

SPRINGFIELD NEWS-LEADER

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OTC, MU partner to make it easier for students to transfer

It will be easier for Ozarks Technical College students to transfer to the University of Missouri-Columbia after the two schools signed an agreement that allows OTC classes to count toward three bachelor's degrees.

Students will now be able to transfer all their OTC credits to get an online degree in nursing, health sciences or general studies. Academic leaders at both schools praised the deal, which was officially signed this morning.

"It's going to serve people in southwest Missouri by doing things that neither of us could do alone," said MU Provost Brian Foster.

OTC Chancellor Hal Higdon said he's not sure how many students will participate in the program. And he said the cost savings per student depend on the student's situation.

OTC and MU already have one such agreement, that allows an associate arts in teaching degree to be transferred to a bachelor of education. But unlike the three latest agreements, that one requires students to move to Columbia for the two years of the bachelor's degree.

The online degrees will allow students to stay in Springfield, which also makes them more likely to seek a job in the area, officials from the schools said.

Foster said MU has similar agreements with all the community colleges in the state.

"Oftentimes, we end up in two-bit competition instead of getting together and doing things together," he said. "This is the kind of thing we should be doing."



MU, Ozarks college partner on transfers

Columbia Daily Tribune Friday, August 5, 2011

The University of Missouri has entered into three new transfer agreements with Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield.

The agreements aim to provide a seamless transfer for OTC students into MU's online programs. The agreements specifically allow students earning an associate degree in nursing from OTC to transfer to MU's bachelor of science in nursing program. and those with associate of arts degrees from OTC to enter into MU's bachelor of health sciences or bachelor of general studies programs online.

The two schools had an existing agreement in place before the signing, connecting OTC associate of arts in teaching graduates to MU's bachelor's degree in elementary education.



Is the writing on the wall?

Not if university leaps to embrace e-learning trend.

BY CRAIG VAN MATRE

Columbia Daily Tribune Sunday, August 7, 2011

In 2008, the website Edutopia posed the question: “Are you concerned that technology could make educators obsolete?” Fifty-one percent of the educators who responded opined, “Technology will remain a resource for teachers to use and will never replace the traditional role of a teacher.”

On July 18, writing in The Wall Street Journal, Terry Moe, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and professor of political science at Stanford University, wrote: “As the cyber revolution comes to American education, it will bring about a massive and cost-saving substitution of technology for labor. That means far fewer teachers ... per student. It also means teachers will be far less concentrated in geographic districts, as those who work online can be anywhere.” It also means money “and jobs will flow out of the ... regular schools into new ... providers of online options.”

Who’s correct? More precise (and pertinent), whose counsel should the University of Missouri heed as it charts its course through the 21st century?

THE KHAN ACADEMY

I recommend you get online and go to www.khanacademy.org. The founder of the site is Salman Khan, a Harvard-trained educator. The San Francisco Chronicle in 2009 called him the “math master of the Internet.” He began his operation by using YouTube videos to help some relatives learn math. Shortly thereafter, he decided to devote himself full time to e-learning. Now he is developing new course offerings and acting as an evangelist of e-learning. His organization provides educational videos that are available online — without charge — and number in excess of 2,400. Bill Gates is a fan. Khan’s “TED Talk” video is on the opening page of the Khan Academy website. It takes 20 minutes to view. Millions of these videos have been viewed around the world. More than 200,000 students watch the educational videos daily.

Khan’s computer offerings have evolved. Now they come with sophisticated tools for teachers to measure how well students in Khan’s courses are learning. A graph showing each student’s

performance in relation to the others taking the course is available, and you can see an example on his website. Khan notes students fall permanently behind in the traditional educational system because they don't learn an important concept in time to apply it to more advanced topics. They are labeled "slow" and don't progress. But with "self-paced" learning, the gaps in their knowledge don't develop because they have to master each concept before they are allowed to move on.

"In every classroom we've studied, there's a group of kids who race ahead and there's a group who are ... slower. But when you let every student work at their own pace ... you see students who took a little bit of extra time to learn one concept or the other, and who then race ahead. Students who you might have thought of as slow six weeks ago, you now would think are gifted. ... It makes you think ... some of the labels some of us have benefited from are due to a coincidence of time," he says.

He also notes that by using computers as the primary source of most information, teachers are freed to work one-on-one with students having difficulties. Thus, the quality of their instruction increases as the quantity they must deliver decreases.

It's impossible to watch Khan's TED Talk video and not be enthusiastic (and perhaps joyful) about what obviously is a significant leap forward in the delivery of knowledge. But it's also hard to watch it and not be anxious for our town and school. What does this mean for the future of the university and college towns everywhere?

A POSSIBLE FUTURE

In the not-too-distant future, most people will have available a wall in their homes that delivers three-dimensional images with the clarity you would enjoy if you were in the front row of a small classroom. Prototypes exist for teleconferences where attendees look at broadcast images so realistic they forget where they are and try to shake hands with the images of their fellow attendees. The size and functionality of iPhones, iPads and the equivalent were incomprehensible only half a decade ago, but now they are almost passé. Not to be too melodramatic, but technology is a juggernaut that will disrupt your life more rapidly than you can imagine.

You should assume technology will make available to you, at a relatively small cost and over the Internet, the educational content of most undergraduate courses. These offerings will arrive with the same clarity, ease of comprehension and consistency as the best teacher can provide on his or her best day — but do it for millions of viewers a day.

Now imagine in the near future a workaday parent whose child wants an education and who is considering alternatives. He knows Prestigious U has developed a series of lectures and related coursework his child can access online. The courses are of excellent quality, and Prestigious will certify that if his child attains the requisite competency in the courses, he or she will qualify for a degree to be awarded by Prestigious itself. Best of all, the course, grading and certification come

at a cost of \$200 per credit hour. Or he can send his student to his state's university, where he or she must be housed in a dorm or an apartment, pay tuition and fees, etc., etc. — at a cost differential of many thousands of dollars. Prestigious U's costs were recovered long ago in the production of the materials and the promotion of the courses. Prestigious already has the brand. It can transmit the electronic materials to his child's AV equipment for a negligible amount — literally a few cents. Its profit potential has become enormous because it is literally making its materials available simultaneously to millions of students around the world. A student can learn at his or her own pace; and when one subject is mastered, it's on to the next course. Competence and not "seat time" becomes the educational standard.

Before you dismiss this example as hyperbole, consider the average U.S. student who graduated with a bachelor's degree in 2008 had more than \$23,000 in student debt, according to the U.S. Department of Education. This debt was projected to rise to \$27,000 in 2010. Couple that with a decline in the median salary for recent college graduates — from \$30,000 in 2009 to \$27,000 in 2010, according to the Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. Suddenly it's easy to understand that saving money while attending college will become an imperative for most. Consumers always embrace alternatives that are at once cheaper and more effective.

How does the University of Missouri compete with Prestigious U in the above hypothetical? Should it assume it is an exaggeration and not be concerned? Or should it begin the dramatic transformation needed to preserve its share of the educational market?

AN OBSOLETE BUSINESS MODEL?

The University of Missouri delivers its product — education — using the same model that has existed for centuries. Students travel to a common geographic location, and a teacher broadcasts information to them. Those who fail to follow the progression of the course lectures fall behind; those who grasp the concepts and want to move through the materials more rapidly must await a later lecture. Time in the classroom is as important as scores on tests. Enormous and costly buildings are needed to house teachers, students and administrators. A rigid national educational hierarchy — almost feudal in nature — exists to preserve this system. It is the way things have always been done, and up until now it has been successful.

Perhaps the MU model isn't in danger because students want to participate in the same educational ritual that has been honored for centuries. Perhaps students want to attend college instead of looking at computer screens. Yet we all have seen examples of businesses in recent times that failed to anticipate the effect technological advances would have. Once a business becomes obsolete, it can't be saved. Record stores, video rental stores, photographic film — you can think of many other examples.

Is the idea of a university in the mold of MU destined to become yet another example of inevitable obsolescence?

A REBUTTAL OF SORTS

There are several arguments in opposition to the above. The first is that computers can't teach abstract concepts like justice, freedom, racial equality, etc. Perhaps that was true a few years ago. Lately, however, IBM's Watson supercomputer proved it can beat the best contestants on "Jeopardy," even though the questions frequently depend on correctly understanding literary allusions, idioms and pop culture. A computer might not be able to debate with you today, but it can reproduce in a nano-second what various authors have written about an abstract concept. Moreover, a computer can introduce and teach a student the basics of an abstract concept and then turn the student over to that student's instructors for advanced training in a discipline.

Another argument is that the college experience is necessary for a true education — the "college as a young adults' camp" idea. Whether parents (or students who put themselves through school) will regard these socialization opportunities as worth the extra years and substantial extra expense probably depends on our nation's economy. Wealthy students no doubt will regard it as worthwhile, but that concept favors schools like Vanderbilt and SMU, not MU. Parents of modest means typically worry much more about whether their children are having too good of a time at college than whether their children are being sufficiently entertained. Besides, how does a university distinguish itself as an entertainment or socialization center?

Finally, it is argued that an educational model based on e-learning will encourage a greater dependence on computers and lead to less imaginative, less innovative graduates. The fear is computers will impose conformity in thought through hyper-standardized educational products. If a sharp decrease in tenured faculty follows from computer-based learning, this will inevitably lead to the modern equivalent of the dark ages, when deviations from orthodox thought were punished. With computers in charge, Big Brother would know instantly about anyone whose thoughts were considered heretical. Accordingly, it is argued, not only the University of Missouri but colleges everywhere need to resist the replacement of teachers by computers.

This last argument has some logic behind it, in addition to its obvious paranoia. The consolidation of newspapers and homogenization and dumbing-down of TV news certainly lend credence to the argument that when too few people get to decide the content of what the public knows, a passively ignorant society results. But this fear, too, can be rebutted by facts. In the case of this last argument, the facts e-learning will make available will prevent knowledge from becoming static or sterile. The facts, theories and premises upon which all human knowledge is based will increasingly become available to all of us instantly and at any time of the day through the Internet. We can use our computer to help us sort through relevant facts to test the validity of what someone is trying to sell us.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

If the new world of education will be based on e-learning, the university's faculty and staff must develop the courses, the techniques for certifying competence and methods of allowing credit

toward degrees for attaining competence without regard to time in the classroom. For willing and able students, that process could (and probably should) commence in high school so a student is programmed (apologies for the pun) to continue his or her education through the university. Affiliations with junior colleges and a greater use of outreach and extension programs to encourage students to subscribe to the university's educational offerings — delivered over the Internet — must be encouraged. Faculty members need to incorporate computer-based learning materials to assist their students for most undergraduate courses. They need to blend this method into their courses immediately.

CONCLUSION

It is hard to believe accelerating the pace that information is available to everyone will be bad for us in the long run.

But in the long run, we will have caused the university to take a path that leads to its preservation and improvement — or one that leads to its irrelevance. If my view of the future is correct, we need to move immediately in the direction of a greater reliance on computer-based education. If we wait until the rest of academia has embraced this method, it will be too late to be anything but an also-ran in the race to deliver educational excellence. Decisions have to be made now, when we are able to see only through a glass darkly.

Attorney Craig Van Matre is a former member of the Stephens College Board of Trustees, a former member of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education and a current member of the Board of Curators of the University of Missouri. The opinions expressed in this article are his alone.



The Tribune's View: Classroom of the future

No more bricks and mortar?

By Henry J. Waters III

Columbia Daily Tribune Sunday, August 7, 2011

Recently columnist Bob Roper wrote in our Opinion section about potential implications of the digital age on education. Today, on the facing page, University of Missouri Curator Craig Van Matre expands on that theme, with particular impact because of his position in the highest echelon of UM policymaking.

Their portentous point is education will never be the same now that e-learning is upon us. Van Matre outlines the advantages of virtual teaching and the real challenges the new medium poses for institutions such as the University of Missouri. And the same is true for places like Stephens and Columbia College. Recently Stephens President Dianne Lynch attended a seminar where officials from digital giant Apple made clear their intent to “come after” the classroom teaching model.

This sort of dire promise is not new. Neither is the typical reaction of people in traditional education who believe nothing will ever replace the model they know and love.

What’s new, of course, is the problem of institutional cost. Even if most families and students might prefer living and studying on campus, simple economics will stop many of them, and the growing literature supports decisions to at least begin college at lower-cost venues. Learning online can be the least expensive of all.

And that’s not the most of it, Van Matre suggests. What if digital technology allows students at home or in classrooms fitted with high-tech screens to see lectures from world-class professors so lifelike the connection between teacher and learner might be more powerful than in a traditional classroom?

What if an e-learning course can be tailored more effectively to each student, concentrating on areas needing extra attention allowing delivery of a superior product at a fraction of the cost?

MU should get ready, says the curator.

But think about this: Stephens recently hosted a group of students from a New York prep school for a weeklong visit to see what college looks like. While here, the eight visitors got to sleep in dorms, ride horses and even make a documentary film about their time in Columbia.

Try that on the Internet.

The Internet poses quite a challenge for those who deliver education the old-fashioned way, but the mysteries of cyberspace can't provide many essential elements of the traditional model, as purveyors of on-campus learning will argue. I'm not expecting the Online Constrictors to compete in the Big 12 or any other sports venue.

Education faces threats from the Internet, but physical colleges can adapt. They can offer unique programs like Stephens' equestrian science, filmmaking and performing arts impossible to replicate online, and they can cleverly develop their own online curricula, as Columbia College and Stephens are doing and Van Matre urges as a higher priority for UM.

For would-be learners, diversity of opportunity through the Internet can be a good thing or provide easy access to inferior education. Our beloved local institutions must be among the energetic purveyors of quality. The online potential is sure to expand, but nimble institutions will keep pace.



UM set to interview president candidates

Columbia Daily Tribune Friday, August 5, 2011

The University of Missouri System's Board of Curators plans to start interviewing candidates for the president's post later this month.

"We've been having informal conversations with a number of candidates," board Chairman Warren Erdman said, adding that those conversations have been between individual curators and candidates. "Interviews won't begin until later this month."

Erdman said curators have sorted through hundreds of names of potential presidents. The board has narrowed down those names, he said, but "we're nowhere near having finalists."

After the board conducts interviews, an advisory committee will also have a chance to review final candidates.

The system is searching for a new president after Gary Forsee resigned in January. Interim President Steve Owens has said he's not interested in the job.

MU Vice Chancellor David Housh to retire after more than 20 years

By Garrett Evans

August 5, 2011 | 5:21 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Lori Franz remembers when, nearly 23 years ago, David Housh came up with what she called a "crazy idea."

Housh had been with the MU College of Business for about a year when he proposed a tuxedo dinner for donors.

"The faculty thought it was kind of ridiculous at the time," said Franz, a professor of business. "We didn't think anyone would put on a tuxedo and black tie for it."

She was impressed that Housh could talk an interim dean into the suggestion when most faculty members were not taking the idea seriously.

That event, now called the Davenport dinner, went on to raise millions of dollars and is now held annually by the business school. Furthermore, it has evolved into the Herbert J. Davenport Society, a membership group for donors.

After 10 years as vice chancellor of development and alumni relations, David Housh has asked to retire at the end of October.

He joined MU in 1987, serving as the first development director for the College of Business.

Housh is a Connecticut native, but has been in Columbia for the past 37 years.

"I'm as close to a native of Columbia as you can get without being one," he said.

He has been in charge of all areas of fundraising at MU, as well as overseeing the Mizzou Alumni Association. He was also in charge of the first comprehensive fundraising campaign for MU but regards the achievement as a group effort.

The campaign — For All We Call Mizzou— began in 2000 with the goal of reaching \$600 million to use toward scholarships, facilities and other campus programs. The campaign ultimately brought in more than \$1 billion, with the bulk of donations made by MU alumni.

Housh said MU was the 14th public university to raise over \$1 billion when the campaign ended in 2008.

“That is what I am most proud of,” he said. “Not for myself, but proud of the teamwork of the deans, campus leaders and students that made it happen.”

Housh planned to retire at the conclusion of the campaign, but Chancellor Brady Deaton asked him to stay for an additional three years to plan the next effort.

Although he is set to retire in October, Housh said he will work on special projects for the chancellor and retain his title and office until a replacement comes aboard.

The success of fundraising through the development program is something Housh hopes to see in future campaigns. He said he believes the program will ensure the financial stability of MU in years to come.

As for future plans, Housh knows exactly where he’s headed — Montana.

He recently sold his home in Columbia, and now he and his wife plan to move to Gallatin Gateway, Mont.

Montana — specifically Helena — is where his grandfather and great-grandfather settled in the 1800s, working as doctors. Housh said his other grandfather rode horses with "Buffalo Bill" Cody in a different part of the state.

When he gets to Gallatin Gateway, Housh plans to work at a hunting or fishing shop, volunteer for his church and help a friend with fundraising at Montana State University.

“Other than that, my fundraising days are over,” Housh said.

He does plan to travel to see his son in Boston, but Housh said he loves Montana and plans to stay “locked in” there.



Dessem to leave dean post at MU law school

Columbia Daily Tribune Published August 4, 2011 at 2:47 p.m.

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The dean of the University of Missouri School of Law has announced he's stepping down after this school year.

In a letter to alumni and friends, Larry Dessem said he has more that he would like to accomplish in his teaching, scholarship and service career at MU.

"One of the many attractions of the MU deanship is the tradition of deans moving to full-time teaching at the conclusion of their service, and I now look forward to following in that tradition," Dessem wrote.

By announcing his decision now, Dessem said the university will have a year to conduct a comprehensive search for a new dean.

Dessem is going into his 10th year as the dean of MU's law school.

He previously served as dean of the Mercer University School of Law.

He is on vacation and not available for comment.



Living together too much commitment for today's couples

By Robert Preidt, Updated 08/07/2011 3:05 PM

A growing number of young American adults are engaging in what's called "stayover relationships," in which they spend three or more nights together each week while still having the option of going to their own homes, a new study shows.

"Instead of following a clear path from courtship to marriage, individuals are choosing to engage in romantic ties on their own terms without the guidance of social norms," study author Tyler Jamison, a doctoral candidate in the human development and family studies department at the University of Missouri, said in a university news release.

"There is a gap between the teen years and adulthood during which we don't know much about the dating behaviors of young adults. Stayovers are the unique answer to what emerging adults are doing in their relationships," she added.

There are a number of reasons for this growing trend in stayover relationships, said Jamison, who interviewed college-aged adults in committed, exclusive relationships.

"As soon as couples live together, it becomes more difficult to break up," she explained. "At that point, they have probably signed a lease, bought a couch and acquired a dog, making it harder to disentangle their lives should they break up. Staying over doesn't present those entanglements."

The couples in the study with stayover routines were content in their relationships, but didn't necessarily plan to move in together or get married.

"Many college-aged adults are students who will soon be facing a transition point in their lives," Jamison said. "Most students do not have a definite plan for where they will live or work after graduation, and stayovers are a way for couples to have comfort and convenience without the commitment of living together or having long-term plans."

The study appears in the current issue of the *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*.

More information: The National Marriage Project at the [University of Virginia](http://www.virginia.edu/marriageproject/) has more on relationship trends in the [United States](http://www.virginia.edu/marriageproject/), <http://www.virginia.edu/marriageproject/>.

The Miami Herald

Study: Young couples leave themselves an 'out' and choose 'stayover' relationships

By Michaëlle Bond

Young adult couples are redefining dating by staying over with each other without taking the plunge into cohabitation, which could help explain drops in marriage rates among young people, according to a university study.

College-educated people in their 20s have shown a growing trend toward "stayover relationships," spending at least three nights a week together, while still having the choice of staying at their individual homes, Tyler Jamison, a University of Missouri Ph.D. student, found.

"I had some anecdotal evidence that it was happening, so I wanted to enter it into research," she said.

Having both convenience and independence is a major draw for young adults who choose to stay over instead of cohabiting, Jamison found through interviews with 22 college-educated young adults in committed relationships.

And getting out of a relationship is easier for couples in "stayover relationships," since they don't have to worry about a shared apartment lease or other shared commitments.

Many young adults are also at transition points in their lives and don't want to be tied down, Jamison said.

Some participants in the study, published in the Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, said they would never cohabit before marriage, but had no problem staying over. Even couples who stayed over seven nights a week don't consider themselves to be living together, Jamison said.

"They definitely considered it a separate behavior. They think, 'If I can go home or send them home, I'm not a cohabiter.'"

Jamison found that some people stayed over to escape undesirable home situations, such as bad relationships with roommates. But refuge was usually a contributing factor, not a main reason for staying over.

Most of the couples interviewed had been together for more than a year and decided early on that staying over was for them. Some of them talked about the arrangement, but it just happened for others.

Jamison found that those interviewed were content with their dating situations. They didn't necessarily plan to take their relationships to another level.

"It may be just a dating behavior that doesn't have a lot of impact on long-term relationships," she said.

Jamison has conducted a larger study, currently being reviewed for publication, of more than 600 young adults to get a sense of how many people are in "stayover relationships" and the characteristics of those who are.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Top-salaried Missouri employee is paid round-the-clock

MU MENTION PAGE 2

JEFFERSON CITY • As a doctor at one of Missouri's psychiatric institutions, Hungi Sripal has been paid thousands of dollars while sleeping on the job. His round-the-clock wages helped make Sripal the state's highest paid employee, earning more than double the governor.

In fact, Sripal is one of 50 state workers who were paid more than Gov. Jay Nixon and the state's seven Supreme Court judges during the recently concluded budget year, according to figures provided to The Associated Press under an open-records request. Like Sripal, almost all those employees are physicians for the Department of Mental Health.

And like Sripal, many got extra pay for working all day and all night -- no matter whether they were sleeping or simply relaxing on the job.

The Department of Mental Health defends the wage arrangement as a necessary price to pay to entice skilled professionals to work undesirable hours attending to sometimes unstable patients at institutions that might be more than an hour away from the doctors' homes in Missouri's major metropolitan areas.

"I understand that the first glance looks bad, but I do think that we're actually managing the money pretty well to take care of the patients," said Jay Englehart, the medical director at the Southeast Missouri Mental Health Center where Sripal works.

Missouri's legislative budget leaders told the AP they were unaware of the physicians' special salary arrangements in the Department of Mental Health. The lawmakers raised concerns about both the size of the paychecks - Sripal's pay was \$320,598 last fiscal year - and a potential lack of transparency in how taxpayer dollars are spent. They pledged to question mental health officials about the salaries at future legislative hearings.

"In this time of underemployed professionals because of the national economy, that really does seem to be a lot of money," said Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia.

The salaries of state employees have come under heightened scrutiny at the Missouri Capitol during several years of tight budgets. Most state workers have gone without pay raises. And the House Budget Committee, in particular, has attempted to reduce the wages of certain upper level officials in Nixon's administration. But the budget ax generally has spared those in advanced-degree professions such as the physicians at the Department of Mental Health.

Records obtained by the AP from the state Office of Administration show the state paid more than 68,000 people during the fiscal year that ended June 30, with amounts ranging from as little as a few dollars and cents to Sripal's six-figure peak.

Nixon's salary of \$133,821 ranked 58th among government workers, just behind that of Missouri's seven Supreme Court judges. Forty-six of the top 50 worked for the Department of Mental Health.

The list does not include earnings for employees at state universities, whose paychecks come from the institutions and not directly from the state. If university salaries were included, the \$2.35 million salary of University of Missouri football coach Gary Pinkel would dwarf that of both the governor and the Department of Mental health physicians.

Sripal's salary is listed as \$114,014 in the 2009-2010 official state manual. But Missouri's online financial tracker shows he actually was paid more than \$300,000 in both of those years. His total wages ballooned over his base salary because physicians at the Farmington facility get an extra \$80 an hour when they serve as the onsite, on-call doctor on nights and weekends. Sripal was paid for more than 2,500 hours of nights and weekends last fiscal year, according to department records.

At times, he responded to patient emergencies. But he also could have passed his time in a room equipped with a refrigerator, microwave, telephone and a place to sleep. Reached at work by the AP, Sripal said he often chooses the extra shifts.

"There are so many other people (in the private sector) who make more than what I make," Sripal said.

The extra pay Sripal receives on nights and weekends would be fairly typical if he were a psychiatrist. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, psychiatrists in Missouri earn an average of \$81 an hour, or \$168,680 a year.

But officials at the Mental Health Department said it can be difficult to entice physicians to work in rural communities such as Farmington, which is about an hour southeast of St. Louis. The facility houses approximately 300 people, including about 130 committed because of sexual offenses. About four-fifths of the total population is there under court order.

"Unlike the private sector, when we have a shortage of physicians, we can't simply opt to close some of these units," said Mark Stringer, director of the department's Division of Comprehensive Psychiatric Services.

To fill a vacancy at Farmington, the state currently is paying \$200 an hour for a temporary psychiatric worker, Englehart said. Staff physicians take turns sleeping at the facility because the combination of patient needs and the remote location make it impractical for an on-call physician to remain at home in the St. Louis area, he said.

"Yeah, we do have some of the highest paid employees in the state, but that is partly because they're working many, many hours, and it's because we provide great service here," said Englehart, whose total wages of \$209,619 ranked 11th among state employees.

The governor's office declined to make Nixon available for an interview about the salaries at the Department of Mental Health.

Schaefer and House Budget Committee Chairman Ryan Silvey both acknowledged the state's need to offer attractive salaries to certain professionals but expressed reservations about the wage arrangements at the Department of Mental Health.

"Does it concern me as a conservative that we have government salaries that high? Absolutely," said Silvey, R-Kansas City. "Is it possibly a necessary evil to provide the services? Possibly."

Schaefer said he's aware of plenty of physicians, lawyers, engineers and other professionals who are not working as much as they would prefer, which he said calls into question the department's justification for paying its physicians extraordinary wages to work after normal business hours.

The two legislators expressed an even greater concern that their budget committees weren't informed of the department's extra-pay policy, and that it was not transparent from employees' base salaries how much they actually are making.

"The fact they're being reported at \$114,000 but they're really making \$320,000 - that's a concern," Silvey said.



Sales tax holiday continues in tight times

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Saturday, August 6, 2011

Families shopping for back-to-school goods this weekend are saving money by not having to pay state sales taxes on certain items, but some wonder whether the sales-tax holiday makes sense when the state has cut millions from public schools and universities in the past couple of years.

“It forces students to pay for political demagoguery because the money comes out of education, anyway,” Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, said.

The eighth sales-tax holiday means shoppers don’t have to pay state sales taxes on clothing, school supplies and some computer items through tomorrow. State law lets counties and cities waive their sales taxes, too, although Boone County and Columbia have opted not to do so.

Brenda Procter, a personal financial planning expert at the University of Missouri, encourages families to take advantage of the tax holiday but also wonders whether it makes sense.

“I worry about lost revenues,” she said. “People are saving money on one hand, but the lost revenues impact programs and services that benefit low-income people.”

It’s unclear how much the state actually loses in general revenue during the tax-free weekend because the Department of Revenue doesn’t track those numbers.

MU conducted a study in 2005 estimating state and local entities lost between \$10.8 million and \$18.5 million in the first year. Procter thinks it’s more now.

“I do know in any given week this past fiscal year, the state collected \$34 million in sales taxes,” she said.

“With a lot more activity this weekend, you have to wonder. The state could lose as much as \$30 million. You have to question in this budget environment whether it’s worth it.”

Plus, the tax holiday doesn’t entice people to buy things they wouldn’t otherwise buy, said Wayne Goode, a member of the UM System Board of Curators and a former state senator. Savvy shoppers might wait to buy supplies and clothes during the tax-free holiday, but they’re not spending money they wouldn’t spend, anyway, he said.

“I don’t think the state gains anything by it,” Goode said. “In fact, it basically loses that amount of sales tax.”

Proponents, including the Missouri Chamber of Commerce, say any lost revenue will be made up by enticing residents from Illinois — which called off its own back-to-school tax holiday this year — and other border states to shop in Missouri. Additionally, back-to-school shoppers are likely spending money on lunch or other items that aren’t exempt from the tax break, chamber spokeswoman Karen Buschmann said.

And people are struggling, Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, said. “Any extra break you can give, I think, is an appropriate thing to do.”

But the tax holiday is little relief for families in the bottom 20 percent of earners making less than \$17,000 annually, Procter said. Those people pay about 9.6 percent of their income in total taxes, including sales, property and income, compared to top earners who pay as little as 5.4 percent, she said.

“Low-income families will save a small amount on whatever back-to-school items they can afford, but they still pay a higher total rate than other income groups in Missouri,” Procter said, adding she is not sure the tax-free weekend is the best way to deal with tax policy.

Procter urges low-income families to also look for free school supplies through community agencies, churches and local back-to-school fairs. Next weekend, local service groups will host an annual fair that provides free backpacks and school supplies for children in grades K-12. The event will be from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. next Saturday at Calvary Baptist Church, 606 Ridgeway Ave.

In the meantime, don’t look for Missouri lawmakers to rethink the sales-tax holiday, Kelly said.

“It’s popular,” he said. “People like it because they think they’re getting something. It’s a hoax.”