

MAR 23 2012

AP Associated Press

MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: Missouri House funds education, cuts blind benefits

By The Associated Press

March 22, 2012 | 5:40 p.m. CDT

NO MENTION

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri House passed a \$24 billion state budget plan Thursday that holds funding steady for education but cuts medical benefits for the blind — a tradeoff decried by the governor that may get undone in the Senate.

Lawmakers are grappling over which services to finance or slice because Missouri's revenues have yet to rebound from the recent economic recession, and broad-based tax hikes have been ruled out by both the Republican-led legislature and the Democratic governor.

When he delivered his State of the State address in January, Gov. Jay Nixon proposed to balance next year's budget by cutting \$106 million from public colleges and universities, which would have reduced state aid to its lowest level since 1997. Nixon later softened that stance by proposing to redirect \$40 million to higher education from Missouri's share of a nationwide settlement with mortgage lenders.

The House budget plan undoes the rest of Nixon's proposed cut, providing public colleges and universities with the same amount they got this year.

To help pay for that, the House plan eliminates a \$30 million program that provides medical care to 2,858 blind residents who earn at least \$9,060 a year, which is too much to qualify for the state's traditional Medicaid health care program. Instead, the House budget provides \$6 million for a new, slimmed-down blind aid program — financed largely by the repeal of a sales tax exemption on the supplies and equipment used to publish newspapers.

"Clearly, the priority reflected in this budget is education," said House Budget Committee Chairman Ryan Silvey, R-Kansas City, who has been targeted with radio ads by opponents of the

blind aid cuts. "The governor has come year after year and asked us to cut education, and we're done with that."

Silvey said the budget merely puts the blind on equal footing with other people with disabilities who do not have a specialized state health care plan. The blind still would receive a \$707 monthly grant from the state.

Nixon has called the proposed cut to the blind aid program "dead wrong." But Nixon's administration did not offer any specific suggestion to fellow Democrats for an amendment that would have cut the budget elsewhere in order to restore the blind benefits, said Rep. Sara Lampe, of Springfield, the ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee.

Senate President Pro Tem Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, has said his chamber will reverse the cut to the blind benefits. But Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, who wants to spare higher education from cuts, remains uncommitted on whether his panel will restore the blind health care program.

"It's time that all programs are looked at to evaluate who has taken their share of the cuts and who hasn't," said Schaefer, R-Columbia.

The budget also could run into a roadblock erected by state Sen. Jason Crowell, R-Cape Girardeau, who has vowed to oppose one-time funding sources for the budget, including the diversion of mortgage settlement money. Crowell also opposes bills that would generate money by allowing the Department of Revenue to garnish the bank accounts of people who owe taxes, and by waiving interest and penalties for delinquent taxpayers who pay up during a special amnesty period.

The House budget plan adds a single dollar to the \$5 million increase that Nixon proposed for Missouri's \$3 billion funding formula for public elementary and secondary schools. The governor and lawmakers touted that as Missouri's largest-ever budget for basic aid to schools. Yet it falls \$416 million short of the amount called for by the funding formula, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Some Democratic lawmakers complained that the school budget is inadequate. They bemoaned the fact that colleagues were unwilling to consider other ways of generating money, such as raising Missouri's lowest-in-the-nation cigarette tax or revamping laws to better collect Internet sales taxes.

"We are falling woefully short on those priorities. We should be using this budget to plan for our future," said Rep. Margo McNeil, D-Hazelwood. "We are really just trying to survive. We are paddling to catch a breath as we go under water, and it is of our own making."

For the first time since the 2009 fiscal year, the House budget plan would offer a pay raise to some state employees. Those earning less than \$70,000 would get a 2 percent raise when the budget takes effect July 1. Nixon had proposed a 2 percent raise for all employees to take effect Jan. 1.



House passes \$24 billion budget

Spending plan maintains funding for public schools, higher education.

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, March 22, 2012

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri House sent the Senate a \$24 billion budget Thursday that maintains education funding for public schools and higher education at current levels.

The spending plan, included in 13 separate bills, also provides most state workers a raise for the first time in three years and eliminates estimated amounts that provided spending flexibility in hundreds of areas.

To secure the education spending at current levels, the House budget plan eliminates a \$28 million program that provides health care to 2,858 blind people. House Budget Committee Chairman Ryan Silvey set aside \$6 million for a “transitional benefit” for those clients, but \$4 million of that amount come from pending legislation targeting newspapers for a tax increase.

As he finished debate on the bill that set higher education funding for the coming year, Silvey took a shot at Gov. Jay Nixon, who has publicly condemned the decision to cut medical care for the blind.

“I am here to say that continuing the assault on education in this state is just plain wrong and the assault by this governor on education ends today,” Silvey said.

The budget, as approved in the House, includes the following:

- \$3.009 billion plus \$1 for basic aid to school districts through the foundation formula. The extra dollar was included by Silvey so Nixon could not claim to have proposed more money for schools than any person in history.
- **\$397.9 million for the University of Missouri, which would represent a funding increase of more than \$4 million over this year’s support after withholdings by Nixon.**
- \$20 million in general revenue added to the budgets of veterans homes to maintain service levels.

But the spending plan also has omissions, as the Republican-led House rejected a \$50 million federal grant to overhaul the Medicaid eligibility computer system. The grant has ties to the federal health care overhaul approved in 2010 that the GOP hopes will be struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The longest debate took place on public school funding. Under the law directing the distribution of state aid in the foundation formula, the state should be spending about \$470 million more in the coming year.

In a debate that touched on the numerous education issues facing lawmakers, many Republicans argued that the money being provided is enough for schools to do their job.

“We are more than meeting our constitutional requirement of spending more than 25 percent of the state’s budget on education,” said House Majority Leader Tim Jones, R-Eureka. “First of all, I ask, how much is enough? I think it is more than adequate.”

Jones called it a “disproven, bordering on fraudulent argument, that pouring money into education would create a different result.”

But Democrats focused on the issues facing large districts, many that stem from poverty, and the state’s stagnant education funding as a reason why new tax revenues should be sought.

“We all know we all represent the children and we are not doing enough,” said Rep. Rory Ellinger, D-St. Louis.

From Columbia, Reps. Mary Still and Stephen Webber voted against the public school funding measure. Rep. Chris Kelly voted for it.

When it came to the higher education spending plan, Webber joined Kelly in voting in favor. Still opposed the bill.

“While I appreciate the fact that the higher education budget was not cut again this year, I voted no today on the flat funding because it is not enough,” Still said in a prepared statement issued after the vote.

The University of Missouri has endured too many cuts for flat funding to be much help, Still said.

“Flat funding after a decade of cuts is simply not enough to maintain the quality of this great university,” she said.



Letters show more NSEI fallout

By Janese Silvey

Posted March 22, 2012 at 12:56 p.m.

A trio of letters captured in a Sunshine Law request to the university show more worries about MU's decision to close the Nuclear Science Engineering Institute.

In one, Ameren employee Charles Riggs argues that his company's Callaway County plant has benefited from the program and its graduates. Missouri is going to need more nuclear engineers over the next few years to support the plant as well as nuclear medicine in the state, he said.

MU Graduate Dean George Justice has said the plans call for a new interdisciplinary program to be created for nuclear science. It doesn't make sense, he's argued, for a school outside of the College of Engineering to offer nuclear engineering degrees.

But a graduate-level "nuclear science" degree looks different to employers than a PhD in "nuclear engineering," students have said.

In another letter, alumnus Zebadiah Smith said alumni have connections and that he will do "everything in my power to make this an issue in this election year, framing the issue in the light of faculty shared governance and as yet another example of education and innovation being casualties of political strife."

A threat in Andy Casella's letter might sting a little more directly. The alumnus and his wife, who also has a nuclear engineering doctorate from MU, wrote that they'll be less inclined to donate to the university as they have in the past.

Faculty Council is expected to discuss NSEI this afternoon. UM President Tim Wolfe also is expected to make an appearance after having rescheduled an earlier meeting with faculty.

MISSOURIAN

UM System should focus more heavily on research, UM president says

Thursday, March 22, 2012 | 9:22 p.m. CDT; updated 9:44 p.m. CDT, Thursday, March 22, 2012
BY [Celia Ampel](#)

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System should consider a new business model, closer to that of research-focused private universities, President Tim Wolfe said Thursday.

At an MU Faculty Council meeting, Wolfe said that as the state cuts funding for higher education, the UM System needs to move toward self-sufficiency.

"I would suggest you look more and more like a Wash U," he said. "If you don't, what do you look like?"

Washington University in St. Louis spent \$604 million on sponsored research for the 2010 school year, compared to \$136 million for MU the same year.

Wolfe said university research benefits the state's economy and helps students by giving them professors who are top researchers in their fields.

"Student success in our business model has high dependence on research, and I like that," he said.

Wolfe said student success is the UM System's top priority as it tries to close a \$47 million budget gap.

"We would like not to be draconian in capping enrollment or cutting merit- and need-based scholarships," he said.

Another priority is making "tough decisions" about which programs can take more severe cuts than others, rather than cutting funding uniformly across the board, he said.

Wolfe did not say how decisions about program cuts would be made. He said he didn't know what sort of metrics were used to make decisions about which programs get cut, and that Chancellor Brady Deaton was more equipped to make those decisions.

He said about 245 jobs within the UM System could be at risk.

Wolfe said he would like to increase appreciation for the system's contributions to economic development, job creation and educating the future workforce.

"My vision for this university is that it's globally recognized ... I don't see anything that's in our way to getting to that particular point in time," Wolfe said. "What we need is support."

In other news

The Faculty Council discussed a few other items at Thursday's meeting.

- **Veterans memorial:** A new memorial for veterans who have worked for or attended MU could be located in what is now a vending machine area in Memorial Union South. The proposed memorial would include a kiosk with searchable pictures of the veterans and any related audio from the Library of Congress or Missouri oral history programs.
- **Definition of "faculty":** Council member Clyde Bentley said 37 percent of MU faculty are on a non-tenure track and are therefore unrepresented on Staff Council or Faculty Council. He proposed allowing such full-time faculty to serve and vote on campus faculty committees and the Faculty Council and to vote in campus faculty elections.
- **Update on the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute:** The dissolution of the institute is on hold following a meeting of faculty and administrators. The March 11 decision to dissolve the institute will likely be reversed, said Faculty Council Chairman Harry Tyrer, a professor of computer and electric engineering.



UM president names new chief of staff

Published March 22, 2012 at 12:40 p.m.

University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe has replaced his chief of staff and custodian of records.

Robert Schwartz, currently interim provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs at UM's Rolla campus, will start duties April 1. He replaces Kathy Miller, who is leaving to "spend more time with her family," a statement from the system said.

"This is an important position for the UM System, and Bob is exactly the right fit to serve as a trusted advisor to me and the university's leadership team," Wolfe said in the statement. "He will help execute the priorities of the UM System and the university's mission statement, represent me and the Office of the President in a variety of settings, and coordinate various staff and office support. I am delighted he has accepted the position."

Schwartz joined Missouri University of Science and Technology in 2002, when it was UM-Rolla. He was a professor of ceramic engineering and later served as faculty senate president.



MU tree project might help Hinkson

By Janese Silvey

Thursday, March 22, 2012

A University of Missouri researcher who has been heading a long-term study of Hinkson Creek is starting a related project to see whether fast-growing trees can help mitigate stormwater runoff.

Jason Hubbart, an assistant professor of forest hydrology and water quality in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, led a team of students this morning in planting 777 willow and cottonwood trees at Hinkson Field off Mick Deaver Memorial Drive.

The project has a number of goals, but mostly researchers are hoping to get water out of the watershed more quickly before it has a chance to flow into the creek.

Willows are especially thirsty trees that take in and use a greater amount of water than most. That means the trees and their roots will serve as a sort of ground sponge, keeping water — and the stuff in it — in the soil, Hubbart said.

While sediments, fertilizers and chemicals are considered pollutants in the water, some are valuable when they stay in the soil, said Enos Inniss, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering.

"Part of the problem is that we're losing soil nutrients in the water," he said. "So you're losing valuable assets."

Inniss is awaiting word on additional grant dollars that would allow him to install equipment and monitor the water absorption on the site.

That will allow researchers to also deem which chemicals or materials can be bio-remediated — the ones that would work together with the soil — and which, if any, can't, Hubbart said. If chemicals can't be bio-remediated, policymakers will have more information when trying to determine whether activities upland are causing harmful pollutants.

Stormwater runoff is the main source of problems for Hinkson Creek, according to a report issued to the city, county and MU last year. The Environmental Protection Agency has called on the three entities to reduce stormwater runoff into the creek by 39 percent.

Hubbart expects to know within two years whether the bottomland forest is working to curtail runoff.

In a separate project, Hubbart is studying the creek's hydrology to confirm what, if any, pollutants are present and what's causing them.

Another aspect of the tree study will be to demonstrate how property owners can use bottomlands for cash crops. Cottonwoods and willow trees are used for biomass, and Inniss expects the university to look to Hinkson Field for biomass wood in the future.

The number of trees needed was determined by the size of the test site — it allows for 37 rows of 21 trees, adding as many as 777. "We hope it's good luck," Hubbart said.

MISSOURIAN

MU researchers plant willow trees in a flood plain management study

BY Ratko Radojic

COLUMBIA — When a dozen or so MU researchers and students stepped onto a bare Hinkson Field on Thursday morning, their feet sank into the soft, rain-soaked ground as they planted 777 willow trees.

In the middle of the field, a murky pond was a remnant of the recent rain. One year from now, the trees they planted will be about 10 feet tall, and the researchers hope their thirsty roots will have absorbed any stagnant stormwater.

The field, near the intersection of Providence Road and Mick Deaver Memorial Drive and next to the Hinkson Creek, is being used as a part of a research project to study flood plain management and stormwater mitigation.

"It is an authentic flood plain experience," Kirsten Stephan, an urban forester at Lincoln University, said about the pond.

Stephan is collaborating on the study with two MU researchers. Jason Hubbart, an assistant professor of forest hydrology and water quality in the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, and Enos Inniss, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering in the College of Engineering, planted the trees as a part of a two-year study. They hope it will become a national model for areas that experience large amounts of stormwater runoff, which often carries pollutants into waterways.

Along with reducing the volume of stormwater retained in a flood plain, planting willow trees will create a potential cash crop for landowners that can be used for bioenergy, Hubbart said. Biofuels are derived from biological sources and provide renewable energy for heat, electricity and vehicle fuel.

"Given that the demand for biofuels is increasing, it makes willows an attractive cash crop because they are perennial trees," Stephan said.

Hubbart created a planting grid that divided the 108-by-60-meter field, owned by MU, into 3-by-3-meter squares.

Elliott Kellner, a graduate research assistant with Hubbart, was one of the people who helped plant the 50 eastern cottonwood willows, and the 727 black willows. He said there is a willow tree planted on each corner of every square.

Hubbart said he hopes that using this method of planting trees will not only mitigate the amount of stormwater, but also give landowners an incentive to grow forest trees in flood plain areas.

"The model creates an attractive payoff for doing something good," Hubbart said.

Flood plain soils such as the field along the Hinkson Creek get waterlogged easily, which makes them a risk for farmers. Even though the soil is fertile, the farmers can't predict when they will lose their crops due to flooding, Stephan said.

However, using species that are native to flood plain habitats and adapt easily to water logging could be a solution for restoring the plains to a more natural state, she said.

Hubbart and Inniss have partnered with the Campus Facilities Landscape Services for the project, which is being funded in part by the Environmental Protection Agency and MU Extension. Inniss has also been shortlisted for a grant from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, which would provide \$10,000 to purchase monitoring equipment. He expects to find out the status of the grant in early April.

Along with studying best managements practices of flood water and finding a long-term sustainable income base for landowners, the researches also hope to study how much carbon dioxide can be sequestered in the soil — although this component belongs to a larger project Hubbart is working on.

"Seventy percent of green house gas production happens in urban areas, so the greatest potential to mitigate climate change is also in urban areas," Stephan said.

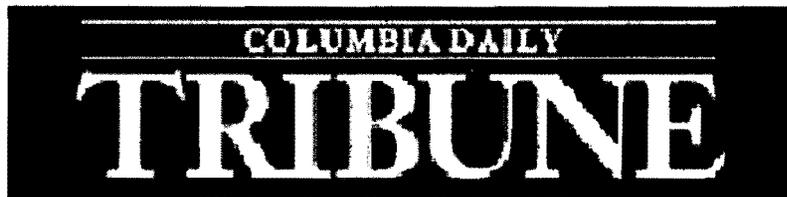
Through urban flood plain forest restoration, carbon dioxide is being pulled out of the atmosphere through trees, she said.

"Urban trees may sequester greater quantities of carbon dioxide than their 'wildland' counterparts," Hubbart said. "The reduced flood volume is created by preferential flow paths for water created by tree roots, thus increasing infiltration rates and volumes."

At the same time, the tree roots increase the porosity of the soil, therefore increasing water holding capacity of the soil, he said.

Hinkson Creek has been designated an impaired water system by the state Department of Natural Resources since 1998. The Environmental Protection Agency identified numerous pollutants entering Hinkson Creek via stormwater runoff, according to a previous [Missourian report](#).

AP Associated Press



News-Leader.com

Springfield, MO

MU's hydrogen car to compete in Houston

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — University of Missouri engineering students are entering their third made-from-scratch hydrogen-powered street car in an upcoming competition in Houston.

The hydrogen vehicle team expects Tigergen III to reach the equivalent of 500 miles per gallon at the Shell Eco-Marathon next week in Houston. The event challenges student teams from around the world to design, build and test energy-efficient vehicles. They compete on a 6-mile stretch for 25 minutes.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that the nearly finished Tigergen III is bigger than its predecessor and has an improved fuel system. Tigergen III will compete in the Urban Concept hydrogen class. That's the same category Tigergen II competed in for two years: last year, it took a first-place award.