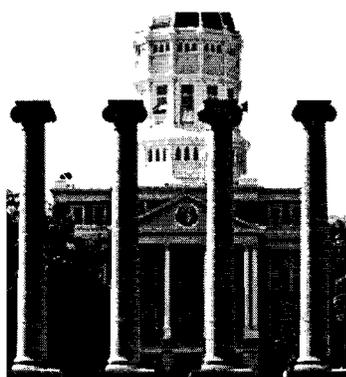


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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Do you think college costs are fair?

BY AMANDA ST. AMAND astamand@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8201 | Posted: Thursday, July 28, 2011 7:23 am |



July 28, 2010 - Jesse Hall and the columns on the campus of the University of Missouri-Columbia. Erik M. Lunsford elunsford@post-dispatch.com

When the calendar rolls around to late July, college students -- and in many cases, their parents -- get that first close look at the semester bills as they roll in.

You'd call it sticker shock, except you know it's coming. But as **USA Today** [reports today](#), it's the little extras that are tacked on to the basic tuition and room and board that are somehow a little tough to take.

As the newspaper reports:

Indiana University-Bloomington is adding a \$180 "temporary repair and maintenance fee" this fall; next year it doubles. Freshmen and transfer students this fall at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale will be charged a one-time \$150 "matriculation fee" for orientation costs. Students at Georgia's public universities will pay 3% more in tuition, but with fees the increase jumps to an average 9% more than last year. The rise is driven primarily by a "special institutional fee" that will cost as much as \$1,088 next year for some students. For Georgia Tech freshmen, all fees total \$2,370 — about a quarter of the total charge, \$9,652.

The special fee, a temporary measure to help make up for budget shortfalls, "keeps the lights on. It pays the faculty. It pays for all the things that tuition pays," [University System of Georgia](#) spokesman John Millsaps says.

My son will be a freshman at a state school in Missouri. His bill arrived last week. It shows a \$50 new student fee, along with \$420 in "mandatory" fees. No clue what those cover.

My daughter, a junior at a state school in Tennessee, is assessed hundreds of dollars in fees for her nursing courses. (At least I can understand those.) Her bill showed up in my email on Wednesday.

States have slashed college funding nearly everywhere; the schools have to make up the difference somewhere. But has it reached and passed the tipping point? Would more transparency in bills help, which the **USA Today** report says more states are considering? Or is it just that college is fast becoming unaffordable for many Americans?

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU professor helps to plant seeds for an advanced biofuel economy

By Megan Cassidy

July 28, 2011 | 6:14 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Shibu Jose and his team believe that today's soggy river bottoms could be untapped grounds for the largest advanced biofuel economy in the nation.

Jose, director for MU's Center for Agroforestry, is proposing to cultivate and harvest biomass crops along the floodplains of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers. He said converting less than 1 percent of the 116 million acres of "marginally productive" cropland in that region could create a corridor of sustainable biomass and biofuel production.

Because of the land's proximity to the rivers, food crops cultivated here — typically corn and soybeans — are prone to failure because of flooding and soil erosion. Much of his proposed harvest would be immune to both.

His proposal involves replacing the food crops along the rivers with seven types of plants:

- cottonwood and willow trees,
- switchgrass and miscanthus grass,
- energy cane, and
- sweet and biomass sorghum.

All except sorghum are perennials, meaning farmers wouldn't have to replant year after year.

Jose, whose background and advanced degrees are in forestry, said this is perhaps the most productive use of some of the flood plains.

“If you plant the trees or grasses, it keeps the soil in place for 10, 15, 20 years,” he said. “Even if there is a flood, they stay in place.”

But the project also represents a more realistic approach to expanding the advanced biofuel economy, which has been stymied by financial shortfalls and unrealistic expectations.

Getting people together

The backbone of the proposal lies in a marriage of environmentally sound land usage and economics. Refineries are currently able to convert just about anything pulled out of the ground into fuel, he said.

“The technology is there, but no one is producing advanced biofuel at a commercial level,” Jose said.

Jose is leading the development of a consortium in the biomass and biofuel industry. More than 50 partners are on board representing every major segment in the supply chain, from education to production to consumption.

Under Jose’s plan, area farmers would cultivate and harvest one or many of the proposed crops.

Small, advanced rural biorefineries would then collect the biomass, grind up the feedstock, and make pellets or extract sugar out of them. The product would then ship to “hubs,” larger plants that ferment the pellets into electricity or biofuel, such as butanol, green diesel and jet fuel. This end product would be sold to consumers.

This producer-to-consumer scheme seems simple enough, but other promising companies have foundered when trying to ignite the commercial market for advanced biofuels.

In 2007, Range Fuels promised it would become the first commercial cellulosic plant; it had planned to use wood chips to produce 20 million gallons of cellulosic ethanol in 2008 with an end goal of 100 million gallons per year. The company received \$76 million from the Department of Energy. Former President George W. Bush said it would help break America’s “addiction to oil.” Today, the company is no more.

Peter Nelson, co-founder of Memphis-based advanced rural biorefinery Biodimensions Inc., said large companies such as Range Fuels broke ground on unrealistic expectations. "The technologies weren't well-vetted," he said.

As Range Fuels planned, most big companies intend to build a huge factory to convert thousands of farmers' harvests into commercially available biofuel, he said. A common problem is that farmers aren't ready to produce the necessary feedstock, and that creates a strain between the companies and the rural communities.

In general, "there were unrealistic expectations on the part of the biofuel companies that the feed stocks were going to be cheap," Nelson said.

"The large petroleum companies and the farmers just didn't speak the same language," he said.

A smaller start

Nelson said small advanced rural biorefineries act as an intermediary between farmers and large petroleum companies. They help farmers have a seat at the table by doing the first step of processing.

"It puts the region in control to work with the large biorefinery," he said.

Jose said advanced rural biorefineries are central to the consortium concept. They will eventually contribute to biofuel production. In the meantime, other byproducts can keep farmers profitable.

Show Me Energy in Centerview, southeast of Kansas City, is an example. It is a farmer co-op that collects biomass from neighboring farms and produces pellets that help heat homes. Eventually, these pellets could be made into butanol, a drop-in biofuel.

Founder Steve Flick said Show Me Energy is starting small and building a foundation.

"You have to crawl before you walk, walk before you run," Flick said. "What we're doing is cutting-edge, for the next generation to learn."

Bringing parties together

Jose said just bringing the diverse stakeholders to the table would help break the vicious chicken-versus-egg cycle that has plagued biofuel technologies in the past: Can't create biofuel without technology. Can't develop technology without funding. Can't get funding without investors. Can't get investors without political support and infrastructure. Can't get political support and infrastructure without demand for biofuel.

Jose and his team envision a "farm-to-fuel" team that places different parties shoulder to shoulder, moving forward at the same time for a common goal: a biomass- and biofuel-based economy using the Mississippi and Missouri river corridors.

Rather than building a basic supply chain, Jose said the teams have learned from others' mistakes and have added bankers, transportation experts and equipment manufacturers to the mix.

"There is no existing model that brings every player together like this in the region," he said.

Advanced biofuels on the market

The term "advanced biofuel" generally means a renewable fuel that is derived from fast-growing crops, agricultural or forestry waste or other sustainable biomass feedstocks other than corn starch. Various low-input, high-yield crops such as tree and grass varieties can be converted into liquid transportation fuels.

Logistical issues such as availability of sustainable biomass feedstock, transportation costs and a lack of venture funding have stunted the growth of many of these technologies.

There are a number of pilot-scale refineries in the U.S. that have the capabilities to produce advanced biofuel, but very few are able to take the steps to commercial-scale production, said Joanne Ivancic, executive director for Advanced Biofuels USA.

"We have (solved) most of the technical challenges at least on a bench scale," she said. "But it costs a lot to move these projects from a bench scale ... to a commercial scale."

Jose said 70 to 80 of the small advanced rural biorefineries in the Missouri and Mississippi river region, or seven to eight per state, would work together to ship their products to five or six large refineries.

Moving away from corn

Underlying the push for a U.S. biofuel economy is the belief that decreasing the nation's dependence on fossil fuels would help disengage the nation from unstable Middle Eastern economies, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower prices at the pump.

However, Ivancic said government support for advanced biofuel commercialization has been small.

“Political will has not really been created to support it,” she said.

Despite meager government funding, ambitious mandates have been set for fuel producers in the future. Under the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, the amount of U.S. biofuel use must increase from 9 billion gallons in 2008 to 36 billion gallons by 2022.

The catch is that 21 billion gallons of that fuel blend must be gleaned from non-cornstarch, or advanced biofuels, which currently are quite scarce.

In the U.S., corn ethanol is the reigning king of the biofuel industry. It is currently the most readily available biofuel on the market. In Missouri, for instance, the Missouri Renewable Fuel Standard requires the sale of 10 percent ethanol blends when ethanol is cheaper than gasoline.

By producing corn ethanol, manufacturers have been able to drop in a gasoline additive that may soon account for as much as 15 percent of the fuel pumped into automobiles.

Pump prices fall considerably when gasoline is mixed with ethanol. According to the Missouri Corn Growers Association, the use of the 10 percent blend amounted to \$285 million in statewide savings in 2008.

Corn advocates such as TheCropSite point to studies that show direct-effect greenhouse gas emissions are reduced 48 to 59 percent in comparison with gasoline.

But critics say the immediate benefits are superficial and act as a glossy PR distraction from corn ethanol's expensive side effects. Some, such as the Environmental Working Group, say the decrease in prices at the pump is offset by grocery costs, since the production of fuel competes with food for corn. The group also says the toll corn ethanol

production takes on the environment cancels out the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Most cars manufactured before 2008 aren't able to handle fuel with more than 10 percent corn ethanol, and even that, some say, burns faster than regular gasoline anyway. Ivancic said that because car engines are designed for optimal gasoline performance, drivers experience a "mileage penalty" when using ethanol-laced fuels.

What could happen

Jose can't suppress his excitement when he talks about the project, which is still in its developmental stages. He speaks of the plants with the adoration of a parent when visiting one of the research farms in New Franklin. He brags about how fast his crops are growing.

He has been awarded a small grant from the Mizzou Advantage Program but says it will take millions of dollars to keep the consortium and its activities alive and billions in private investments to bring the biofuel economy to fruition.

He says if all goes as planned in the next five to 10 years, the Mississippi and Missouri river corridor could see:

- 1 million acres of biofuel crops.
- The creation of 70 to 80 advanced rural biorefineries in the region (seven to eight per state), creating jobs and economic benefits in the states.
- A healthy, advanced biofuel industry producing 20 to 30 percent of the national goal of 21 billion gallons a year.

His team is applying for several federal grants worth millions of dollars, but the programs are highly competitive.

"We've decided as an institution to move forward with the consortium one way or another," he said. "That's our strategy."

Missourinet

Debt ceiling plans hold differing outcomes for farm programs

by Mike Lear on July 29, 2011

Farmers could be impacted depending on how the debt ceiling debate in Washington D.C. pans out. The Program Director for the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri, Pat Westhoff, says different proposals have differing approaches to farm programs.

Senator Majority Leader Harry Reid's plan would reduce the amount of base acreages eligible for direct payments, meaning fewer dollars going to farmers as early as October of 2012. Other proposals would eliminate direct payments altogether. Westhoff says even if changes to farm programs are not made upon passage of a package, it may set into motion a process leading to reductions later.

Westhoff says eliminating direct payments would amount to 5 billion dollars out of the total budget deficit of over 1 trillion dollars. With cuts possible across all federal programs, however, Westhoff says it is difficult to defend any one of them. He says everything from annual appropriations bills to major spending packages will be thoroughly studied.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Food! Glorious Food

Kate Uptergrove | Posted: Friday, July 29, 2011 12:00 am

Sushi ... Churrasco beef ... pulled pork smoked on campus ... Mongolian barbecue ... vegan ...
Campus dining has changed.

No longer are students served the cafeteria selections their parents might remember. Today, the emphasis is on bold flavors, fresh ingredients and culinary expertise.

"Do we still need pizza, nuggets, burgers and ice cream? Yes! But today's students also want something more. Students are looking for more variety and authentic flavor profiles," explained Julaine Kiehn, director of Campus Dining Services at the University of Missouri - Columbia.

Taste, above all, reigns supreme.

"If it doesn't taste good students won't eat it," Kiehn said. She pointed out that Mizzou takes a stealth health approach to good nutrition — always with an emphasis on taste. "If we see a way to create a better nutritional profile without compromising taste or quality, we just do it." To that end, much of the food served at Mizzou is purchased from local farmers and prepared fresh in front of the customer.

It's a trend that's taking hold across the region, explained Linda Thacker, director of Food Services at Maryville University and an employee of Fresh Ideas, a food service company headquartered in Columbia, Mo.

Standing inside the newly installed food court in Maryville's Gander Hall, Thacker points to an array of impressive stainless steel food preparation and serving areas, but I can't get past a round appliance I immediately recognize.

"You have a Mongolian grill?" I'm surprised and a little jealous. This isn't what I remember from college.

"Yes! I think it's going to be very popular," Thacker said. In fact, she's hired two former HuHot employees to ensure that the "food preparation is fun and the food is great."

Like Kiehn, Thacker emphasizes fresh — as in fresh food, fresh ideas and fresh specials daily. Even in the deli, only fresh-cut meats are used.

"We're all about healthy options," Thacker said. "And, we're becoming more adept at meeting individual student needs — from offering vegan and vegetarian choices daily to meeting the needs of students with food allergies."

Gone, it seems, are the days of the all ice cream and pizza college diet I remember. Well, maybe not completely gone as Mizzou senior Eric Woods explained.

"I can admit to not always making the best choices," Woods said. He admitted that when he first came to campus, he went a little overboard, but it didn't last long. "I learned to tone it down pretty quickly," he said.

Today, Woods said, his favorite place to eat on campus is Mort's, a burger and fry joint that pays homage to Missouri alumnus Mort Walker and The Shack, a legendary Columbia restaurant where Walker presumably penned his venerable cartoon, "Beetle Bailey."

"Mort's is great," said Woods. "Good food, and a great atmosphere. Although I probably eat there too much."

While Woods is too young to remember the original Shack (a campus favorite from the 1920s through the mid-1980s), the nostalgia of the joint is not lost on him.

"They've brought back some of the original recipes and booths," Woods said, "along with the tradition of students carving their initials into the restaurant's wood panels and beams."

Atmosphere, quality, taste and convenience — it seems these are the four pillars of the campus dining experience today.

"When students dine on campus, they want to be able to enjoy the same kind of quality and restaurant experience they enjoy off campus," explained Brad Woodruffe, general manager of Sodexo, whose Webster University offerings must compete with an array of local restaurants — all within walking distance of the university. To keep them on campus, Woodruffe knows the food and service have to be exactly what students want, so he watches trends carefully and studies what students like. One of the emerging trends Woodruffe sees — on campus and off — is an increased appreciation for Mediterranean cuisine. "It's heart healthy, exotic and appeals to vegetarians as well a meat-eaters," Woodruffe said. Other international flavors are born from Sodexo's operations in 80 countries around the world and preferences of the university's international student body.

"Students today have a much broader palette when it comes to food," Woodruffe said. "And, they want choices." Along with his food service colleagues, he plans on keeping them happy and well fed.



Suspect pleads to killing of Missouri football fan

Updated 12:45 a.m., Friday, July 29, 2011

COLUMBIA, Kan. (AP) — The first of eight people charged in the deadly holdup of a Kansas man visiting Columbia to watch his cousin play football has pleaded guilty.

Aaron Hobson was robbed and shot last Oct. 23 as he drove through the parking lot of a Columbia convenience store. A passenger said several people approached the car and demanded money.

Hobson was the 22-year-old cousin of University of Missouri defensive back Trey Hobson.

On Thursday, 24-year-old Daron Peal pleaded guilty in Boone County Circuit Court to second-degree murder and armed criminal action. Investigators had identified Peal as the shooter.

Aaron Hobson was from Wichita and had been attending Kansas City, Kan., Community College, but was planning to return to Prairie View A&M University in Texas for the spring 2011 semester.