably as a campuswide leader but less so when it comes to dealings with individuals. Fewer than half of those who took the survey ranked him highly when asked if he treats units fairly or holds other administrators accountable.

"People like the chancellor. I like him, personally," Loyalka said. "But there is no question there are serious issues where one would like to see some definitive actions. Fairness is definitely an issue — colleges, departments and faculty being treated fairly."

Best & Worst

Participants were asked to grade Deaton on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highest. Deaton scored the most 4's or 5's in the following areas, including the percentage giving those scores:

- Understanding the history and traditions of MU (86 percent)
- Understanding the relationship of MU to Columbia (84.6 percent)
- Respecting others (82.5 percent)
- Encouraging pride in the university (80.5 percent)
- Guiding his actions with professional values and performing ethically (79.3 percent)

Deaton scored the most 1's or 2's in:

- Understanding issues of individual academic units (38.6 percent)
- Effectively communicating to faculty through deans (37.3 percent)
- Effectively communicating with individuals (36.9 percent)
- Holding campus leadership accountable (36.8 percent)
- Responding fairly to campus grievances (34 percent)

MU Chancellor Deaton plans to bridge communication gap with faculty

By Holly Bender

July 7, 2011 | 6:01 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Chancellor Brady Deaton plans to increase direct communication with MU faculty based on results of a Faculty Council survey that indicated he needs improvement.

In a letter addressed to colleagues Wednesday, Deaton said he was pleased with the generally positive survey results, but added that a need for more direct communication "stood out" for him.

In response, he plans to:

- E-mail faculty more frequently about issues discussed in MU Faculty Council meetings and state and national events that impact higher education.
- Attend more college/divisional faculty meetings.
- Hold an annual town hall meeting with faculty, staff and students.
- Meet with the full Faculty Council once per semester in a public forum.

The council evaluates the chancellor's performance every five years. Deaton earned an A from 39 percent of the respondents, while 44 percent gave him a B or C and 17 percent gave him a D or F.

A total of 1,968 ranked faculty were asked to rate Deaton's understanding of "university issues, general administration, personnel issues, budget and resource management, academic and extension programs and communication skills."

He scored highest in the management of MU academic and extension programs and the understanding of issues that affect the university.

But nearly 40 percent of respondents reported that Deaton lacks understanding of individual issues in each academic department, does not communicate effectively with faculty and fails to hold campus leaders accountable.

“Overall, his approval rating was pretty remarkable, but the more people who have the opportunity to work with him one-on-one, the better,” said Leona Rubin, chair of the MU Faculty Council Executive Committee.

More than 80 percent of faculty indicated that Deaton is knowledgeable about MU history and traditions and that he encourages university pride. Seventy-nine percent surveyed said he carries out his duties professionally and ethically.

One-third of the respondents said Deaton does not allocate funds and resources fairly or efficiently.

The council will meet again in November to evaluate whether communication between the chancellor and faculty improves, Rubin said.

Second step of MU plan to ban smoking takes effect

By Bi Yoo

July 7, 2011 | 6:42 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **With the start of July came the second step of MU's three-step plan to become a smoke-free campus by 2014.**

People can smoke in areas around 15 designated smoking urns on campus, in MU parking lots or on the top floor of MU parking garages.

"I think it's a little ridiculous, and outside is everyone's technical property," said Dustin Ramirez, a delivery driver for Domino's Pizza on campus. "They already took cigarettes away from inside of buildings — they cannot take it away from outside."

Ramirez thinks the plan is respectful, but also a little unfair to people who smoke, such as himself.

The university began the transition toward a smoke-free campus in 2008, and people who smoke have been required to do so at least 20 feet from building entrances since then.

Ramirez was one of several people interviewed around campus Wednesday about the latest step in the plan.

"I don't think people will care about this policy," he said. "People are going to smoke anyway. They are not illegal. I wonder what the penalty would be given if I smoked (outside of a designated area)."

MU spokesman Christian Basi said any action taken by MU officials for violation of the policy will depend greatly on the situation.

"Education is a large part of the policy," Basi said. "As more people are educating about the current restrictions, we hope that we will see fewer violations of the policy."

Smoking areas were selected based on looking at where people typically went to smoke, Basi said.

At the MU Student Center, employees of Tiger Tech were smoking behind the building, which is a non-designated area. The employees said they knew they should be smoking somewhere else and that an eventual campus-wide ban is unrealistic.

Evan Whittaker, a Tiger Tech employee who has been smoking for two years, said it might affect his short break time.

"It's a little over the top," he said. "I understand health concerns, but I think (the designated area) should be doubled. I think there is going to be a major opposition to a complete ban."

Chase Whisenhunt, who also works at Tiger Tech, said smoking should be a personal choice and it would be a hassle if it's prohibited on campus.

"People are going to smoke, and you can't limit it," Whisenhunt said. "I think if you want to ban cigarettes on campus, I think you should take away things that kill as many people as smoking, such as trans fat, first."

Junior Laura Orozco, who plans to quit smoking, said she is encouraged by the prospect of a smoke-free campus, but more information is needed.

"And I understand the health purpose. But I also don't really follow it," she said. "To me, it's just a formality, like alcohol in dorms."

Senior Dylan Muckerman said he's never smoked a cigarette in his life, but he said he understands the perspective of some people who smoke.

"They do a good job on encouraging (people to quit), but especially if you have a job on campus, I think at least a few areas are necessary for workers," Muckerman said.

Students can find information on how to stop smoking through the Wellness Resource Center. Faculty can find details through insurance information on the UM System website.

Basi said he expects that it will take time for everyone to know about MU's push to go smoke-free and that there will be visitors, new students or people who've been away who might not know about it.

"If you find somebody who isn't following the policy, go up to them and tactfully tell them about it," he said. "If it keeps occurring, people can report it to the building coordinator, and he or she will work with that person and make a judgment on how to proceed."

THE MANEATER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF MU SINCE 1955

'Father of Mizzou Homecoming' to serve as this year's Grand Marshal

Posted to On Campus by Jimmy Hibsich at 11:26 a.m., July 7, 2011



Chester L. Brewer

Chester L. Brewer organized MU's first homecoming celebration, and now 100 years later, he is serving as this year's Grand Marshal.

"The University of Missouri is recognized as the birthplace of the homecoming tradition and this year marks the 100th anniversary of the first homecoming celebration," the Mizzou Alumni Association announced on its website. "To preside over the festivities, former MU Athletic Director Chester L. Brewer will serve as the 2011 Homecoming Grand Marshal."

Brewer passed away in 1953, so members of his family will represent him at the festivities. During his time at MU, Brewer served as athletic director and coached football, basketball, baseball and track. He is credited with organizing MU's first homecoming.

The announcement comes exactly 100 days before the centennial Homecoming celebration Oct. 15.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Mizzou New Music Summer Festival to include 10 world premieres

By Will Floyd

July 7, 2011 | 6:26 p.m. CDT

Experiences, musings spark creation of new music

COLUMBIA — Every new piece of music has a story behind it, a budding inspiration that will blossom into the vision of the artist.

For Steven Snowden, that story starts with a summer job working beside his father at a construction site. He is one of eight resident composers whose work will premiere next week at the Mizzou New Music Summer Festival.

“I could hear bits and pieces of classic rock songs between drills and other random power tools, and I would often get very short fragments of these songs stuck in my head with no memory of their context,” said Snowden, who grew up in Branson. “These bits and pieces would eventually evolve into something that hardly resembled the original, similar to the process of saying a word over and over until it no longer makes any sense.”

Those memories prompted Snowden to compose "For So Long It's Not True," which is based on seconds and half-seconds of "Dazed and Confused" by Led Zeppelin.

“I never listened to classical music when I was younger — I use blues and pop music (for inspiration) because it is where I came from,” Snowden said.

Another resident composer, Patrick David Clark of St. Louis, said he got the idea of his new work, "Ptolemy's Carousel," from the mathematical equations Ptolemy created so that it appeared the Earth was the center of the solar system, a belief widely accepted at the time.

These calculations reminded Clark of the calculations a composer must make to get what is wanted from the music.

“Ptolemy’s Carousel’ is a continuous rotation of harmony, fairly pure harmony and complementary harmony, with its eight chords orbiting like the planets around the sun,” Clark said. “I would describe it as a sub-dream and mystical environment of sound.”

Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Roger Reynolds, whose "SEASONS: Cycle 2" will be performed on Thursday evening, uses seasons as his muse for his composition that will be performed at the festival.

In a written description of the piece, Reynolds said he drew not only on the earthly seasons of the year — fall, winter, spring and summer — but their relationship to the seasons of life — infancy, youth, maturity and age.

“Reading through a range of poets ... I searched for pertinent passages, absorbing the characteristics they associated with each of my seasons,” Reynolds wrote. “Every movement in the two Cycles refers both to a season of life, and to a season of the year. There are ‘consonant’ pairs such as infancy/spring, and more ‘dissonant’ ones including winter/youth.”

"SEASONS: Cycle 2" is electroacoustic, a term applied to a range of music exploring and incorporating natural and electronically generated sound. The piece is part of a multi-part project he is working on with the nationally known new-music ensemble, Alarm Will Sound.

Composers are really starting to understand and develop electroacoustic music, said Stefan Freund, co-artistic director of the festival, composer and founding member of Alarm Will Sound. “I know people will take his (Reynolds’) ideas into the future.

Freund, along with the festival’s other artistic director, W. Thomas McKenney, were charged with selecting the eight resident composers from more than 100 applicants from around the world.

The six-day Mizzou New Music Summer Festival will include lectures and workshops by the resident composers, MU faculty composers Freund and McKenney, guest composers Reynolds and Anna Clyne and guest artists Susan Narucki and Jaime Oliver.

All presentations, as well as rehearsals, are free and open to the public.

The main focus of the festival will be four concerts, which will feature 10 world premieres, all performed by Alarm Will Sound.

Snowden said it's an amazing opportunity. "A lot of young composers dream of working with Alarm Will Sound," he said.

Members of the ensemble arrived this week and have been rehearsing at the Sinquefield Reserve south of Jefferson City, a home of festival patrons Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield. On Wednesday, the elegantly simple architecture of the reserve's lake house and the lush, rolling grounds around it seemed an equal match for the music being performed inside.

At first, watching the musicians get ready for rehearsal was like watching a group of high school friends tuning guitars and tapping drums in their parents' garage. Random notes — a bowed chord, fingers dancing on a keyboard — punctuated their talking and soft laughter.

But once the rehearsal started, it was as if a switch had been thrown. The atmosphere became one of focus and cohesion; and the music, at this point "Ptolemy's Carousel," was soothing and flowing, one note gently running into the next.

This is the second public Mizzou New Music Summer Festival (a scaled-down trial run was held in 2009 at the Sinquefield Reserve). It is being sponsored in part by the Missouri Arts Council, the City of Columbia Office of Cultural Affairs, and the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation.

The festival is part of the Mizzou New Music Initiative for the creation and performance of new music.

"Jeanne Sinquefield's dream is to establish Missouri as a center for new music," Freund said.

The Boston Globe

Legislators' vital work veiled from public's eye

By Noah Bierman
Globe Staff / July 8, 2011

The \$30.6 billion budget approved by the Legislature last week was negotiated almost entirely in secret, with six lawmakers meeting for 24 days of talks that were off limits to taxpayers. Debates, agendas, and even the times and locations of the meetings were held in strict confidence. No minutes were kept.

Information blackouts are treated with an almost religious reverence by the power brokers on Beacon Hill, who frequently decline to detail what is being discussed out of what they term "a respect for the process."

Massachusetts, the birthplace of American democracy, is one of fewer than 20 states with virtually no requirements that legislators discuss government business in public, according to a Globe review of open government data compiled by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. This state is one of about 10 in which the public does not have even limited rights to view legislators' records.

"It puts it among a handful of states who are at the absolute bottom of the barrel," said Charles N. Davis, a journalism professor at the University of Missouri who researches open-government laws. "If you're in the business of trying to self-govern, if you're a citizen, if you're an activist, if you're someone who is trying to affect the outcome of legislation, it's nearly impossible because you're literally shut out of the process."

A lack of public access is a common complaint in state capitals from Juneau to Atlanta.

Since the recent conviction of the former House Speaker, Salvatore F. DiMasi, on corruption charges, Senate President Therese Murray and Speaker Robert A. DeLeo have argued that transparency is a top priority and that the Legislature is more open than ever.

Still, Massachusetts lawmakers depend on closed doors at nearly every stage in deciding which laws to pass and which taxes to increase. Records on everything from the number of aides legislators employ to which special interests they meet with or even how some members vote in their committees are off limits. Leaders can call "joint caucuses" of Democrats and Republicans, allowing the entire House or Senate to meet in private.

During this year's budget deliberations, lawmakers in the House and Senate did collect public testimony. And they held floor debates for several days before passing separate budget plans in each chamber. But the critical decisions at the beginning, when the budget is being crafted, and those at the end, that meld the plans, were made out of public view.

By the time lawmakers vote on the floor, it is often no more than a formality, rubber stamping what a few leaders have agreed upon in private.

"Nobody's been able to get a good answer of where or when they're meeting or how talks are going," said Andres Del Castillo, a 20-year-old Suffolk University student who camped in front of the State House during budget negotiations to protest an immigration provision.

Not every state legislature operates this way. Colorado is one of many states where all meetings, including party caucuses and committee meetings, are held in the open unless they involve personnel issues.

New Hampshire is one of six states to enshrine a right to open government in its constitution. There, every bill gets a public hearing, and all committee votes are taken in the open.

Vermont legislators recently revamped their open records laws to make it easier for people to sue for access to public information, forcing the government to pay attorneys' fees if it is improperly denied.

In Florida, often considered the gold standard for open government, the law prohibits three or more lawmakers from meeting to discuss pending legislation. If they run into each other at a barbecue or drug store, they are allowed to make small talk, but they are barred from discussing an upcoming vote.

If residents there want to know which special interests are influencing a bill, they can look at lawmakers' calendars, phone logs, or e-mails, though some legislators try to skirt that requirement by deleting often.

Conference committees, where lawmakers make the toughest decisions on what becomes law, are public in Florida. Residents can ask for charts that show which elements of a pending bill are in dispute. In Massachusetts, little about the conference process is visible.

Charlie Crist, governor of Florida from 2007 through earlier this year and a strong advocate for open government, said a history of open access has created an expectation among residents that their leaders will invite them in.

"We're the Sunshine State where these open-government laws have been a way of life," he said.

Crist, a Republican turned independent, would sometimes invite the press into the governor's mansion to witness meals he had with the House speaker and Senate president.

Story continues...

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Vicky Riback Wilson retires after more than 18 years at MU

By Garrett Evans

July 7, 2011 | 2:52 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Last summer, a freshman from Memphis, Tenn., walked up to the MU Fellowships booth during Summer Welcome.

New to campus, John E. Mitchell didn't know what to expect.

At the booth, he met Vicky Riback Wilson, coordinator of MU's Fellowships Office.

Her first cheerful words to Mitchell were supportive. She called him an "energetic, high-achieving young man full of potential."

After that day, he began to visit her office regularly, sharing his experiences on campus. She introduced him to faculty members, signed him up for the Honors College and opened his eyes to other possibilities at MU.

"Mrs. Wilson's guidance, commitment, altruism and encouragement has given me the impetus to reflect upon myself, my values, what I believe in and why I believe it," Mitchell said recently.

"She reinforced my courage in believing that I am as capable and competitive as anyone pursuing a fellowship and being successful in life."

Vicky Riback Wilson has been working with students at MU for more than 18 years, and she is set to retire at the end of July.

She has been the assistant director of the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center and associate director of the Missouri Rural Innovation Institute, as well as a former Peace Corps volunteer in Africa and a state legislator.

MU established the Fellowships Office as the result of a study Riback Wilson was hired to conduct in 2005. It helps high-achieving students become more competitive when looking for jobs, graduate schools and national awards.

Riback Wilson said her mark at MU has been working with "fabulous students who are making a difference in this country and overseas." Those students have become social workers, physicians, Peace Corps volunteers and educators.

"A few students have been working in public policy or politics; many are in graduate school doing amazing research or preparing for careers that will contribute to public good, and one student just completed several years of research on microfinance in a remote part of Indonesia," Riback Wilson said.

"My reward has been students reaching out to say the Fellowships Office has made a difference in shaping that path."

Students such as MU senior Kanwal Haq continue to reach out to Riback Wilson and let her know how the office has impacted their lives. Haq regards Riback Wilson as one of the most influential advisers she has ever had.

Riback Wilson encouraged Haq to apply to the Sue Shear Institute's 21st Century Leadership Academy, a weeklong program designed to inspire women's public sector leadership.

"It was a week that ended up changing my life," Haq said.

Other students frequently send Riback Wilson notes telling her what they're doing. When former students pass through town, she often makes arrangements to see them — something she said is very gratifying.

Before her time at MU, Riback Wilson traveled to Uganda as a Peace Corps volunteer in 1969 and 1970, and she later worked in Indonesia, where she taught English.

She also temporarily left MU in 1996 to serve as a state representative. During her eight-year term, she fought for legislation on domestic violence issues, advocacy work for women, ending discrimination based on mental health and other humanitarian efforts.

She said she is most proud of the contacts she established with constituents and her work on major legislation and appropriations.

“I am also passionate about helping people not give up on our political system even though it can be frustrating and discouraging at times,” she said. “If I can get that across to students at MU, then there isn’t any greater impact I can have.”

After she leaves MU, Riback Wilson plans to travel.

“There is no one place, just a very long list,” she said. “But I am going to start with the most important place, Maine, to see my granddaughter.”

The Des Moines Register

Senate strikes deal on ethanol subsidy

11:29 PM, Jul. 7, 2011 |

Written by LEDYARD KING

of ethanol subsidy agreement

How eliminating ethanol subsidies could affect stakeholders:

TAXPAYERS: Reduce the federal deficit by \$1.3 billion this year.

PRODUCERS: Reduce production by about a billion gallons, but the cut would be temporary, Iowa State University economist Bruce Babcock said.

FARMERS: A University of Missouri analysis of the impact of the tax credit for ethanol says it raises corn prices by about 18 cents per bushel. Eliminating the credit could lower income for grain farmers but reduce costs for livestock producers and other users.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY: Most economists do not expect a major impact on industry jobs. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack had warned of significant job losses in Iowa and other ethanol-producing states.

Washington, D.C. — A deficit-cutting deal brokered between ethanol opponents and farm-state senators would end broad subsidies for the industry but preserve smaller, targeted tax breaks designed to help biofuels flourish.

The compromise, announced Thursday, would repeal the Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit starting Aug. 1 if Congress approves it. The credit, set to expire Dec. 31, gives blenders 45 cents for every gallon of ethanol they mix with gasoline, at a monthly cost of more than \$400 million to the U.S. Treasury.

The 54-cent-per-gallon tariff on ethanol imports also would expire July 31 under the deal, which would need House approval as well.

The announcement comes less than a month after the Senate overwhelmingly opted to end the tax credit immediately. The 73-27 vote on June 16 marked a momentous shift away from federal assistance for an industry that has enjoyed more than three decades of government support. But the proposed repeal stalled on Capitol Hill, prompting lawmakers to strike a deal.

Iowa's two senators, Chuck Grassley, a Republican, and Tom Harkin, a Democrat, issued statements supporting the compromise, with Grassley the less enthusiastic of the two.

"All things considered, it's good news that an agreement was reached that salvages some of the effort to reduce America's dependence on foreign oil," Grassley said. "I wish it would have included a more robust investment in alternative fuel infrastructure and cellulosic ethanol.

"Overall, the fact that this happened in a vacuum, rather than in an even-handed debate over all energy tax incentives, will always be a raw deal, especially for taxpayers and renewable fuel producers."

Harkin praised Senate colleagues for "proposing this timely reform of ethanol policy," and he said biofuels will continue to grow as the best replacement for gasoline.

"We need to support that expansion, for our energy security, for cleaner air, and for domestic economic development, by making sure higher blends of ethanol are available and by expanding the vehicles that can use higher blends," he said.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who has led anti-ethanol efforts, negotiated the compromise with John Thune, R-S.D., and Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

"After productive discussions with industry stakeholders over the past several weeks, we have reached a bipartisan solution that reduces the federal deficit and modifies current biofuels policy without pulling the rug out from under American renewable energy producers," Thune said.

Under the deal, two-thirds of the \$2 billion in savings this year, or about \$1.3 billion, would go toward deficit reduction. The remaining \$668 million would be used to extend several biofuels tax credits, including one for small producers and another that makes it easier for service stations to install fuel pumps that can accommodate gasoline with blends of ethanol up to 85 percent.

Currently, the limit for ethanol content at most pumps is 15 percent under a recent decision by the Obama administration.

The compromise does not include two other provisions ethanol proponents favor: government support for more flex-fuel vehicles that can run on higher ethanol blends and construction of a pipeline that would transport ethanol from the Midwest to other parts of the nation.

Nonetheless, the deal was welcomed by ethanol supporters who said it will speed long-sought "reforms" they've been championing.

"This gives us an opportunity to move in the correct direction to remove the barriers to the marketplace that we face in competing with oil and also providing consumer access at the pump," Tom Buis, CEO of Growth Energy, an ethanol lobby.

The industry has increasingly had to defend itself from attacks by opponents who say its increasing production hurts the environment, gums up small engines and raises food prices as more pasture is plowed for cornfields that will feed cars and trucks rather than poultry and livestock. About 40 percent of last year's U.S. corn crop went toward ethanol production.

Lately, critics outside of corn-producing states have been asking how a government saddled with more than \$14 trillion in debt can afford to provide more than \$5 billion a year in tax credits.

The compromise could provide a model for efforts to reduce the deficit by selectively targeting tax breaks.

Ethanol opponents say the deal doesn't achieve all that they'd like but it's a long-awaited first step.

"It's quite a remarkable reversal of fortune for the ethanol and corn lobbies and it may be — at least hopefully — a welcome sign that the iron grip that these lobbies have had on biofuels policy is loosening," said Craig Cox, Midwest director of the Environmental Working Group.

"We certainly would have preferred that the deal makes a clean break from subsidizing corn ethanol, but it does seem to be taking a small step toward to finally leveling the playing field for all biofuels," he said.

The New York Times

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

A smaller version of this editorial appeared in the July 8, 2011 St. Louis Post Dispatch.

Even for Cashiers, College Pays Off

By DAVID LEONHARDT

Published: June 25, 2011

No MU mention

ALMOST a century ago, the United States decided to make high school nearly universal. Around the same time, much of Europe decided that universal high school was a waste. Not everybody, European intellectuals argued, should go to high school.

It's clear who made the right decision. The educated American masses helped create the American century, as the economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz have written. The new ranks of high school graduates made factories more efficient and new industries possible.

Today, we are having an updated version of the same debate. Television, newspapers and blogs are filled with the case against college for the masses: It saddles students with debt; it does not guarantee a good job; it isn't necessary for many jobs. Not everybody, the skeptics say, should go to college.

The argument has the lure of counterintuition and does have grains of truth. Too many teenagers aren't ready to do college-level work. Ultimately, though, the case against mass education is no better than it was a century ago.

The evidence is overwhelming that college is a better investment for most graduates than in the past. A new study even shows that a bachelor's degree pays off for jobs that don't require one: secretaries, plumbers and cashiers. And, beyond money, education seems to make people happier and healthier.

"Sending more young Americans to college is not a panacea," says David Autor, an M.I.T. economist who studies the labor market. "Not sending them to college would be a disaster."

The most unfortunate part of the case against college is that it encourages children, parents and schools to aim low. For those families on the fence — often deciding whether a student will be

the first to attend — the skepticism becomes one more reason to stop at high school. Only about 33 percent of young adults get a four-year degree today, while another 10 percent receive a two-year degree.

So it's important to dissect the anti-college argument, piece by piece. It obviously starts with money. Tuition numbers can be eye-popping, and student debt has increased significantly. But there are two main reasons college costs aren't usually a problem for those who graduate.

First, many colleges are not very expensive, once financial aid is taken into account. Average net tuition and fees at public four-year colleges this past year were only about \$2,000 (though Congress may soon cut federal financial aid).

Second, the returns from a degree have soared. Three decades ago, full-time workers with a bachelor's degree made 40 percent more than those with only a high-school diploma. Last year, the gap reached 83 percent. College graduates, though hardly immune from the downturn, are also far less likely to be unemployed than non-graduates.

Skeptics like to point out that the income gap isn't rising as fast as it once was, especially for college graduates who don't get an advanced degree. But the gap remains enormous — and bigger than ever. Skipping college because the pace of gains has slowed is akin to skipping your heart medications because the pace of medical improvement isn't what it used to be.

The Hamilton Project, a research group in Washington, has just finished a comparison of college with other investments. It found that college tuition in recent decades has delivered an inflation-adjusted annual return of more than 15 percent. For stocks, the historical return is 7 percent. For real estate, it's less than 1 percent.

Another study being released this weekend — by Anthony Carnevale and Stephen J. Rose of Georgetown — breaks down the college premium by occupations and shows that college has big benefits even in many fields where a degree is not crucial.

Construction workers, police officers, plumbers, retail salespeople and secretaries, among others, make significantly more with a degree than without one. Why? Education helps people do higher-skilled work, get jobs with better-paying companies or open their own businesses.

This follows the pattern of the early 20th century, when blue- and white-collar workers alike benefited from having a high-school diploma.

When confronted with such data, skeptics sometimes reply that colleges are mostly a way station for smart people. But that's not right either. Various natural experiments — like teenagers' proximity to a campus, which affects whether they enroll — have shown that people do acquire skills in college.

Even a much-quoted recent study casting doubt on college education, by an N.Y.U. sociologist and two other researchers, was not so simple. It found that only 55 percent of freshmen and sophomores made statistically significant progress on an academic test. But the margin of error

was large enough that many more may have made progress. Either way, the general skills that colleges teach, like discipline and persistence, may be more important than academics anyway.

None of this means colleges are perfect. Many have abysmal graduation rates. Yet the answer is to improve colleges, not abandon them. Given how much the economy changes, why would a high-school diploma forever satisfy most citizens' educational needs?

Or think about it this way: People tend to be clear-eyed about this debate in their own lives. For instance, when researchers asked low-income teenagers how much more college graduates made than non-graduates, the teenagers made excellent estimates. And in a national survey, 94 percent of parents said they expected their child to go to college.

Then there are the skeptics themselves, the professors, journalists and others who say college is overrated. They, of course, have degrees and often spend tens of thousands of dollars sending their children to expensive colleges.

I don't doubt that the skeptics are well meaning. But, in the end, their case against college is an elitist one — for me and not for thee. And that's rarely good advice.

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