

University presidents warn of zooming costs

BY VIRGINIA YOUNG • Post-Dispatch Jefferson City Bureau Chief vyoung@post-dispatch.com > 573-635-6178 | Posted: Thursday, February 2, 2012 12:00 am | [\(3\) Comments](#)

JEFFERSON CITY • Missouri is fast reaching the point where many students from low- and moderate-income families will be priced out of a college education, presidents of public universities told a House committee Wednesday.

The administrators said they have tried to limit tuition increases the last several years, even as state funding has shrunk. But the 12.5 percent reduction in state funds proposed by Gov. Jay Nixon for next year can't be offset solely by administrative savings or efficiencies, they warned.

"I could fire every administrator I have and I couldn't come up with \$15 million," the amount needed to replace \$10 million in state funds and pay growing bills for utilities and other expenses at his campus, said Missouri State University interim President Clifton "Clif" Smart.

At the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, savings from a hiring freeze and the elimination of eight academic departments helped keep tuition increases to an average of 1.4 percent over the last three years.

But if legislators adopt Nixon's proposal, state appropriations would provide less than 40 percent of the schools' total funding, which President Chuck Ambrose called "a fundamental threshold. This budget moves us to the edge" of being able to keep college affordable, he said.

The House Education Appropriations Committee heard from the presidents of Missouri's 10 four-year public universities, as well as representatives of the state's technical and community colleges.

So far the most specific tuition increase proposal has come from the University of Missouri. That system's Board of Curators, which is meeting today in Kansas City, is considering an average 6.5 percent increase in tuition and fees at its four campuses.

Legislators have said they want to soften Nixon's budget cuts. But given the state's \$500 million budget shortfall, they acknowledged that they aren't likely to be able to offer substantial relief.

"It's sad," said Committee Chairman Mike Lair, R-Chillicothe. "I wish it were not this way."

Kenneth Dobbins, president of Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, said legislators have a difficult job because "it's a sum-zero game. If you give to someone, you've got to take from someone else."

Smart, the Missouri State University leader, came close to saying the governor and Legislature should instead look to increase state revenue.

Given that Missouri's goals are to increase the number of residents who are college graduates and to make college accessible to all qualified students, "it appears to me there is a disconnect between what we say is important — our collective intent — and our collective actions," he said.

Asked later whether he was suggesting a tax increase, Smart said: "I'm going to stay out of that minefield."

He added that a tax credit overhaul — championed by Nixon last year but killed by gridlock between the House and Senate — could provide \$200 million for state coffers.

Several of the college presidents noted that Nixon's proposed reduction in funds would bring the state's cuts to 24.5 percent over the last three years.

While Nixon's budget holds scholarship funding stable, the money will be divided among a larger number of students, reducing the amount each receives, noted Constance Gully, chief financial officer at Harris-Stowe State University in St. Louis.

At the same time, federal Pell grants for low-income students are being scaled back, an especially painful move at Harris-Stowe, where 93 percent of the students qualify for the grants.

The administrators listed ways they have coped with previous cuts, including by axing programs, encouraging early retirements, partnering with other universities, delaying building repairs, scaling back scholarships and increasing enrollment.

They've also taken smaller steps.

At Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, trash collection is limited to once a week. Rather than let a banana peel smell up the office, employees now take such refuse outside, said President Bob Vartabedian.

If next year's cuts are as large as Nixon proposed, class sizes will increase and some classes will not be offered as often, the officials predicted. University reserve funds will be used.

But that won't be enough, the presidents said. That means tuition increases.

"We're at the point now where we'll have to have a significant increase," said Smart, of Missouri State University.



Scholarship funds under state review Access Missouri, other programs may change.

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

MU MENTION P. 2

JEFFERSON CITY — Students who use Missouri's scholarship programs to support their education won't see any major changes in the coming year, but a review is under way, lawmakers were told yesterday during an appropriation hearing.

Deputy Commissioner of Higher Education Paul Wagner said that before the department was told Gov. Jay Nixon would replace a shortfall in state financial aid programs with general revenue, an overhaul might have been attempted on an emergency basis.

Still, he told the House Appropriations-Education Committee, the department expects to propose changes to at least three programs — the Bright Flight, Marguerite Ross Barnett and Access Missouri programs.

"We are beginning to question whether we are achieving the aims the state has in mind," Wagner told the committee.

A report with recommendations will be ready by the end of the year, he said. If enacted by lawmakers, the changes could take place in fall 2013.

Discussion of the contemplated changes took place as Department of Higher Education officials went over their budget for fiscal 2013 with lawmakers for the first time. The spending plan slashes \$106 million from college and university budgets in the coming years, setting spending levels back to amounts last seen in the 1990s.

"We are suffering a little bit from battle fatigue as we go through another year of reductions and managing resources," Commissioner of Higher Education David Russell said.

College and university presidents will testify today. "What I would like to convey today to you is that higher education is not sitting still as we wait to emerge from these economic doldrums," Russell said. "There is no better time for reform than the time when there really is not a lot of money on the desk."

State colleges and universities have 175 programs "on notice" to generate results or be slated for elimination, Russell said. The programs are slated for review in three years, he said.

The three scholarship programs being looked at for changes were created at different times with different objectives. The Bright Flight program was created in the 1980s and provides financial help to students who graduate at the top of their class and attend school in Missouri. Of the 7,377 students who received help in the 2010-11 school year, 3,502 attended a University of Missouri campus.

Nixon wants to spend \$12.2 million on Bright Flight in the coming year, a cut of \$1 million from this year's spending levels.

The Barnett scholarship program was created to help nontraditional students and was named after a late chancellor of the University of Missouri-St. Louis campus. Only 160 students used the program in the 2010-11 school year.

Access Missouri is the most recently created program and the most expensive one operated by the state. It has been supported in each of the past two years by a \$30 million donation from MOHELA, the state's student loan service agency.

Of the 54,300 students receiving Access Missouri aid in 2010-11, 38,571 attended public colleges and universities. The University of Missouri's campuses had 9,713 students who received \$8.85 million that year.

Nixon wants to spend \$62.8 million on the program, the same as the current year after withholdings. In a year when he cut \$106 million from state college budgets, Nixon moved \$23.8 million in general revenue to Access Missouri.

Rep. Lyle Rowland, R-Cedarcreek, wanted to know how many of those students stay in the state after they graduate.

"We're working on it," Wagner replied. "We don't have a finished product yet."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Mizzou lands recruiting's top prize

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. • The video cameras had been packed away and the big, buzzing vans with the satellite towers had pulled off the Hillcrest High School parking lot. The school's gymnasium was no longer packed with pom-pom holding cheerleaders and brass-blowing band members. The students had returned to class.

Forty-five minutes earlier, Dorial Green-Beckham, the most-wanted 2012 football recruit in the country, had stood in front of a microphone in a black shirt and white tie and made the crowd lean forward and fall silent when he said. "I will be continuing my education at ... " He left the word hanging then took a black and gold Missouri hat out from beneath a table and put it on his head.

And just like that, the most anticipated announcement of the 2012 national signing day was over. Just like that, the University of Missouri beat out Alabama, Texas, Oklahoma and mostly Arkansas and secured its first No. 1 recruit since signing Florissant running back Tony VanZant in 1986.

But how?

Tracy Beckham answers that question with a story from five years ago.

It was a summer day, and her husband, John Beckham, took his foster son Dorial Green to a one-day Missouri football camp in Springfield. The boy did not yet own the 6-foot-6, 220-pound frame he has now, but his size misrepresented his age. It always has.

"What school do you go to?" Missouri offensive coordinator David Yost asked.

"I go to Reed," Dorial replied.

"Reed?" Yost responded, puzzled.

Tracy Beckham's smile flashes now. She explains that Yost soon found out that the kid who caught his eye was only 14 years old at the time, and that Reed was not an unknown high school, but a Springfield middle school.

"They (Missouri) have been around a long time," she adds.

According to Green-Beckham and his family, there was no single event or dramatic realization that resulted in the star receiver picking Missouri. Similar to the process that led Green-Beckham to identify with his adopted family, his college decision was based on the growth of a

relationship over time and a connection with Mizzou that continued after that first meeting with Yost, who offered a scholarship after Green-Beckham's freshman year.

It was 2006 when Dorial and his younger brother, Darnell, moved into the house that sits on 60 acres of Springfield countryside. Originally from St. Louis, the brothers had bounced between group homes and family members in St. Louis and Springfield before finding themselves in the care of experienced foster parents John and Tracy Beckham. As a result of his Hillcrest football coaching job, John Beckham had temporarily housed an older brother of Dorial and Darnell. When he found out the two younger brothers needed help, the Beckham family made room. Slowly, a relationship grew. Dorial and Darnell Green started calling John Beckham "Dad" instead of "Coach." Tracy Beckham became "Mom." In 2009, the brothers asked the couple to officially adopt them.

Now known as Green-Beckham, Dorial's football career thrived. He took his first varsity pass for a touchdown. Teams tried to double- and triple-team him. They failed. By the start of his senior season, Rivals.com had named him the No. 1 player in the class of 2012, and every coach had heard about the can't-miss player from Springfield.

Offers flowed in, and Green-Beckham explored his options. He visited campuses, mingled with head coaches and NFL stars. The nation's attention never strayed. The dates of his campus visits were often leaked online. Paparazzi photos surfaced and spread over recruiting websites. Speculation reigned supreme as John Beckham struggled to maintain as much privacy as possible.

"I've heard Oklahoma is leading. I've heard Arkansas is leading. This team is in. This team is out. But you really never heard any of that from Dorial or myself," Beckham said. "People just make speculations. Somebody would put it on the Internet and it became a fact."

After setting a national record for career receiving yards (6,356) and winning nearly every national player of the year award imaginable, Green-Beckham cut his list of potential schools to Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. His final two campus visits came back-to-back at Arkansas then Missouri. On Monday, Green-Beckham told John and Tracy Beckham he wanted to go to Missouri. He slept on it and felt the same way again Tuesday. He announced his decision to his family.

"We all got in the living room and had a discussion," Darnell Green-Beckham said.

John Beckham had planned to make a pro-con list on the school his son picked. That list never happened. The family was in agreement.

"At the end of the day, Dorial just felt more comfortable with Coach (David) Yost, Coach (Gary) Pinkel and Coach (Andy) Hill," John Beckham said. "Those are just people he's been around, really since middle school."

For the Beckham family, a stable coaching staff was important. Some recruits sign on only to find out the coach they built ties with got fired or switched schools. An example is Garrick

McGee, the offensive coordinator at Arkansas for the past two seasons who left the Razorbacks in December to become the head football coach at University of Alabama at Birmingham. John Beckham acknowledged McGee's move might have made an impact on Green-Beckham's decision.

Missouri's coaching consistency is one Tracy Beckham admired.

"Their coaching staff is one of the most stable in the entire nation," she said. "That's a big part of it. Coach Hill (Missouri's wide receivers coach) has coached for years there. They're not going anywhere. He is not going to have huge coaching staff changes. They're all content with their spots."

Another important aspect was completely out of the desiring schools' control. Green-Beckham wanted to stay close to his family. This requirement hurt Alabama and Texas, a school John Beckham said he and his son both liked.

"Despite Dorial and Darnell's age, we, on a relationship level are still a young family," Beckham said. "We need to, as a family, experience this with him. We just felt that if he was in Texas we wouldn't be able to do that. But at Missouri, we could."

The 170-mile, three-hour drive from Springfield to Columbia gave Missouri an advantage over every school other than Arkansas.

"That helps a lot," Darnell Green-Beckham said. "We can come to all of his home games."

It is the combination of a close relationship forged over time, a sense of consistency and a close proximity that led Dorial Green-Beckham to Missouri. Other schools offered some of each. But none offered them all.

"It was really important for me to pick the University of Missouri," Green-Beckham said Wednesday. "Not just because it's home, but for the people that have encouraged me the past few years."

It was Missouri that found him in the beginning. And it was Missouri that made it to the end.



MU professor identifies new crocodile species

By Janese Silvey

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A University of Missouri researcher has discovered that modern crocodiles have a long-lost African ancestor.

Well, "lost" might not be the right word. For years, the creature's fossilized skull has been stored in a drawer at the Royal Ontario Museum of Toronto, where Casey Holliday discovered it in 2007. The museum let him borrow it, and the MU assistant professor of anatomy has since identified it as "Shieldcroc," a never-before identified prehistoric crocodile.

The museum "wants it back as soon as possible to put on display," Holliday said.

Shieldcroc is a nickname Holliday gave the creature to describe its unique head feature. By analyzing blood vessel scarring on the fossil, he determined it would have had an eye-like feature on the roof of the skull. The shield-shaped patch likely was used to attract mates and possibly as a thermoregulatory device to cool the brain, Holliday said.

Shieldcroc is believed to have lived in Africa about 95 million years ago, and the skull indicates it would have been larger than modern crocodiles. Holliday and Nick Gardner, an undergraduate researcher at Marshall University, estimate that the specimen was 30 feet long and had a 5-foot-long head.

Because it likely was related to a group of crocodiles dubbed the "pancake crocs," Shieldcroc probably had weak jaws and wasn't a ferocious predator.

"We believe Shieldcroc may have used its long face as a fish trap," Gardner said in a statement. "It is possible that it lay in wait until an unsuspecting fish swam in front of it. Then, if it was close enough, Shieldcroc simply opened its mouth and ate the fish without a struggle, eliminating the need for strong jaws."

Shieldcroc joins several species of crocodiles discovered in recent years believed to have lived in the Late Cretaceous period, part of the Mesozoic Era. Typically, that era has been referred to as the "Age of the Dinosaurs," but some scientists are now calling it the "Age of the Crocs" because of new discoveries.

The prehistoric findings could have modern-day implications by shedding more light on how crocodiles adapt to climate changes and human encroachment, Holliday said.



The★Star
THE KANSAS CITY STAR HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Professor documents cancer battle in online videos

By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- A Missouri professor recently diagnosed with cancer is documenting his treatment in online videos to teach others about medicine and mortality.

David Oliver, who teaches at the University of Missouri's medical school, has a form of upper throat cancer. It is considered treatable but not curable.

The 69-year-old has spent a career teaching medical students and hospital workers how to care for dying patients. Now he is using his videos to promote an unusually public conversation on medicine and mortality.

Oliver, a specialist on aging and a former health care executive, made his first video to tell colleagues about his diagnosis. When word spread on social networks, he started a video blog and made a YouTube site.



Bradford home to fascinating projects

By Bill Clark

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

The University of Missouri could soon receive a financial boost from a very different source — a product called Mizzou Doo.

Mizzou Doo? What, pray tell, is that?

You take all the campus food waste — the scraps, leftovers and food students refuse to eat from every dining hall on campus, then mix it with the manure and bedding from all the stalls from the horse barns at MU's South Farm equine research station — and you compost it.

The compost is then used to grow vegetables at Bradford Research and Extension Center, and those vegetables then wind up back in the university's dining facilities.

The compost is extremely rich in plant nutrients and a valuable product of recycling, and it comes at minimal expense — a win-win project.

The amount of compost produced is far more than can be used on university farms. Thus, it becomes a marketable product — Mizzou Doo.

In addition, Mizzou Doo is the product of MU's bio-engineering students.

The compost program is one of many that make Bradford a fascinating 810-acre classroom that uses the past to improve the present and give bio-engineers a place to shape the future.

The fascinating projects are coordinated by an equally fascinating superintendent, Tim Reinbott.

Bradford is one of four major teaching farms in Central Missouri. Turkey Farm, east of Columbia, is the poultry research facility; South Farm, on New Haven Road, is the research facility for horses, cattle, swine, entomology, corn genetics and turf; and Foremost Farm, west of Midway, is for dairy research.

Bradford is dedicated to those crops that grow in the ground and to the fauna that live therein. Located on Rangeline Road, the farm was deeded to MU in 1959 by Mary Robnett Bradford and her daughter, Estelle. The farm was dedicated in 1965.

A trip through the research projects at the farm is a journey you need to take. Reinbott is happy to be your leader. Here are a few of those fascinating projects:

- Going green with grease. In addition to Mizzou Doo, bio-engineering students annually use more than 3,000 gallons of vegetable oil left after cooking french fries and chicken fingers, converting it to bio-diesel, which then fuels the vehicles that haul all compost materials to the farm, the tractors that help grow the veggies and the trucks that haul those veggies back to university dining halls. There is no need for fossil fuels.
- The compost project even came about with outside money. A major sponsor has been the Mid-Missouri Solid Waste Management District — Columbia's regional landfill.
- The rainout shelters to study drought and heat stress on crops. By 2050, the necessary food supply will double worldwide, and research must develop crops that grow in arid and hot conditions.

The farm has two 50-by-100-foot shelters mounted on rails that are activated by two-tenths of an inch of rain, sliding over the crops that must be kept in drought conditions. One shelter covers corn; the other covers soybeans.

The ability of these crops to grow in hot, dry conditions is crucial to the future of mankind. For every degree Celsius above normal conditions, there will be 10 percent loss of production. The work on heat and drought has been ongoing since 1984.

- Fields are devoted to sweet corn varieties that are super sweet, super tender and super both.
- A tomato festival annually showcases 115 varieties of tomatoes and 61 varieties of peppers.
- Ponds devoted to production and marketing of a strange crop for Central Missouri — fresh-water shrimp.
- Plots devoted to native plants.
- Programs that bring farmers together with conservationists, highlighting how wildlife and agriculture work together to make both profitable.
- Using grasses and cover to improve quail populations. In 2003, the farm was home to two coveys; today, there are 25 coveys on the farm.

There is much more about Bradford and Tim Reinbott you need to know. We'll finish the story on Friday.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

No More Angling for the Best Seat; More Meetings Are Stand-Up Jobs

Companies Ban Sitting to Speed Things Up: Ralph the Chicken Decides Next Speaker

Atomic Object, a Grand Rapids, Mich., software-development firm, holds company meetings first thing in the morning.

Employees follow strict rules: Attendance is mandatory, nonwork chitchat is kept to a minimum and, above all, everyone has to stand up.

Stand-up meetings are part of a fast-moving tech culture in which sitting has become synonymous with sloth. The object is to eliminate long-winded confabs where participants pontificate, play Angry Birds on their cellphones or tune out.

Atomic Object even frowns upon tables during meetings. "They make it too easy to lean or rest laptops," explains Michael Marsiglia, vice president. At the end of the meetings, which rarely last more than five minutes, employees typically do a quick stretch and then "go on with their day," he says.

Holding meetings standing up isn't new. Some military leaders did it during World War I, according to Allen Bluedorn, a business professor at the University of Missouri. A number of companies have adopted stand-up meetings over the years. Mr. Bluedorn did a study back in 1998 that found that standing meetings were about a third shorter than sitting meetings and the quality of decision-making was about the same.

The current wave of stand-up meeting is being fueled by the growing use of "Agile," an approach to software development, crystallized in a manifesto published by 17 software professionals in 2001. The method calls for compressing development projects into short pieces. It also involves daily stand-up meetings where participants are supposed to quickly update their peers with three things: What they have done since yesterday's meeting; what they are doing today; and any obstacles that stand in the way of getting work done.

If employees are late to this meeting, often called a "daily scrum," they sometimes must sing a song like "I'm a Little Teapot," do a lap around the office building or pay a small fine, says Mike Cohn, president of Mountain Goat Software, Lafayette, Colo., an Agile consultant and trainer. If someone is rambling on for too long, an employee may hold up a rubber rat indicating it is time

to move on. Companies make exceptions to their no-sitting rules if a worker is sick, injured or pregnant—but usually not for workers outside the office telecommuting on Skype.

One Microsoft Corp. development group holds daily meeting in which participants toss around a rubber chicken named Ralph to determine who gets to speak next, says group member Aaron Bjork.

As Agile has become more widely adopted, stand-ups have spread along with it. VersionOne, which makes Agile-development software, polled 6,042 tech employees around the world in a 2011 survey and found that 78% held daily stand-up-meetings.

Office outfitters are responding by designing work spaces with standing sessions in mind. Furniture maker Steelcase Inc.'s Turnstone division, for example, recently introduced the "Big Table," a large standing-height table designed for quick meetings.

Mitch Lacey, a Bellevue, Wash., tech consultant and a former Microsoft employee says that some of his former colleagues used to hold stand-ups in an unheated stairwell to keep meetings brief.

Holding meetings before lunch also speeds things up. Mark Tonkelowitz, an engineering manager for Facebook Inc.'s News Feed feature, holds 15-minute stand-ups at noon. sharp. The proximity to lunch serves "as motivation to keep updates short," he says.

Sometimes people cheat a bit. "We have some very good slouchers and leaners," says T.A. McCann, founder of Gist, a Seattle contact-organization tool acquired last year by Research In Motion, which holds a 10 a.m. stand-up three days a week.

Obie Fernandez, founder of Hashrocket, a Jacksonville, Fla., software design firm, says his team passes around a 10-pound medicine ball during stand-ups. For newcomers unaware of the practice, "it's pretty mean," he says, "but really the main thing you want is to avoid people pontificating."

Participants frown upon late arrivals, and some data-obsessed engineers have even computed the costs of tardiness. Ian Witucki, a program manager at software firm Adobe Systems Inc., calculated the cumulative cost over the course of a typical 18-month product release cycle of starting the stand-up just a little bit late every day.

The total—about six weeks of work for two employees—equaled the amount of time the firm could spend building one major feature on each product, he says.

Soon after, the team imposed a \$1 fine for latecomers. Now staffers run down the hall to make it on time, says Mr. Witucki.

Jason Yip, a principal consultant at ThoughtWorks in Sydney, Australia, plays music such as Bob Marley's "Get Up, Stand Up," to round up colleagues. "It acts like a Pavlovian bell," he says.

Meanwhile, the Starr Conspiracy, a Fort Worth, Texas, advertising, marketing and branding agency, signals its daily stand-up—which it calls "the huddle"—with a few bars of the song, "Whoomp! (There It Is)," says partner Steve Smith.

"I'll be at a football game, hear the song and all of a sudden I have the urge to huddle up," says Mr. Smith.

Steelcase's Turnstone unit, which has been doing stand-up meetings for about a decade, for years played Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire," to begin meetings. It recently switched to Elvis's "A Little Less Conversation"—a reminder to keep meetings brief, says general manager Kevin Kuske.

There are occasions when even a stand-up takes too much time.

At Freshbooks.com, a Toronto-based company that makes online accounting software, teams try to do daily 10 a.m. stand-ups. But on days when everyone is too swamped to gather around the company Ping-Pong table, team members will shout out their status updates from their desks, which are arranged in a circle.

They call those meetings "sit-downs."

Mo. GOP challengers trail Sen. McCaskill in money

Associated Press | Posted: Wednesday, February 1, 2012 4:48 pm | [1 Comment](#)

Missouri's Republican U.S. Senate candidates are struggling to raise money in their quest to challenge Democratic incumbent Claire McCaskill — a hardship they blame on the economy.

Campaign finance summaries released this week show that Republicans Todd Akin, Sarah Steelman and John Brunner raised a combined total of about \$520,000 in individual donations during the last three months of 2011. That's barely half of the \$923,000 that McCaskill raised from individuals.

The Republican candidates also are lagging well behind McCaskill in available campaign cash. After expenses, McCaskill reported having \$4.8 million in her account to start 2012. Akin had less than \$1.2 million. Steelman had about \$573,000. And Brunner reported about \$209,000 in his campaign account after burning through \$1 million of his own money.

Polls show McCaskill can expect a close race from whoever wins the Republican primary in August. But the finance figures indicate the Republican candidate may need to rely on ads from national party groups or independent political action committees to compete with McCaskill. American Crossroads, a conservative group connected to Republican strategist Karl Rove, already has run ads and paid for billboards targeting McCaskill.

With the election still months away, some Republican donors may be holding onto their money to see if a frontrunner emerges in the Republican race, said Jay Dow, an associate political science professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia. But he said the main reason Republicans candidates are trailing in fundraising may have more to do with McCaskill.

"Incumbents are hugely advantaged in raising money," Dow said Wednesday. "To say they're doing poorly, given that they're up against an incumbent is probably a little bit of an overstatement."

During a debate Monday night in Branson, Steelman and Akin both acknowledged they were finding it more difficult to attract donations than they had expected. Brunner did not participate in the debate.

"Fundraising is tough right now. It's a hard economy, people are hurting out there," said Steelman, a former state treasurer who reported raising \$83,648 during the last three months of 2011.

Akin, a congressman from suburban St. Louis, reported raising \$207,447 from individuals this past quarter and an additional \$23,500 from political action committees. He said fundraising struggles have forced him to modify his campaign strategy.

"We started out raising a lot of money, and it's become increasingly difficult," Akin said during the debate. "So consequently, we have adjusted our campaign plan and also the rate (at which) we're spending money." But Akin added: "I think that's good and healthy."

Both Akin and Steelman have turned to their sons to help manage their campaigns, instead of paying professional campaign managers.

Brunner's campaign manager is Jon Seaton, a former presidential campaign aide to Sen. John McCain who also worked in the White House of President George W. Bush. Brunner has wealth from his family's long-time business Vi-Jon Inc. and has said generally that he will not allow his campaign "to run out of gas."

But Brunner fared little better than the other Republican candidates when it came to raising money from others. He reported raising \$229,067 from individuals during the past quarter.

THE HUFFINGTON POST

Beef Prices Hit Record Highs Amid 'Perfect Storm' Of Drought, Foreign Demand

Steel yourselves, steak fans: your dinner is about to get a lot more expensive.

The price of beef has hit an all-time high in each of the last four months. Experts expect cattle prices to rise even more throughout 2012 -- and, if conditions don't improve -- beyond.

The cause is what Mark Miller, of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, called a "perfect storm of elements" that show the convolutions of the global economy as effectively as any PowerPoint on the European debt crisis.

"Last year, we averaged \$4.83 a pound," Ronald Plain, an agricultural economist at the University of Missouri, told The Huffington Post. "And I expect we're going to average \$5.10 and \$5.15 in 2012."

Going into 2011, American cattle stock was already thin. Meat-eaters had been moving away from beef, toward chicken, for decades, so ranchers had cut output accordingly. The shift gained momentum in the mid-2000s, when the Bush administration mandated the inclusion of corn ethanol in gasoline. Cattlemen got outbid for corn by SUV drivers. The price of feed skyrocketed and livestock profits fell.

Beef was especially hard hit, Plain explained, because cattle require more feed per pound of growth than do hogs or poultry. Farmers responded by raising fewer cattle.

Then, a severe drought hit Texas and Oklahoma, where almost a quarter of America's cattle spend time grazing on pasture. Travis Miller, of the Texas Agrilife Extension Service, said 2011 marked "the worst drought that anyone alive has ever seen, because it was the worst in recorded history, back to 1895."

Blistering heat and cataclysmic aridity killed cows and grass. The drought also sparked wildfires that consumed 4 million acres of pasture, National Weather Service meteorologist Victor Murphy said -- "the size of Rhode Island and Connecticut combined."

Many ranchers were forced into a desperate choice: cull or move.

"They started culling back in April and May -- the older cattle, the less-productive cattle, the mamas with no calves. They sent them to slaughter. Others heard that there were still grasses up

north, and they brought their herds to Nebraska, South Dakota," Miller said. "We lost in the order of 600,000 or even 800,000 cows."

Cattlemen who insisted on raising their own cattle, on their own land, had to dip into hay reserves to feed their herds. The hay went quick, and neighbors were just as desperate as they were, so ranchers were forced to drive hundreds of miles to buy feed.

Then, just as cattle supply was dwindling, foreign demand started rising. In 2011, U.S. beef exports grew 23 percent.

"Last year, U.S. beef exports were record-large on a tonnage basis. And on a value basis, we shot through every record, because prices are so much higher," said Jim Robb, chief economist at the Livestock Marketing Information Center.

The surge has been propelled by the American dollar, which has fallen considerably since mid-2010 against European, Asian and Mexican currencies. That means beef bargains for foreign buyers, who pay less, in their currency, than Americans pay in dollars.

"You're being outbid by Japanese and South Korean and Mexican and Russian consumers," Plain said.

A weak dollar also makes imports pricier for Americans. As a result, beef imports fell 12 percent in 2011 -- putting further pressure on a drum-tight supply chain.

There is now less beef on grocery shelves and in restaurants, per American, than there has been since 1952. The gap between prices for beef and for pork, chicken and turkey (which have also risen) continues to widen. Many beef fans have had to adjust.

"Instead of buying a steak or a roast, they might pick hamburger. They might choose to buy select beef rather than choice," U.S. Department of Agriculture meat analyst Shayle Shagam suggested.

Robb said many supermarkets have started cutting steaks thinner. A major steakhouse chain, he added, has begun serving dinners on smaller plates, with more vegetables and punier pieces of beef.

Many of the trends that have boosted prices in recent years will likely continue. The threat of bad weather in the Southern Plains, for example, continues to rankle.

"You need rain, you need pasture, to raise cattle. Get us some grass and we'll grow," Plain said.

Even if Texas and Oklahoma do get good rain, it will take them almost three years to restore the herd to pre-drought levels. And the longer-term outlook on beef prices remains bleak.

"These higher-value food products -- the meat, the dairy, all those things -- are going to keep seeing more and more demand from around the world," Robb said.

And just as human demand for beef surges, Mother Nature may interrupt with more events like last summer's drought -- which could make the "perfect storm" of 2011 look downright placid.