Missouri House budget plan offers relief for higher education

By Rudi Keller

State colleges and universities are being offered relief from Gov. Eric Greitens’ proposed cuts if they will refrain from increasing tuition this year, House Budget Committee Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick said Wednesday when he presented his plan for state spending.

The proposal, which will be up for a committee vote next week, puts $30 million into a state need-based scholarship that Fitzpatrick said he will shift to institution budgets if a tuition agreement is reached.

Greitens’ budget called for reducing funding for two- and four-year state institutions by $68 million below actual spending in the current year. Fitzpatrick’s plan restored $38 million of that amount directly and he wants an answer about tuition before the committee votes.

“My goal is to help the institutions out but I also want that to translate into the cost of college being held down,” Fitzpatrick, R-Shell Knob, said to the committee when it met Wednesday morning. “I do think if we are going to be spending close to $70 million going back into institutional budgets that there should be some consideration for that.”

State law limits tuition increases for undergraduate Missouri residents to the rate of inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. For the coming academic year, the limit is 2.1 percent. Colleges and universities are agitating for a change in the law to allow tuition increases greater than inflation in years when state funding is cut.

The University of Missouri’s Columbia campus is facing a $60 million budget shortfall because of Greitens’ original budget plan, projected declines in enrollment and cost increases, Chancellor Alexander Cartwright told a faculty meeting Monday. The state cut is about $21 million of that shortfall, he said.

Fitzpatrick’s plan would increase Greitens’ recommendation of $376.5 million for the UM System by $17.6 million and holds out the promise of another $13.9 million from the $30 million he allocated to the Access Missouri Scholarship fund. The money will stay in the scholarship fund if no agreement is reached on tuition, he said.

“If tuition is going to go up I want to make sure we are putting some of that money in a place where it will help some of the people paying that tuition to offset it,” he said.
The potential for revenue from a tuition increase is about the same as the funding potentially available from the money parked in the scholarship account. Tuition rates for the current academic year included a 2.1 percent increase for resident undergraduates, estimated when approved to be worth about $14.1 million in new revenue.

Under the regular order of university business, the Board of Curators would discuss tuition for the fall at its next regular meeting set for April 12-13 in Rolla.

The university administration hasn’t decided how it will react to Fitzpatrick’s offer, spokesman Christian Basi said.

“We are very grateful for the continued support that has been shown by the legislature, including this most recent action by the House Budget Committee,” Basi said. “We know they have been working very hard over the last few weeks to address the issue of affordability in higher education. We have been working on affordability as well and look forward to working with legislators on affordability in coming months.”

State Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia and the ranking minority member of the budget committee, said he supports Fitzpatrick’s proposal.

“We are able to undo at least a significant amount of the damage,” Kendrick said. “There are still programs and priorities that we are way underfunding.”

Greitens cut funding for colleges and universities as he took office in January 2017 and actual spending this year is 9 percent below appropriated levels. His budget plan called for an additional 10 percent cut in the year that begins July 1.

“I would like to get it to the point where some of the cuts could be restored in the money that was cut last year,” Kendrick said. “There is still work to be done but I am generally pleased with where the budget is at this point.”

The proposal sets aside $12 million for four programs funded through individual line items that have become a magnet for budget cuts. Greitens withheld all the money appropriated for the four programs in the current budget and did not recommend any support in the coming year.

Fitzpatrick’s plan allocates $6 million for medical education in Springfield, $3.6 million for a dental collaboration between the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Missouri Southern State University and $1.2 million each for engineering and pharmacy programs operated with Missouri State University. He intends to incorporate the spending into the base appropriation for each institution to make it less vulnerable to cuts, he said.

“The deal was that I offered them was if they accept 60 percent of the funding, and agree to support the projects at the originally intended level, we will roll these amounts into the institutional cores and you can never come ask us for money for them again,” Fitzpatrick said. “The programs will continue to operate and we’ll move on with all of our lives so we don’t have to talk about it again next year.”
Fitzpatrick’s budget plan also provides a $293,512 increase to the $2.5 million operating budget of the State Historical Society of Missouri, which will be moving into a new research center and museum in 2019. Greitens’ budget did not include an increase for the society.

MISSOURIAN

House panel plans to restore higher education cuts if tuition stays flat

TYLER WORNELL

JEFFERSON CITY — House members will attempt to strike a deal with state universities to restore nearly $70 million in higher education cuts in exchange for a tuition freeze next year.

The House Budget Committee released preliminary details of its budget proposal Wednesday morning, which includes restoration of $68 million in cuts that were in the governor's recommended budget. Of the $68 million, $30 million would be placed into the Access Missouri need-based scholarship fund and remain there until an agreement is met between lawmakers and universities to keep the tuition rate flat next year. If such a deal is met, that $30 million would instead be added to schools' core funding.

Budget chairman Rep. Scott Fitzpatrick, R-Shell Knob, is still trying to finalize the deal, which would freeze tuition for in-state undergraduate students only. He said some universities have been receptive, while others have not. The goal, he said, is to fund higher education while also keeping college affordable.

"I want to make sure that if we're putting that money back, it's going to result in holding down the cost of college for Missouri students," Fitzpatrick said. "If tuition is going to go up, I want to make sure that we are putting some of that money into a place where it will help with people who are having to pay that tuition."
The extra money comes from a pool of $80 million the General Assembly set aside last year when Congress failed to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Fund. With the renewal of CHIP earlier this year, Fitzpatrick announced two weeks ago that he would like to funnel the money toward higher education.

**MU spokesman Christian Basi said university officials are still in the planning stages and discussing tuition with lawmakers, but that the university supports the legislature's work in restoring funds to higher education.**

"We're grateful for the continued support from legislators over the past few weeks, as we know they've been working hard to find additional money for public higher education," Basi said. "Together, we've made significant progress in ensuring that public higher education remains affordable."

Sen. Dan Brown, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee, said he's spoken with Fitzpatrick and right now isn't in a position to support Fitzpatrick's proposal. Brown said Missouri Southern State University would be most impacted by the tuition freeze and he has been having conversations with university officials about it.

"I have from the beginning of the session said that I'm going to put the $68 million back in, and I didn't put any caveats on it," said Brown, R-Rolla. "Right now, unless I hear something different, I'm not leaning toward forcing them to hold the tuition rate."

A spokesman for Missouri Southern said university officials were still meeting with lawmakers about the issue and were not yet ready to weigh in.

While Fitzpatrick is trying to keep tuition flat next year, lawmakers are also trying to pass legislation that would increase the cap by which universities can raise tuition. Currently, they are prohibited from raising it beyond the price of inflation. A Senate bill sponsored by Caleb Rowden to increase the cap has stalled in the Senate, and a bill filed in the House was passed out of committee Wednesday.
While Gov. Eric Greitens has described the higher education cut as being $68 million, that figure does not compare his proposal with the budget approved last year, as is typical when describing budget changes. Greitens withheld funding from higher education during this fiscal year. The actual amount of the governor's proposed cut is $98 million compared with last year's budget.

Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, said Greitens' proposed cuts upset a lot of budget committee members, allowing for a conversation about higher education and its importance to the state.

The proposal to restore $68 million "doesn't necessarily make higher education institutions whole or put them back to where they were in fiscal year 2017. We're a long ways from that," Kendrick said. "If there is a silver lining to all of the proposed cuts that were put out there, it's allowed us to focus in on higher ed this year in such a way that hopefully we can continue to gain on this momentum going into the future."

As for the plan to place $30 million into the scholarship fund, Kendrick said he was "still processing" that.

"I've been focusing on the issue of student debt for a number of years, so I can appreciate fully funding a need-based scholarship program," Kendrick said. "As a state in general, we underfund need-based aid for low- and middle-income individuals, but it could potentially run a risk."

The committee is expected to debate all the budget bills next week, when members can propose changes.

The higher education budget also includes funding four cooperative programs and rolling that money into the schools' core budgets, rather than having them as "line items" on the budget. MU School of Medicine's cooperative program in Springfield would receive $6 million, as opposed to the requested $10 million. The governor's budget included no funding for the program.

Kendrick said rolling these programs' funds into core budgets will help protect them in the future.
"I think it's critical at some point that we roll them up into the core because as long as those line items continue to hang out there," Kendrick said, "that's one of the first places to go to make cuts."

Once the full House passes a budget bill, it will advance to the Senate where further changes can be made. The bill is likely to end up in a conference committee, where Fitzpatrick's tuition deal could prove crucial to working out a compromise.

"I hope it's not too big of a problem," Brown said. "We'll see where we end up, but I'm going to stand pretty strong, and I'm sure he will too."

Missouri budget leader pitches college tuition, funding deal

JEFFERSON CITY (AP) — Missouri's House budget leader says he's trying to work out a deal to avoid higher education cuts, but only if schools don't raise tuition.

Budget Committee Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick's latest state spending plan unveiled Wednesday would restore about $38 million in cuts Gov. Eric Greitens recommended for public colleges and universities next fiscal year.
The Republican governor had asked lawmakers to give schools $68 million less in funding compared to what they're expected to get this year. Fitzpatrick says he wants to restore all of that, but only if schools agree not to raise tuition for in-state undergraduates.

Fitzpatrick says he'll give the remaining $30 million to public colleges and universities if they reach a deal. Otherwise, he says he'll set that money aside for need-based scholarships.

**Missouri universities could see another increase in tuition**

JEFFERSON CITY - The higher education committee voted to move forward with removing state university tuition caps Wednesday, which could clear the way for higher tuition for students.

After several hearings, the committee voted 7 to 1 in favor of removing the cap.

Rep. Joe Adams, D-University City, voted in favor of the bill. He said he wants to make sure the legislature controls the rising cost if tuition increases.

"The real answer is the states really have to fund it, public education, college, universities at the higher rate than they're doing, and that will definitely keep the cost down," Adams said.

Adams was a teacher for 33 years and paid for college himself.

"If you're going to a public university, I mean yeah, you've got to pay something, but you shouldn't be coming out with debt that's going to take you a billion years to pay off. That's crazy," he said.
The Missouri National Education Association supports the bill as well. State affiliate for the MNEA, Otto Fajen, said this will benefit universities during these tough budget cuts.

"There's no simple easy answer for kids when the state is not investing enough in higher education, but where we come down is on the side of quality and being there and having the programs our kids need," Fajen said.

Fajen said if it takes increasing tuition, the MNEA supports that.

"From what we can tell, students will really support that too because they know they want the kind of quality and programs that they really need," he said.

Rep. Jason Chipman, R-Steelville, was the only lawmaker on the higher education committee who voted against the bill.

"I had questions about the implementation of the cutoff date, so by law we're supposed to finish the budget by the end of May, but that doesn't give families much time," Chipman said.

Chipman said he's concerned families won't have enough notice to budget for possible tuition increases if they go into effect this fall.

"I don't think it's fair to the kids or to the parents," he said.

Chipman said he's in favor of what's called differential tuition, which considers the student's degree when determining the tuition.

"If you get a degree in English or if you're an elementary school teacher, the minimum pay for an elementary school teacher is $25,000. Maybe we make that degree a little bit cheaper than the engineer who is going to start off making more money," Chipman said.

House Bill 2348 will now move to the Rules Committee for another vote, then it could head to the House floor.
University of Missouri, McGraw-Hill reach textbook discount deal

By Columbia Daily Tribune

McGraw-Hill Education will make its entire digital catalog of higher education textbooks available to University of Missouri students for $40 or less, expanding the UM System’s offering of low-cost course materials.

The discounted textbooks, called eBooks by McGraw-Hill, will be offered for five years under an agreement announced Wednesday in a university news release. McGraw-Hill was the university’s initial partner in the AutoAccess program to provide affordable and open-source materials to students. The program has saved students $9.7 million, the news release stated, and is available for 300 courses taken by 40,000 students across the UM System’s four campuses.

To meet the university’s definition of low-cost textbooks, McGraw-Hill cut prices by about 38 percent for materials in the catalog.

MU announces lower cost of electronic textbooks

Generated from UM System Press Release

Chancellor responds to faculty concerns about graduate program cuts

BY BRANDON R HILL

Chancellor Alexander Cartwright said Wednesday that he would meet a May 16 deadline for a final decision about graduate program closures.

Addressing concerns about recommendations made in a recent academic program review, Cartwright said he will work closely with faculty and staff to review the data and the recommendations.

The report was issued in January by the Task Force on Program Analysis, Enhancement and Opportunities, made up of faculty from across campus.

He also told the campus community in an email that “this process will include the recommendations made in the task force report, as well as other data and feedback the deans or others may bring forward.”

MU faculty called for a special meeting Monday in response to the January announcement that MU may close more than a dozen programs and review 16 more “where significant concerns were identified.”

Hundreds of faculty members attended the meeting, with many expressing apprehension about the data collected by Academic Analytics, a company that looks at faculty and school productivity.
Many faculty were worried that the company’s evaluation wasn’t an accurate portrayal of the quality of the graduate programs. They also objected to a lack of transparency in the process.

They approved a motion asking Cartwright to allow ample opportunity to correct inaccurate and misleading data; provide a budgetary justification for each recommended closure or merger; and produce a transparent set of procedures with a timeline.

In his Wednesday email, Cartwright pledged to implement the following procedures before the May 16 deadline:

- Continue to work with members of staff, deans, department chairs, faculty leaders and members of the task force to review data and recommendations. The process will include the recommendations made in the task force report, as well as other data and feedback the deans or others may bring forward.

- Provide additional view of the data as it becomes available. This will include summary information at the department level that can be easily accessed for review. Faculty are encouraged to review the data and provide any clarification or additional information to his office by April 9.
University of Missouri frats respond to hazing accusations

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — The Interfraternity Council for the University of Missouri announced it is halting all new-member activities in response to hazing allegations.

Tuesday's announcement on Twitter said the activities will be paused until March 19, the Columbia Missourian reported.

IFC official Matthew Oxendale declined in an email to name any specific fraternities, citing an active investigation. The investigation is a joint effort between national fraternity headquarters and the university's Office of Student Accountability and Support.

The council will work with the local chapters and national headquarters during the investigation to review new member programs to "ensure activities are positive, educational and comply with all policies," Oxendale wrote.

The decision to pause new member activities was made unanimously by all 29 university fraternity chapter presidents and council board members. Regular chapter activities will continue as normal, according to Oxendale.

The school appreciates IFC's commitment to student safety, said university spokesman Christian Basi.
"We really appreciate them taking a step back, stopping any activities that they have any kind of concerns about and putting student safety first," Basi said.

The consulting firm Dyad Strategies released a report last year criticizing the university's Greek life and hazing practices. At least 14 fraternities were placed on probation between April 2015 and October 2016.

The report suggested that freshmen no longer live in fraternity houses. It also recommended fraternities register all social events and that the university work with the council to provide security and inspect chapter houses during registered events.

**IFC puts two-week pause on new member process after hazing allegations at MU**


Similar stories ran on WDAF (Kansas City, Mo.) and KTVO (Ottumwa, Ia.)
MU student gov. candidates drop out amid damaging tweets

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- Three candidates for University of Missouri's student government have dropped out after the discovery of offensive tweets they made.

Blaine Thomas and Claire Jacobs separately announced Tuesday they were quitting the race for Missouri Students Association president after student journalist Brett Stover publicized tweets of theirs including racist and homophobic language, the Columbia Missourian reported.

Stover also revealed derogatory tweets about women and black people posted by vice-presidential candidate Caius Gillen. He removed himself from the race Wednesday.

"I want to reiterate that I am so sorry for any pain my old tweets may have caused," Gillen posted on his Twitter account. "I am not the person I was two years ago -- I hope that my fellow students will forgive me."

Stover, a junior who works at campus radio station KCOU, shared on his personal Twitter account a history of the candidates' comments posted between 2012 and 2016.

The Board of Elections commissioners suspended the presidential campaign Tuesday to investigate the matter. Board members have since reinstated the campaign after deciding they couldn't punish candidates for comments posted before the election period.

"None of these tweets were made during the election period, so they fall outside of my statute of limitation," said Joseph Sell, board chairman. "As the BEC, I can only make decisions regarding the election."

Stover said he looked through several years of tweets by all six candidates running for student office as a part of election coverage. He said it's a process he has repeated since arriving to the university in 2015.
"I never hope that I'll find these kinds of things because, I mean, it's disappointing," Stover said. "It shows you how far the university has not come since the time I've been here."

The information has been forwarded to the Office for Civil Rights and Title IX, said Christian Basi, spokesman for the university.

"You never expect something like this to happen, especially during an election," Sell said.

3 candidates for Mizzou student government drop out after the discovery of offensive tweets

By ELIZABETH DUESENBERG

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Three candidates for University of Missouri's student government have dropped out after the discovery of offensive tweets.

Blaine Thomas and Claire Jacobs announced on Tuesday they were quitting the race for the position of Missouri Students Association's president.

ABC 17 previously reported that the election process was suspended on Tuesday after the discovery of the tweets.

MSU vice-presidential candidate Caius Gillen was also accused of having derogatory tweets about women and black people. He removed himself from the race on Wednesday.

The campaign was reinstated after board members decided they could not punish candidates for comments posted before the election period.

A spokesperson for the university said the information has been forwarded to the Office for Civil Rights and Title IX.
MU library removes controversial posters after student complaints

By JUSTIN KOLLAR

COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri's main library has taken down three posters after a student group petitioned for one of them to be removed.

The anti-abortion group Mizzou Students for Life, objected to the poster showing Margaret Sanger, who founded Planned Parenthood and advocated for birth control.

The group cited Sanger's belief in eugenics, the science of improving the human race by controlling breeding to increase desired characteristics.

Junior Anna Haberdash, a chair of Mizzou Students for Life, said she does not believe Sanger should be remembered positively.

"She used birth-control to target people that she thought were defective, people she thought shouldn't be reproducing," Haberdash said. "Her main goal was to create a cleaner race, she wrote that stuff in her books verbatim."

Haberdash spearheaded the campaign for the poster's removal after deciding that the display would be detrimental to today's society. She said she is pleased her group could bring about change no matter how small.

"It feels really good, it feels like our work paid off," Haberdash said. "We researched everything and that took a long time. We wanted to make sure we had all our facts straight before petitioning for this, but definitely a good feeling."

Just one day before, the library was saying it wouldn't remove the Sanger poster.
"There are a variety of posters and exhibits throughout the building that some people might find offensive," said communications director Shannon Cary. "The library will not remove this poster from its exhibit."

She said it would be at least summer before the exhibit was changed.

But down the poster came, along with two others showing Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, which were adjacent to the one of Sanger.

Haberdash thinks the move is a result of the petition.

"I don't think the timing was a coincidence," she said. "It just seems fishy and ironic that they took the other two down."

Mizzou Students for Life said it had no issue with the King or Malcolm X posters. Haberdash, however, said she thought the placement of the posters was odd to begin with since Sanger believed in the sterilization of African Americans.

In what Haberdash believes was a mistake, she received an email from library staff the day after the poster was taken down. She believes the email was only intended for library staff.

It said, "So can I have these posters put back up?"

Haberdash said the email solidifies her feelings that the decision to remove the posters came from higher up the ladder than the staff.

"I do not believe that they took it down on their own," Haberdash said. "They took that poster down because we told them to, and I think they took down all three just to save face."

Ellis Library staff would not comment further on the timing of the posters' removal or the email.
MU medical school doing more than ever to help prepare doctors to prescribe opioids responsibly

ALLYSON VASILOPULOS 1 hr ago (0) 3 min to read

Once upon a time, medical students at MU received almost no training on how to prescribe opioids responsibly. Now it’s a big part of their education.

“We’ve had an opiate lecture every eight weeks since halfway through our second year,” third-year medical student Spencer Lambdin said. “Every rotation, it seems, has had an opiate talk.”

Last December, Lambdin attended a lecture by Lucas Buffaloe, assistant professor of clinical family and community medicine, as a part of his rotation in family medicine. The lecture, which lasts around an hour, focuses on how opioids work, the effects they have on the brain and how addiction can develop in patients. Most of the statistics Buffaloe relies on come from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines on opioid prescribing.

“What we’ve tried to do in response to the current opioid epidemic is be much more thoughtful about how students are trained,” Buffaloe said.

This involves making sure that doctors are prescribing more responsibly but also that all students are receiving a formal education on how to properly prescribe opioids and watch for signs of addiction. Lectures on opioids play a huge part.

The need for increased attention to how medical students are trained stems from the rise in opioid-related deaths over the last few decades. More than 115 Americans die daily due to opioid overdose, according to an estimate from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.
And the Midwest is the biggest culprit. In the last year, the Midwest has seen the greatest increase in opioid-related emergency room visits compared to any other region, according to a recent CDC report. From July 2016 to September 2017, opioid overdoses in the Midwest have increased by 70 percent.

**Doctors could make a difference.**

In the past, the only training medical students received in prescribing opioids came from watching other doctors, Buffaloe said. That’s how he learned when he was in medical school. But because prescription practices varied from doctor to doctor, there was little consistency in what students learned.

Meanwhile, over the last 20 to 25 years, the number of opioids prescribed by physicians has increased dramatically, though there wasn’t an increase in the number of Americans reporting pain.

“We prescribe about four times as many opioids as we did in the early 1990s,” Buffaloe said.

As a result, more people are dying from opioid use and abuse. In the U.S. from 1999 to 2014, more than 165,000 persons died from opioid overdose, according to the CDC’s guidelines.

In Missouri alone, 908 people died from an opioid overdose in 2016, according to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. Nearly 93 percent of those deaths were accidental, the data show.

“For me, it’s understanding that education is a really big weapon in this fight against opioid overdoses,” third-year medical student Cory Declue said.

Missouri is also the only state without a prescription drug monitoring program, though the city of Columbia has recently joined the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program of the St. Louis County Department of Public Health.
With a statewide system, Missouri physicians would be able to track what medications their patients have been prescribed by all of their doctors, which would help reduce “doctor-hopping” for opiate prescriptions.

The number of opioid prescriptions written by physicians has decreased over the past few years, Buffaloe said.

“I would say over the course of the last five years, doctors have become much more aware of the problem of opioid abuse and opioid addiction and have been gradually taking steps to change their own prescribing practices,” Buffaloe said.

In his experience, Buffaloe said, physicians are now much more likely to try other methods of pain relief for their patients before prescribing an opioid. Alternatives can include physical therapy, rest, cognitive behavioral therapy or steroid injections, among other approaches.

And it seems this might be the right call. A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association shows that for people with chronic pain, like back aches or arthritis, over-the-counter medications and non-opioids work just as well as opioids, without many of the negative effects. The pain relief provided from non-opioids was slightly less.

**Medical student experiences**

In some of the more rural parts of the state, proper opiate prescription education isn’t readily available. Before entering medical school, Declue worked as a pharmacy technician back in his hometown of DeSoto. He recalls many Drug Enforcement Administration investigations and many local physicians losing their licenses for inappropriate prescribing of opioids, he said.

“You don’t get an academic center such as Mizzou in every small town,” Declue said. “The farther that these physicians travel from academia and current research in the field of opioid prescribing, the less that they really stay up on it and the less that they understand the implications of overprescribing opioids.”
One of the things the university stresses in training medical students on prescribing opioids is how to recognize the predictive factors for addiction. Age, prior substance abuse or family history are among the factors that can make a person more likely to develop an addiction.

“(Most people) think of someone who is doing it maliciously,” Declue said. “There are a lot of times that patients simply want to feel better. And we want them to feel better, but we want them to feel better appropriately.”

But knowing how someone is going to respond to an opioid prescription can be difficult. Persuading someone to try something other than opioids to relieve their pain can be even more of a challenge.

“It’s an art form, almost, to talk the patient away from opiates, to tell them that they have different options and that these options work,” medical student Lambdin said.

Overall, Buffaloe said he’s received a great response from his students to his lectures on opioids.

“I think what we’re doing now at the medical school is really going to make an impact in terms of future prescribing practices,” Buffaloe said. “It’s a big improvement to how students learned about pain medications in the past.”
Monsanto merger brings Bayer into partnership with MU’s research hub

By Brian Treece

The University of Missouri, with 30,000 students and 15,000 faculty and staff members, is a leader in scientific and technological innovation that Missouri and our nation will depend upon for economic growth and prosperity in the decades ahead.

Indeed, MU is a world-class research institution — housing facilities that foster discovery and interdisciplinary collaboration across a wide range of scientific fields. The university has 17 research farms, research centers and forests, covering more than 14,500 acres, and has several multi-disciplinary grants that focus on crop production and animal health.

The school’s extraordinary level of interdisciplinary research is exemplified by first-rate collaborative environments that include the Christopher S. Bond Life Sciences Center, the Dalton Cardiovascular Research Center, the Health Activity Center, the Interdisciplinary Plant Group, Center for Geospatial Intelligence, and the National Center for Animal Reproduction and Genomics.

All of this constitutes a scientific powerhouse that helps draw to our state industries grounded in science and technology.

Recently, I had the pleasure of touring the university’s research facilities with senior executives from Bayer, the global pharmaceutical and life sciences giant that we soon expect to become a cornerstone of Missouri’s business community through its merger with St. Louis-based Monsanto. The Bayer team was highly impressed with what they saw at MU, and all of us were enthusiastic about the Bayer-Monsanto merger bringing a new level of innovation to Missouri and the City of Columbia.

Monsanto, of course, has been a key player in Missouri’s scientific and business worlds since 1901. Over the decades, MU’s researchers in fields such as agriculture, veterinary medicine, and pharmaceuticals have collaborated with Monsanto’s R&D scientists and engineers to give the world new and better ways to feed itself and stay healthy.

The challenges of feeding a hungry world mean much more of that work lies ahead. Experts say farmers around the planet must boost productivity on their land by 60 percent to feed a total world population of 10 billion just over 30 years from now. In fact, they will have to meet that demand with less farmland, as the amount of farmland per capita falls by 17 percent over that
period. The projected impact of climate change will make providing food and fiber even more daunting, as farm yields are expected to decline 17 percent by 2050 due to warmer average temperatures and other factors.

Bayer’s worldwide corporate experience and resources, newly established in Missouri, will contribute to these vital efforts. Together, Bayer and Monsanto over the years have been at the heart of revolutionary agricultural innovations. Their combined annual research and development work is valued at EUR 2.5 billion. More than 10,000 professionals within the two companies work in facilities in the U.S., Germany, and elsewhere. Bayer U.S. employment stands at 12,000 people, while Monsanto has about 20,000 workers.

The Bayer-Monsanto partnership will create an ever-greater demand for graduates in myriad fields of science and technology, and will offer new opportunities for those who pursue innovation. And the City of Columbia is committed to the process we established some years ago for providing an ecosystem that supports Bayer and others in their scientific work.

Columbia’s Missouri Innovation Center, already a key resource in helping entrepreneurs carry their ideas through the research and development phases and on to commercialization, is poised to become even more important to the Mid-Missouri economy with Bayer’s presence ramping up interest and activity in agribusiness and related fields.

Collaboration between Bayer and MU has already been fruitful. Recently, Bayer licensed an MU-developed technology via a startup company incubated at the MU Life Science Business Incubator at Monsanto Place. The technology was originally developed on the MU campus at the Bond Life Science Center, also partially funded by Monsanto. This successful case history demonstrates how Bayer and MU can collaborate on new products in agriculture, animal health, and healthcare. It also shows how Monsanto’s investments in MU and the Life Science Incubator have created local jobs.

The City of Columbia will welcome Bayer and support, in every way, its growing collaboration with MU and other resources based here. Because as the University of Missouri and its private sector partners grow and enhance their stature, our city also rises on the national and international stages.

Brian Treece is mayor of Columbia.
US soldier returns from deployment, surprises twin cheerleader daughters at Missouri basketball game
By: Katherine Lam

A U.S. soldier who was deployed for 10 months surprised his twin daughters at a University of Missouri basketball game on Saturday and had the crowd erupting in cheers at the Mizzou Arena.

Capt. Kody Kemerling made his surprise appearance at the Norm Stewart Court, FOX4 KC reported. His daughters, cheerleaders Maria and Micalea, stood in the middle of the court as the announcer described Kemerling’s military experience. Kemerling then appeared and hugged them from behind.

“Surprise girls! Welcome home, Captain Kody Kemerling!” the announcer said.

Their ecstatic reactions during the emotional reunion was captured on camera as attendees cheered in the stands. Truman the Tiger, the university’s mascot, stood behind the trio and waved an American flag.

University of Missouri cheerleading posted the sweet moment on its Facebook page over the weekend with the caption: “Thanks you to all who serve our country! Especially when it’s dad!! What a surprise!”

The Missouri Tigers went on to defeat the Arkansas Razorbacks, 77 to 67.
Missouri Supreme Court issues order in CID election challenge

By Caitlin Campbell

A lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the state’s Community Improvement District Act could soon be up for appeal after more than two years in legal limbo at the trial court.

The Missouri Supreme Court on Tuesday commanded Boone County Circuit Judge Jodie Asel to reverse an order dismissing an election lawsuit against the Business Loop Community Improvement District — a decision that would allow it to finally be appealed to a higher court. Asel dismissed the case in March 2016 in a manner that barred the woman suing the district, Jen Henderson, from appealing, and refused requests to amend her order to allow an appeal. Henderson was one of seven voters in the district’s December 2015 half-cent sales tax election; her lawsuit alleges the district violated the Missouri Constitution and conducted an unlawful election.

“It’s very hard to take joy in this because we got a victory on a battle we shouldn’t have had to fight to begin with — and it took two years to get here,” said Richard Reuben, one of Henderson’s attorneys and a law professor at the University of Missouri.

Asel has until April 5 to respond to the court’s order — a preliminary writ of mandamus — in one of two ways: by either entering a judgment Henderson can appeal, or by explaining to the court in writing why she will not do so. If she selects the later option, the Missouri Supreme Court would consider her arguments before making a final decision on the matter. The writ of mandamus is an order commanding a government official to properly fulfill the duties of the office.

“You the said Honorable Jodie Asel, are commanded in the mean time to take no further action in said cause, other than as set forth above until the further order of this court,” the writ states. “Herein fail not at your peril.”

It is unclear at this time what Asel will do — she did not respond to a message seeking comment sent through the judges’ office Wednesday. In 2017 when asked during a hearing by one of Henderson’s attorneys to enter a judgment that could be appealed, Asel suggested she would only do so if she was ordered to by a higher court.
Tuesday, when the writ was issued, was “an important day for the rule of law in Missouri,” Reuben said. It sends a message to trial judges that they cannot block their rulings from reconsideration by a higher court, and that Missouri has “a system that holds trial judges accountable,” he said.

Reuben noted that before dismissing the case the trial court did not explore his client’s allegations that the CID election was unlawful because it lacked a secret ballot, a secure ballot box, adequate notice of the election and a neutral election administrator. Asel didn’t address the allegations and dismissed the lawsuit on arguments that the courts have no jurisdiction to hear a CID election contest.

The state’s general election laws regulate a multitude of things including how an individual may contest an election in court. No procedure for contesting the results of an election exist in the CID Act, which CID attorney Caleb Colbert argued meant Henderson could not challenge the election results in court.

Colbert did not respond to a message seeking comment Wednesday.

If Asel does not object to the writ, Reuben said he will appeal “right back to the Missouri Supreme Court to challenge her decision that she did not have” jurisdiction “to hear the CID case.” If the court decides it has jurisdiction, then it can finally address whether the state’s CID Act is unconstitutional if it allows conduct inconsistent with state requirements for general elections, he said.
Cells eat and regurgitate your tattoos

French scientists have discovered that tattoos are actually maintained by an ever-changing process: The ink crystals are continuously engulfed, regurgitated and gobbled back up by macrophages — immune cells that ingest foreign or unhealthy debris in the body.

By: Steph Yin

We think of tattoos as fixed adornments. Plunge ink deep enough into the skin and there it will sit, suspended in subterranean connective tissue forever.

But what if I told you that tattoos are actually maintained by an ever-changing process — one in which ink crystals are continuously engulfed, regurgitated and gobbled back up, merely giving the illusion of stasis?

That’s what French scientists observed from studying tatted mice. In their model of tattoo persistence, published Tuesday in the Journal of Experimental Medicine, macrophages — immune cells that ingest foreign or unhealthy debris in the body — play a starring role. Targeting these cells, the authors suggested, might help improve tattoo removal procedures for people.

As a tattoo is given, macrophages descend to capture invading ink. Probably because the ink granules are too bulky for the microscopic Pac-Mans to break down, they hold onto the pigment, your body art shining through their bellies.
With time, these original macrophages die and release their pigments, which get vacuumed up by new macrophages, starting the cycle over, said Sandrine Henri, a researcher at the Immunology Center of Marseille-Luminy who led the study with her colleague Bernard Malissen.

This research “shows that tattoos are in fact much more dynamic than we previously had believed,” said Johann Gudjonsson, a professor of immunology and dermatology at the University of Michigan who was not involved in the study.

The science behind your emblazoned anchor, sparrow or world map of places you’ve travelled has never fully been nailed down. For years, researchers suspected that tattoos worked by permanently staining fibroblasts, the cells that synthesize collagen, under the surface of our skin.

Then, looking at tattoo biopsies under the microscope, scientists saw macrophages laden with ink globules, and the story of tattoos became one of the immune system. Still, it was thought that tattoo-bearing macrophages were stable and long-lived, giving tattoos their permanence. What this study suggests is that, at least in mice, these macrophages are constantly being replaced.

Neither Henri nor Malissen have tattoos, and the pair didn’t set out to study them. They were examining skin cells in black mice for another project when they noticed macrophages scavenging the melanin released by dying, pigment-making cells. They wondered if the same process occurred in tattoos.

Tattooing green stripes on the tails of albino mice (via stick-and-poke), the immunologists confirmed that macrophages sequestered the ink. When they selectively killed off macrophages, the tail tattoos remained unchanged; new macrophages had come in and slurped up the freed pigments.

Next, the team grafted tattooed skin from one mouse onto another. After six weeks, most of the ink-laden macrophages on the graft were from the recipient mouse, not the donor — evidence that the macrophages had gone through a cycle of renewal.
The authors speculate that targeting macrophages might enhance laser removal, which can take as many as 20 treatments. An estimated 1 in 5 adults in the United States have at least one tattoo, and tens of thousands of laser removals are performed each year.

Jared Jagdeo, a dermatologist at the University of California, Davis, has also wondered whether macrophages impede tattoo removal by reabsorbing lasered ink particles. Since 2014, he has performed a laser removal procedure that uses anti-inflammatory ointment to suppress macrophages.

“It makes a difference,” he said, noting that he often removes tattoos in 10 or fewer treatments.

**But Nicholas Golda, a dermatologist at the University of Missouri School of Medicine, suggested other approaches might be simpler and more effective. Others have tried to promote tattoo inks that are more easily shattered by lasers, but these haven’t caught on because “tattoo artists weren’t interested in making it easier for people to remove their art,” he said.**

And getting a tattoo of your lover’s name, knowing that it can be easily erased, just doesn’t pack the same romantic punch, does it?

For now, it seems, tattoos remain high-stakes, hard to reverse and sacred — but don’t mistake them for a fixed, unchanging part of your body.
MU students find new way to relieve stress

By JALYN HENDERSON

Watch video at:  

COLUMBIA - Everyone deals with stress in different ways. Some meditate, others go for a run.

Some MU students decided to let go of their stress in a different way – by destroying an old, beat up car.

"Being a college student is just stressful in general, so why not just get that anger out, get that stress out and go to class and have a nice day," Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Incorporated Secretary Brandon Rice said.

The fraternity charged one dollar to hit the car with a sledgehammer. They're trying to raise money for the American Cancer Society and also help students let off some steam.

"Stress is one of those things that's universal," Aspire Counselor Jessica Tappana said. "You're going to experience stress at some level no matter what."

Releasing stress through aggressive behavior is getting more and more popular as “anger rooms” are popping up around the country.

Anger rooms provide people with ways to relieve their stress by breaking things like TVs, vases and printers.

Despite the growing popularity, Tappana doesn't think destroying things is the most beneficial way to handle stress.

She said based on research she's read, destroying things aren't helpful to someone's mental state.
"While sometimes the physical act can be relieving, it can also kind of heighten the feelings of anger sometimes," she said. "If you're thinking angry thoughts, you might be adding to the anger and you're associating the angry thought with physical release."

Tappana said she recommends other forms of physical exertion like running, pushups and sit-ups. She said those are effective and productive ways to relieve stress compared to breaking things.

However, students who participated in smashing the car don't agree. Some said it was the "highlight of my day" and was "well-needed."

"School does build up a little stress and tension and it did feel good to use the hammer to slam the car," MU student Sean Clemmons said. "For me personally this is helpful. I feel good, I feel relieved."

A University-Run School District?

NO MU MENTION

By Rick Seltzer

Muncie Community Schools enrollment peaked at 19,808 students in 1967, a time when the shine had yet to wear off the rust belt and manufacturers were near the apex of their power as employers hiring in Indiana.

School enrollment has declined since then as the region’s manufacturing jobs moved away, population fell and students shifted to other schools. Today, the school system enrolls 5,215 students.

Despite the declines, the school system has built two new high schools, another middle school and a new elementary school since its heyday. As of 2017, the district’s facilities were less than 75 percent occupied. By some estimates, their occupancy rate was on track to fall to 68 percent by 2030. In that case, the school system would have 100 excess classrooms.

Just three school buildings were labeled in good shape in an assessment of facilities performed in 2015. Six needed significant maintenance. But $10 million from 2014 general obligation bonding intended for school repairs was spent instead on operating expenses, drawing the ire of state legislators. Last year, the state put emergency managers in place to address the district’s
finances. Then in December, the state decided to take full control of Muncie Community Schools, giving the emergency managers full control of academic and financial operations.

Now Ball State University is poised to take control of the embattled school district in its home city.

Legislation advancing through Indiana’s General Assembly would permanently replace Muncie Community Schools’ five-member elected board with a seven-person board appointed by Ball State, giving Indiana’s fourth-largest public university full control of the school district. The idea, advanced by Republicans and likely to pass in Indiana’s GOP-controlled state government, has drawn support from Ball State’s administration.

University leaders hope to reverse a long financial slide at the school district, boost its academic offerings and attract new students in a state where laws allow for neighboring public schools and charter schools to compete fiercely with each other for enrollment. They point to the university’s roots as a teachers’ college and connections Ball State already has with Muncie schools, arguing the new arrangement would allow them to do more to help students.

The proposal remains rife with risks. Area politicians have howled about the pending loss of voter control over Muncie schools. Teachers’ unions objected because Ball State would not be required to recognize collective bargaining, and the university could face conflicts of interest related to its newfound taxing power.

The idea of a university controlling its local public school district is also nearly untested. One point of comparison might come from the private Boston University, which ran Chelsea Public Schools for 20 years ending in 2008. The partnership ended with mixed results.

Only one thing can be said for certain: Ball State is about to test the limits of optimism about higher education’s power and role in society.

Story continues.