

House budget keeps college funding steady

By RUDI KELLER

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JEFFERSON CITY — Higher education was the big budget winner Wednesday as the House Budget Committee approved a spending plan in excess of \$24 billion for the coming year.

Winner is a relative term in this budget, which has few increases. But instead of absorbing a \$66 million cut, state colleges and universities are slated to maintain funding at the current level for another year.

No attempt was made during debate to restore the \$28 million cut from medical care for about 2,800 blind people, although most Democrats on the committee voted against the bill that formerly included the spending.

For the University of Missouri, the spending proposal the House approved would provide \$393.25 million in the coming year. That is well above the \$348.5 million Gov. Jay Nixon originally proposed in January or the amended plan for \$367 million, proposed after the national mortgage settlement.

The budget line for blind health care was not left completely empty. Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, cut \$2 million from the Department of Economic Development to restore a portion of the funding. Committee Chairman Ryan Silvey, R-Kansas City, is dedicating \$4 million expected from ending a tax exemption enjoyed by newspapers to the program as well. That bill has not had a committee hearing yet.

Silvey said he wants to end the medical care program, which operates like Medicaid but is funded entirely out of state tax revenue, because it is a benefit available to people regardless of income.

The funding he has restored, he said, will convert it to a "transitional benefit" that will "help those on the bubble" with incomes close to Medicaid limits.

"We are talking about less than 5 percent of blind people" receiving the assistance, he said after the conclusion of the committee meeting.

For most adults, Medicaid is available only to those with incomes below \$290 a month. For the disabled, the limits are higher, but the blind medical care program has no income test. Recipients of the medical program can have up to \$20,000 in assets, while Medicaid recipients are limited to a total of \$1,000 in personal assets.

Nixon has attacked House budget writers for eliminating the money. After meeting Tuesday with leaders of the Missouri Council of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind, Nixon said he will fight the cut.

"This program is carefully focused to help blind Missourians with the greatest need, and it is a lifeline for thousands of people," Nixon said in a news release.

After the committee vote, Nixon again attacked the proposed cut. He said he had worked hard to balance the budget, making tough choices during the lengthy recession. "But slashing health care from more than 2,000 needy blind Missourians simply isn't an option," he said "Full funding for this program is the only way to ensure that needy blind Missourians have access to the critical health care services they need.

"For decades, Missouri has provided vital health care services for needy blind people across our state," he added. "Strict eligibility requirements ensure that these services help blind Missourians with the greatest need. This is an efficient and compassionate program that truly saves lives."

He had previously called the cut "just plain wrong."

In the committee debate, Kelly said the program has flaws because it provides benefits unavailable to people with other disabilities in similar economic circumstances.

"It is not just plain wrong, or no more just plain wrong than the attack on higher education," Kelly said.

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Mizzou amped to join elite SEC, but does it know what it's getting into?

By Dennis Dodd | CBSSports.com Senior College Football Columnist

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- The big paw reached between the closing elevator doors. At the height of his power, Bear Bryant perhaps could have parted seas. For Gary Pinkel, this simple act was impressive enough.

"All the sudden a hand went up ... and he walked in with a couple of entourage people," Pinkel said, remembering a day more than 30 years ago. "I introduced myself to him. He said, 'You're one of Donnie's boys.'"

At that moment, the man who would eventually become Missouri's coach felt like he had become one of Bear's made men. The chance meeting came at the coaches' convention where annually the great, near-great and anonymous mix in a cauldron of lobby waving, schmoozing and clinics.

As a 29-year-old University of Washington assistant for Don James, Pinkel hit the bump-into jackpot. He was made aware of an inner circle that he never knew existed. Champions roll with champions.

"We never called Coach James 'Donnie,'" Pinkel said. "We went up two floors and it stopped. He walked out, turned around, looked at me and said, 'Make sure you tell Donnie, the Bear said hello.'"

A few months later Bear Bryant had passed, but the moment hadn't.

"It was the last convention he went to," Pinkel said solemnly. "I got to shake his hand."

Three decades later, the words on an office paper weight still recall that chance meeting.

I ain't nothin' but a winner -- Bear Bryant

Before last fall, Pinkel's paper weight might have gone unnoticed. Now it is a reminder that Missouri is in college football's inner circle. The grand transition to the SEC has begun. The state school from a Civil War border state is in the process of cutting ties with the Big 12, a

conference in which it has played in some configuration since 1907. This week's Big 12 basketball tournament marks another stage in that long, sad -- at times contentious -- goodbye.

If nothing had happened in the realignment merry-go-round, Missouri still has never been hotter. Enrollment is booming. The basketball program is in the top 10. The signing of the nation's football No. 1 recruit -- Dorial Green-Beckham -- sent a couple of messages. A potential star, sure, but already a sign to the rest of the SEC that Missouri has come to play big-boy football.

"We're getting [recruiting interest from] the best in the nation now," Pinkel said.

As tough as the decision to leave was, this is the way the end had to be. A whole lot of hell before bliss. Missouri has made a lifetime decision to go South and East for what seems like a forever marriage.

Six months from the kickoff of the first season in the SEC, Pinkel knows there is a standard to meet. The stadium will eventually have to grow and get prettier. The 80-yard indoor facility must be expanded to 100 yards. He would like a stand-alone football office.

The city itself might have to build more hotels to accommodate big-boy football. That's based on the early ticket interest for the Georgia and Alabama home games. Some of those SEC standards were made clear to the administration when they asked the coach's opinion of the move.

Great, Pinkel said, but either go strong or go home. A man who shares Midwestern sensibilities with his constituents, made his bones on the West Coast with James and shares a non-BCS alma mater with Nick Saban (Kent State), must change homes. Quickly. Successfully. Now.

"This, to me, is Missouri's shot," said Pinkel, now 59. "You want to be significant in that league? There's never been a better opportunity to make the move. Now we have to do it."

For the Missouri Tigers, their paw has reached between the doors. The elevator to the top of the best football conference in the country awaits.

Football drives the bus

Leaning back in his office chair, Pinkel is saying it without saying it. None of this would have been possible without success in football. His success. The greatest coaches in Missouri history are considered Dan Devine and Don Faurot. Faurot put the school on the map by playing a series of high-profile guarantee games for financial reasons in the 1940s and '50s. Oh yeah, he also invented the Split T formation.

Devine, the future Packers and Notre Dame coach, won 92 games here in 13 seasons, including 77 in the '60s. During that decade, Mizzou was the only program in the country to lose no more than three games in a season.

If Missouri succeeds in the SEC, Pinkel will leave a legacy that could top both local legends. In his 12th year, Missouri is back to enjoying consistent success. Since 2007, it is 48-19 -- a better record in that span than Auburn, South Carolina, Arkansas and Georgia. Since 2006, Missouri is one of six BCS schools to win at least eight games each season. The only SEC program on that list is LSU.

In '07, the Tigers were ranked No. 1 for a week and came within a game of playing for the national championship.

So the potential is there, just as it is for stagnation. There have been seven consecutive bowls. Pinkel (85 wins at Missouri) needs just 16 wins to overtake Faurot's school record of 100. The program has been more than competitive with the SEC, going 19-8-1. Its only losing record is against Kentucky and Georgia.

But the program hasn't won an outright conference title since 1960. They're calling Mizzou the SEC's new Arkansas -- competitive and proud, but not dominant.

The question they're asking from Gainesville to Fayetteville remains: Does Missouri know what it is going into?

'He was defending me so much'

Pinkel is referring to his boss, athletic director Mike Alden. The coach took over a program in 2001 that had two winning seasons in the previous 17. The late Larry Smith laid somewhat of a foundation, but it was crumbling when Pinkel took over. Example: There was one cornerback on scholarship.

"I can go on and on," Pinkel said.

So he does, reaching into his files for his job evaluation from Alden after Year 2. The Tigers had completed a second consecutive losing season since Pinkel had arrived from Toledo.

Gary Pinkel inherited a program that has had very, very limited success in the sport of football ... There is no question the competitiveness and talent level that he inherited was below average.

"He was digging, man," Pinkel said. "He had to find something positive."

Missouri coaches trace the turnaround to 2005, against an SEC program. Missouri came from 21 points down to defeat South Carolina in the Independence Bowl. The Tigers beat Steve Spurrier and beat back some demons. Since that day, the Tigers have won 70 percent of their games.

That compares favorably with Alabama. In the same six-year span, the Tide have been marginally better overall (76 percent). So, yeah, Pinkel knows his program's place in this conference migration.

"The only reason we're in that league is football," he said.

Our Way

Missouri considers its spread option offense unique. The quarterback stands a distant seven yards behind the center. The idea is to get the ball out of the quarterback's hands as soon as possible, a direct challenge, it would seem, to those SEC D-line freaks.

It is not smash mouth, but it works. Beefy offensive linemen -- a lot of them homegrown Missouri boys -- have been a staple. Offensive coordinator Dave Yost isn't afraid to proclaim he may have the best set of tackles in the country -- Elvis Fisher on the left side and Justin Britt on the right.

It is not a one-trick Tiger. Mizzou claims Aldon Smith, who had 14 sacks as a rookie for the 49ers. In his second pro season, linebacker Sean Weatherspoon was No. 2 in tackles for the Falcons.

But offense is how Missouri got to this moment. There is also an understanding there is an SEC man card to be earned. Yost says his scheme was adopted from Urban Meyer during Meyer's time a decade ago at Bowling Green. Over the years the offense has been refined, tweaked. Missouri has become a quarterback factory of sorts. Brad Smith, Chase Daniel and Blaine Gabbert have all graduated to the NFL.

Oregon's Chip Kelly and Dan Mullen, when he was at Florida, have trekked here to study the offense.

"We call it, 'Our Way,'" Yost said.

Yost is Missouri's version of whatever the term "offensive guru" means these days. He's 42 and could pass for 22. His blond, surfer-cut hair always seems to have a set of shades nested in it. You never know when you're going to run into a tasty wave in mid-Missouri.

Since 1997, he has been Pinkel's recruiting coordinator. Four times in the past six years, Missouri has finished in the top 12 in total offense. As one of Pinkel's top lieutenants it will be his job to keep the offense moving, to penetrate the toughest defenses in existence.

"You always hear about how great the SEC is -- and they always have really great teams -- but we played pretty good football in the Big 12 ...," he said.

"You always hear about it. Let's go."

From Big 12 to big picture

It was more of a pep rally when the official Missouri-to-the-SEC announcement came down in early November.

Dick Clark would have loved the American Bandstand feel. Students, alums and officials gathered on campus. Dancing, it seemed, was optional. Everyone was geeked. The school had swung and missed at the Big Ten in 2010. This chance came out of nowhere and quickly.

The Big 12 can argue about Missouri's tactics and loyalty and truthfulness, but it can't argue about the league's instability. Concessions were made, but too late. Nebraska, Colorado and Texas A&M were already out the door in September when Mizzou apparently made its final decision to leave. Texas and Oklahoma flirting with the Pac-12 for a second time was too much.

That November day, SEC commissioner Mike Slive was briefed on Missouri traditions by Florida president Bernie Machen, a St. Louis native. They had trouble locating the SEC helmet to be presented to Alden. Slive pulled it off smoothly, even returning to Birmingham with a couple of frozen Shakespeare's pizzas from Mizzou's landmark eatery.

"Welcome," Slive told the gathering, "to your new home."

That sounded so strange. What do the Mizzou Tigers know of Mike the Tiger or Rammer Jammer or War Eagle? What does it all mean? With 14 SEC teams, it could mean more world domination. It certainly means more game inventory. It means the SEC can now plan for a network of its own. The Big Ten has set the standard with its successful endeavor that could shoot off \$4 billion-\$5 billion in rights fees and profits by the year 2027.

It means Pinkel was right. Mizzou will have to invest. It comes into the SEC 11th in both revenue and expenses; 12th in the 14-team league in expenses directly allocated to football. (Figures provided by the Birmingham News.)

"Honestly our budget has never been a problem," Pinkel said.

It means Mizzou took the next recruiting step when it landed Green-Beckham last month. Yost was as professionally and emotionally invested in the kid as any he had recruited. They met when Green-Beckham was in the seventh grade.

There is a picture on Yost's phone from Green-Beckham's trip to New York for the December Heisman ceremony. The high school senior is standing next to Jets quarterback Mark Sanchez.

"Which one looks like an NFL player?" Yost asked coyly.

Yost became so close to the Beckham family that on visits he thought nothing of heading to the room of Eliza, Dorial's 7-year-old sister, to watch videos or read. When the time came for the recruit to pick a school, six years of recruiting paid off. Missouri has never won a national championship or and has gone 52 years since sniffing a share of a conference title, but they snagged No. 1 on Feb. 1.

Arguably the biggest recruit in school history is competitive addition by subtraction. By playing for Missouri, he won't play for SEC rivals Arkansas or Alabama, two of his other finalists.

"That was a good day for us," Pinkel said. "It helps our brand name. Going to the SEC, the statement was made. If he's here almost anybody will look at us. Why would they not?"

It means Pinkel is placing more recruiting emphasis in Georgia and Florida. There will be billboards, direct mail. Lots of direct mail -- 30,000 pieces per week in the Southeast, Pinkel said, aimed at high school students, coaches and administrators.

The program isn't cutting recruiting ties with the state of Texas, which has sustained Missouri greatly during Pinkel's reign. It is merely repositioning -- telling those kids what it is telling everyone: Do you want to play in the best conference around?

It also means Missouri is suddenly tied for seventh in a darker category associated with the SEC -- all-time number of NCAA major infractions cases (four).

"Really, if you want to get down to it, the SEC is all about being the best," said Missouri offensive line coach Josh Henson, who spent four years in the league as Les Miles' tight ends coach.

Whatever form "best" takes?

"I'm not going there," Henson said.

For better or worse, Missouri is well on its way there -- South and East in this forever marriage.

Mizzou wastes no time declaring its allegiance to the SEC

By Graham Watson | Dr. Saturday – 6 hours ago

Mizzou isn't going to leave the Big 12 without setting some small fires to its bridge with the Big 12.

On Wednesday, the university released a new SEC promotional video featuring several athletes playing their various sports against a black backdrop. In the background, a voiceover makes sure to let everyone know how much better Missouri's new conference is compared to its old one.

"They say you rise to the level of competition ... That playing great teams only makes you better ... We're counting on it."

Just to recap, the SEC has great teams, the Big 12 does not. I just want to make sure no one missed the not-so-subtle message there.

Meanwhile, Mizzou coach Gary Pinkel is convinced the Kansas series will continue and just to make sure, he gave a jumbo-sized (geez, that's never going to get old) shout-out to the rivalry.

"I wish the Big 12 luck. I'd never wish Kansas luck. I can't do that. That's against my principles," Pinkel told 610 AM sports in Kansas City. "But certainly I hope the Big 12 does really, really well. Let's just move on. Gosh darn, it's not that complex."

I appreciate that Missouri is excited to be in a new league, but it may want to tone it down just a little bit. Mizzou's move to the SEC is a big sore spot within the Big 12 and rubbing it in isn't helping. So in the words of Cam from the television show Modern Family, let it scab, Mizzou, let it scab.



Teachers embrace social media in class

By Mary Beth Marklein, USA TODAY

MU MENTION p. 2

As social media become nearly inescapable on college campuses, a pair of recently published studies supports what many professors already have concluded: Students using Facebook or text messaging during a lecture tend to do worse when quizzed later.

Most teachers report using at least one social media site in their class, but 53% said Facebook and 46% said Twitter add "negative" value, a new study says.

But wait: Faculty who build Twitter into classwork may be helping students learn better, a 2010 study suggests. And a survey of nearly 2,000 faculty last spring by education publisher Pearson found that many consider YouTube a "very valuable" classroom aid.

"The more research we do, the more we understand that it's about nuances in how the technologies are used, not whether or not they're used, that matters in the classroom," says Lock Haven (Pa.) University professor Reynol Junco, one of a handful of researchers to study the topic and publish studies on the topic in journals such as *Computers & Education* and *Journal of Computer-Assisted Learning*. "You'd be shocked at how many people don't get that."

Faculty among them. Nearly two-thirds reported using at least one social media site in their class, but 53% said Facebook and 46% said Twitter add "negative" value, the Pearson study says. A survey last fall by Faculty Focus, a website about teaching, found that about 83% of professors allowed laptops in their classrooms; 58% said they found students using Facebook when they weren't supposed to.

Some students acknowledge the distracting nature of their digital devices.

When Harrisburg University of Science and Technology in Pennsylvania blocked access to several popular social media sites for a week last semester as a consciousness-raising exercise, 25% of participating students reported having "better concentration in the classroom." But many students also poured into an off-campus hotel lobby during breaks to plug in.

Lesson learned? "Social media is here and we as educators have to acknowledge that," Harrisburg University Provost Eric Darr says. For now, faculty are taking advantage of the phenomenon.

University of Missouri journalism professor Jen Lee Reeves urges students to tweet about the topic of discussion during her classes — then checks her phone occasionally to make sure entries are appropriate. "It turns into kind of a live, flowing notebook of what we've discussed in class," she says.



(top American magazine)

What's Really Making Us Fat?

By Kristin Wartman

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MU MENTION p. 3

It may not be as simple as calories in, calories out. New research reveals a far more complex equation for weight gain that places at least some of the blame on organic pollutants.

Conventional wisdom says that weight gain or loss is based on the energy balance model of "calories in, calories out," which is often reduced to the simple refrain, "eat less, and exercise more." But new research reveals a far more complex equation that appears to rest on several other important factors affecting weight gain. Researchers in a relatively new field are looking at the role of industrial chemicals and non-caloric aspects of foods -- called obesogens -- in weight gain. Scientists conducting this research believe that these substances that are now prevalent in our food supply may be altering the way our bodies store fat and regulate our metabolism. But not everyone agrees. Many scientists, nutritionists, and doctors are still firm believers in the energy balance model. A debate has ensued, leaving a rather unclear picture as to what's really at work behind our nation's spike in obesity.

Bruce Blumberg, professor of developmental and cell biology and pharmaceutical sciences at the University of California, Irvine, who coined the term "obesogen," studies the effect that organotins -- a class of persistent organic pollutants that are widely used in the manufacture of polyvinylchloride plastics, as fungicides and pesticides on crops, as slimicides in industrial water systems, as wood preservatives, and as marine antifouling agents -- have on the body's metabolism. Organotins, which he considers to be obesogens, "change how your body responds to calories," he says. "So the ones we study, tributyltin and triphenyltin, actually cause exposed animals to have more and bigger fat cells. The animals that we treat with these chemicals don't eat a different diet than the ones who don't get fat. They eat the same diet -- we're not challenging them with a high-fat or a high-carbohydrate diet. They're eating normal food, and they're getting fatter."

The CDC reports that "nearly all" Americans tested have BPA in their urine, "which indicates widespread exposure to BPA in the U.S. population."

A widely reported study that came out in January in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition (AJCN) would seem to dispute this finding: it confirms the belief in the energy balance model, and has been cited as proof by many researchers working in the field. I asked an author of the study, Dr. George Bray, professor of medicine at Louisiana State University, about the myriad of additives and industrial ingredients in our food that were not accounted for in this study. "It doesn't make any difference," he said in a telephone interview. "Calories count. If you can show me that it doesn't work, I'd love to see it. Or anybody else who says it doesn't -- there ain't no data the other way around."

The participants in the AJCN study were given low, normal, and high amounts of protein and 1,000 more calories than needed. The study does not take into account the content and form of calories, how they were processed, or with what additives or industrial chemicals.

Bray doesn't believe that additives or how foods are processed or produced will ultimately affect the outcome of studies. In fact, he completed research in 2007 that he refers to as his "Big Mac study," which fed participants three meals a day for three days giving one group fast-food items like Big Macs and the other group foods made "from scratch." Bray says the results showed that the type of food made no difference: "At least in an acute study measuring glucose tolerance, insulin, and things -- they don't make any difference. Now, if you fed them over a longer time period, it's clearly going to be the quantity that matters, largely."

One study conducted at Princeton University indicates that types of calories do matter. Researchers found that rats drinking high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) gained significantly more weight than rats drinking sugar water, even though the amount of calories consumed was the same. The rats drinking HFCS also exhibited signs of metabolic syndrome, including abnormal weight gain, especially visceral fat around the belly, and significant increases in circulating triglycerides.

Miriam Bocarsly, the lead author of the Princeton study and a Ph.D. candidate there, said in a phone interview: "The question of calories in, calories out is a very good one and is highly debated in the field. You have traditional nutritionists who say 'energy in energy out,' but we have this result and at this point all we can really say is that this is what is happening in the rat model. Something is obviously different between HFCS and table sugar, and the next question is. What is that difference?"

Blumberg says that fructose itself is an obesogen. "Crystalline fructose doesn't exist in nature, we're making that," he says. "Fructose is not a food. People think fructose comes from fruit but it doesn't. The fructose that we eat is synthesized. Yes, it's derived from food. But cyanide is derived from food, too. Would you call it a food?"

Robert H. Lustig, a pediatric neuroendocrinologist and a professor of pediatrics at the University of California, San Francisco, also believes that fructose is an obesogen. "I personally do lump fructose in with [obesogens]," he told me in an email. "There are those who don't, because

fructose is a nutrient, and they want to think of an obesogen as a foreign chemical. But because fructose tricks the brain into eating more in a free-range situation, it has some properties consistent with an obesogen."

Lustig is another researcher and doctor who finds fault in the calories in, calories out model. "I don't believe in the energy balance model, which is calorie-centric," he says. "I believe in the fat deposition model, which is insulin-centric. The reason is that by altering insulin dynamics, you can alter both caloric consumption and physical activity behavior. This has been my research for the past 16 years." What Lustig means is that by increasing circulating insulin -- often as a result of consuming too much fructose -- people become hungrier and more fatigued, which results in overeating and little motivation to exercise.

Another possible obesogen that has made headlines recently is bisphenol-A (BPA), which is found in an overwhelming number of food items and packaging material. **Frederick S. vom Saal, curators' professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, receives funding the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences for his research on BPA.** "We do animal experiments with chemicals like BPA, and we dramatically alter the way fat is regulated in those animals," vom Saal said in a phone interview. "And they're not changing their food intake."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that "nearly all" Americans tested have BPA in their urine, "which indicates widespread exposure to BPA in the U.S. population." The American Chemistry Council has called for a ban on BPA in baby bottles and sippy cups (which California and several other states have already done), and some food manufacturers are already moving away from using BPA in their packaging. On Monday, Campbell's Soup announced it will stop using BPA in the lining of its cans. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is scheduled to decide by the end of March whether to ban the chemical's use in all food and beverage packaging.

Vom Saal believes that BPA is only the most prominent example of many substances in our food supply and environment that functions as an obesogen. "If people really want to solve the obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease epidemics," he says, "it isn't a wise thing to be ignoring any contributor to this. And we're not obese just because of HFCS, or because of BPA. I also know that nicotine and PCBs and other chemicals are implicated in diabetes and metabolic disease as well."

The energy balance model diverts responsibility back to the consumer because conventional wisdom says the spike in obesity is the result of people consuming more foods than ever before.

Lustig echoes vom Saal's belief that a wide range of substances in our food supply and our environment are likely leading to obesity and metabolic disease based on hosts of studies of various substances. These include soy-based infant formula, phthalates (used in many plastics),

PCBs (found in coolant and electrical equipment), DDE (a type of pesticide), fungicides, and atrazine (a common pesticide).

If the obesogen theory comes to be accepted and casts doubt on the energy balance model, the food industry will be in trouble. It would be harder to keep promoting diet and "health" foods that may be low in calories but that also contain an array of substances that may actually prove to contribute to weight gain.

The emphasis that industry places on personal choice puts the onus back on the individual and leaves the consumer with tough decisions to make about industrial food products and additives. The food industry does not disclose what kinds of potential obesogens, like certain organotins or BPA, are in its products, because these substances are not required to be listed on labels and are difficult for the FDA to regulate. With an emerging debate in the scientific community and an absence of information on labels, consumers are left making their best guess on the safety and health of foods.

"People say to me all the time, 'What do I do?'" vom Saal says. "And the answer is, there's not much we can do, because industry has no legal mandate to tell you, and so they refuse to tell you the way they're using these chemicals. How do you avoid something you are blind to?"

The energy balance model also diverts responsibility back to the consumer because conventional wisdom says that the spike in obesity and diet-related disease is the result of people consuming more foods than ever before. But a review of the literature in *The Obesity Epidemic: Science, Morality, and Ideology* by Michael Gard and Jan Wright asserts that there is no evidence that food intake levels have increased in industrialized countries, or that activity levels have declined. According to Gard and Wright, some studies even suggest a reduction in energy intake over the past several decades.

Julie Guthman, a professor of community studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, points out in her new book, *Weighing In*, that the amount of calories consumed across racial lines and income levels varies little, according to a study by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This is despite the fact that obesity and overweight do vary across racial lines and income levels: Poorer people tend to be more obese, and African Americans and Latinos have higher rates of obesity than do whites. This means there must be some other mechanism, Guthman says, besides excess calories, in the varying levels of obesity. In her book, she refers to the possible role of environmental factors like exposure to obesogens and other toxins, stress, and non-nutritional aspects of food.

Guthman would like to see stronger regulation on the part of the government, and a discussion that focuses more on how food is produced and not just on how much is eaten. "I think people would like to say that weight loss is simple and that it's all about changing personal behavior," Guthman says. "So there's an emphasis on trying to make people have better lifestyles or on changing the built environment."

This seems to fit with Marion Nestle's approach to educating people on weight loss. Nestle is the co-author of a new book on the subject, *Why Calories Count*. "BPA, PCBs, and other such contaminating chemicals can't possibly be good for health," she said in an email. "But it's really hard to prove that they cause demonstrable harm. They might have something to do with obesity -- I suppose it's not impossible -- but why invoke complicated explanations when the evidence for calories is so strong? Let's say obesogens affect a body weight regulatory factor, which they very well might do. But so what? Weight is regulated by more than a hundred biological factors, and these are redundant, which means that if something goes wrong with one of them the others fill in the deficit."

The "so what," Guthman says, is that "We really don't understand the science enough, and there's new evidence in the science that completely re-shifts how we think about these things."

According to Blumberg, the food industry would like to discredit emerging research on obesogens. "What industry typically does is fund studies that produce the opposite conclusions, thereby shedding doubt on the science," he says. "If you take BPA as an example, the vast majority of studies performed by independent government and academic scientists show that it has numerous deleterious effects on health. In contrast, not a single industry-funded or -conducted study has found any hazard associated with BPA."

Can we afford to continue to frame the discussion simply in terms of calories in and calories out? Or by looking only at conventional categories like fat, protein, and carbohydrates and dairy, meat, grains, and vegetables? Given the proliferation of industrial pollutants and the ultra-processing of foods in our current food systems, it seems that we can't.

Isureveille

(student newspaper at Louisiana State University)

O'Brien underscores transparency

Candidate focuses on diversity

By Brian Sibille

Updated: Thursday, March 8, 2012 00:03

Michael O'Brien presented Wednesday his vision for the University if he were chosen as executive vice chancellor and provost, emphasizing his belief in transparency and openness as a university administrator addressing growing financial problems.

"The last thing somebody should do is walk in here and tell you what to do," said O'Brien, the current dean of the College of Arts and Science at the University of Missouri.

O'Brien said his primary goal if chosen as the University's second-in-command is to foster internal discussion between schools and colleges and to be transparent with administrative decisions.

In Missouri, he said he views his current role as a faculty member first and a dean second, and he would maintain the same attitude as the University's provost. O'Brien said he would place importance on daily communication with faculty and staff.

"I'm not a power-hungry person," O'Brien said. "The title doesn't mean anything to me. It's what you get done."

Like past candidates Kevin Carman and Bobby Schnabel, O'Brien highlighted a financial strategy that focused on an increase in private funding from alumni and other invested individuals.

Increasing out-of-state enrollment could be another source for increased revenue, he said. At Missouri, a decrease in high school graduation rates led the school to shift focus to attracting out-of-state students, he said.

O'Brien said adding more non-resident students resolved Missouri's problem of decreasing enrollment numbers.

This could be applied at LSU, he said, though enrollment has been increasing over past years, according to the Office of Budget and Planning.

O'Brien highlighted many of Missouri's successful past efforts, including a focus on bringing back prominent alumni as faculty.

He addressed the same faculty problems as previous candidates in past forums, but O'Brien made it clear he wouldn't equalize differing pay between disciplines because economic demands across the country make some disciplines more profitable than others.

What he would work toward is ensuring "living wages" for all University employees, including faculty on a non-tenure track, who he said have unharvested potential.

O'Brien, who studied anthropology at Rice University and the University of Texas at Austin, said his academic background plays a role in how he interacts and makes decisions as an administrator.

"It does teach respect for other people," he said. "Anthropologists understand diversity."

O'Brien is the third candidate to emphasize diversity and name it as an area in which the University could improve.

He said he would like to see more involvement from international faculty in attracting students from their respective countries, and the University could be more attractive to out-of-country students by honoring hours earned at international schools.

Louisiana's culture has much to offer to international students and faculty, O'Brien said.

He said he has strong ties to the University, where he almost studied for his undergraduate degree, and he has many relatives in Louisiana.

The open provost position could be the "job of the century," he said, and the state plays a large role in the University's potential.

"I would come in and help you develop good — and hopefully big — ideas that come from you," he said, adding he would be proud of working with the University community. "You have to figure out the needs of students and faculty, and then adapt, and not the other way around."



City seeks feedback on renters' choices

Wednesday, March 7, 2012

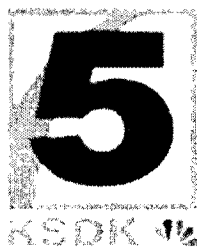
A survey on the city's website asks renters in Columbia to give feedback on factors that influence their decisions on where to live, particularly related to energy efficiency.

Those who rent their homes are invited to take the survey at www.gocolumbiamo.com.

The survey was created through a partnership between the city and students from the University of Missouri's Truman School of Public Affairs.

It will be available through March, and students then will analyze the data along with focus group feedback.

"There have been discussions in the past about how to increase energy efficiency in rental properties," Leigh Britt, Neighborhood Services manager for the city, said in a news release. "This survey will allow us to find out from renters what factors affect their decision on where to live, what information they would like and how we can provide more information to them."



Roger Fidler, with the MU School of Journalism, dreamed of an iPad-like device in the 1980s

By Casey Nolen

St. Louis (KSDK) - It had all the hype expected from an Apple release, and for many it's already living up to expectations.

Like countless tech experts giddy to get their hands on it, Roger Fidler blogged about the new iPad Wednesday, but he's one of the few who can say they saw it all coming.

"Well, I've been dreaming about it for more than 30 years," said Fidler.

Now at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, back in the 80s and 90s, Fidler was dreaming up the future of newspapers for the Knight-Ridder company, and his dreams looked a lot like today's reality.

"Most of my colleagues thought it was a nut-ball idea. It would never happen. It was pure science fiction," he said.

Fidler says to him, it seemed obvious that a digital newspaper would work a lot like the original, with improvements.

Because of the technology of the time, the pads Fidler designed never actually worked, and even after meeting Steve Jobs, the man who made his dream a reality, Fidler says he never tried to capitalize on his creation.

"It was never about the money or fame. I really saw my role as an evangelist for the concept and also to try to prepare publishers for what I thought was inevitable," he said.

As for his next prediction, Fidler expects everyone to have at least one iPad in the next 10 years.

And Fidler wasn't the first to dream up an iPad. He's quick to point out Arthur C. Clarke wrote about such a device in the 1940s in a book that eventually became the movie "2001: A Space Odyssey."