



Mizzou News

Daily Clips Packet

October 29, 2015



Gene Therapy Could Treat Debilitating Form Of Muscular Dystrophy

Duchenne muscular dystrophy is a debilitating genetic disorder that has garnered much attention lately as the U.S. Food and Drug Administration prepares to review two experimental drugs that could soon treat some patients with the degenerative muscle disease.

Now, a team of researchers at the University of Missouri claims to have successfully treated dogs with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) using gene therapy, which involves the delivery of new genetic material in an attempt to cure disease. The researchers say the positive results could pave the way for human clinical trials within the next few years.

DMD is a form of muscular dystrophy that appears almost exclusively in boys, with about one in 3,600 being affected by the disease. Duchenne patients have a genetic mutation that renders their bodies unable to make functional dystrophin, a key protein found in skeletal and heart muscles. Without enough usable dystrophin, these muscles become damaged after repeatedly contracting and relaxing over time, causing muscle weakness and heart problems. Boys affected with the disease lose their ability to walk and breathe as they age.

Typically, gene therapy uses neutralized viruses – those that cannot cause disease – as vectors, or vehicles, to carry DNA into cells. As part of their replication cycle, all viruses attack their host cells and introduce new genetic material, leaving behind basic instructions on how to produce more copies of the virus. By tapping into this natural mechanism, scientists can use inactivated viruses to carry good genes into a patient's cell.

But dystrophin is one of the largest genes in the human body, making it difficult for researchers to devise a way to deliver the entire gene using a traditional vector. So investigators at the University of Missouri realized they had to take a different approach. In previous research, they developed a miniature version of the dystrophin gene called a microgene, which showed a protective effect in the muscles of mice. Using this microgene as a starting point, the team worked for more than 10 years to develop a strategy that could safely deliver the micro-dystrophin to every muscle in a dog afflicted by the disease.

In a small preclinical trial involving three dogs, the MU team used a common virus called adeno-associated virus (AAV), which is not known to cause disease, to deliver the micro-dystrophin to Duchenne-affected dogs. The dogs were injected with the gene therapy when they were 2-3 months old and just starting to show signs of DMD. The dogs are now 6-7 months old, and the researchers report that they continue to develop normally. The results are published in the journal *Human Molecular Genetics*.

“The virus we are using is one of the most common viruses; it is also a virus that produces no symptoms in the human body, making this a safe way to spread the dystrophin gene throughout the body,” said Dongsheng Duan, the study leader and the Margaret Proctor Mulligan Professor in Medical Research at the MU School of Medicine, in a statement. “These dogs develop DMD naturally in a similar manner as humans. It’s important to treat DMD early before the disease does a lot of damage as this therapy has the greatest impact at the early stages in life.”

AAV was used more than a decade ago to treat dystrophic mice, but translation to larger mammals has been challenging. The only reported attempt was performed in newborn DMD dogs. The MU investigators believe success in their preclinical study will lay the foundation for human tests.

Dogs have been used to study cancer and other human diseases because disease progression in these animals often mimics what happens in the human body. The MU researchers used dogs to model DMD because dogs have a body size similar to that of an affected boy.

Still, human clinical trials could be years away, and patient advocates are hoping to see a DMD drug on the market before then.

In the meantime, companies like BioMarin and Sarepta are developing drugs for DMD – drisapersen and eteplirsen, respectively. Both companies were expected to face an FDA hearing review in November to determine the fate of their investigational drugs. But recently, the FDA has decided to instead conduct the hearings separately, with BioMarin scheduled for November and Sarepta slated for January.

PTC Therapeutics is also developing a treatment, but this month the New Jersey firm announced that its drug, ataluren, failed a main goal in a Phase III trial, missing its primary endpoint of significantly improving patients’ performance on a six-minute walk test compared with placebo.



Students voice frustration with potential library fee at forum

By Megan Favignano

Wednesday, October 28, 2015 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri students soon will vote on a proposed library fee that, once fully implemented, would use about \$13 million from students to stop MU libraries from falling behind, library officials said.

John Kennedy, a doctoral student at MU, said graduate students appreciate the libraries but are concerned about adding more student fees.

“Quite frankly, we’re tapped out. Especially graduate students,” Kennedy said at a forum Tuesday.

While Kennedy said graduate students see the role of libraries and use them, he was puzzled by the need for additional funding.

“From looking at the mission of the university, I have a hard time believing that after classroom instruction, that libraries aren’t No. 2 budget priority,” he said.

Starting at 5 p.m. Nov. 9, students will be able to vote on whether to allow the fee, which will pay for modernized spaces, expanded library collections, services and staffing. Students have until 5 p.m. Nov. 11 to vote.

Matt Gaunt, director of advancement with MU Libraries, answered student questions about the proposed fee and the library’s plans should it receive the additional funds at the Tuesday night forum in Ellis Auditorium.

The library proposal calls for a \$15 per credit hour fee by the 2021-2022 school year. The fee gradually would be phased in over six years, starting at \$5 per credit hour next school year. Once the fee is fully implemented, the library’s revenue would increase to about \$30.7 million. MU Libraries’ revenues for fiscal year 2014 were about \$17.7 million.

With the fee, the libraries could renovate spaces at Ellis Library and the eight specialized libraries on campus. The fee would allow the library to add 40 positions. In the past 15 years, Gaunt said library staffing has decreased by 25 percent while enrollment has increased by 50 percent.

“We’ve asked librarians to do more work for more people, and we’ve done it without giving them raises,” Gaunt said. “We have squeezed the budget at the library.”

The library’s proposal includes a compensation plan for staff. The fee also would raise the collections budget from about \$8 million to \$13 million, which Gaunt said would bring MU in line with its peers in the Association of American Universities.

The Association of Research Libraries, Gaunt said, ranks MU’s investment in libraries lowest among its peer land-grant universities in the AAU.

Kristin Torres, a graduate student and library ambassador, spoke in favor of the fee but said she feels pushed into a corner. “The university wants to say it has these priorities for research and

AAU ... but then it shoulders the burden onto the students,” Torres said. “I’ll probably vote for this is because I ... don’t want to see what this doomsday scenario is. I worry for the reputation of the university.”

Gaunt said the library is the only academic unit at MU that doesn’t levy a fee. The library sought student input as it developed its proposed improvement plan and fee structure.

“Fees are important to everything that happens at this university,” Gaunt said.

Gaunt said student input on the future of MU libraries is imperative. The library created a university libraries student advisory council last week. If the fee passes, the newly formed group will provide input as MU libraries moves forward with its plan.

If students don’t approve the fee, Gaunt said the 25-member group will help the library decide what to cut.

“If this fee doesn’t pass, we will reduce our hours, we know we’ll have to cut our collections and we know we’ll cut staff further,” Gaunt said.

the maneater

With a lack of administrative support, students accept voting in favor of library fee

In preparation for the quickly approaching vote on Nov. 10, a second forum discussing the potential \$15 per credit hour library fee was held Oct. 27 in Ellis Auditorium.

This follow-up forum to the one held on Oct. 15 was much smaller than the first, with around 25-30 attendees. **The goal of the forum was also different; Matt Gaunt, director of advancement for MU libraries, gave about 15 minutes of overview of the fee before moving to an open forum discussion.**

The first forum started with the slogan “great universities have great libraries,” and focused on supporting the fee. Gaunt said that this second forum was not intended to convince students to vote for the fee, but it was a place to hear concerns.

“If you have a view that is on the other side, if you’re not ‘I’m in,’ you don’t have to ask a question,” Gaunt said to open the forum. “You can make a statement. This is a chance for us all to have a conversation.”

If passed, the fee would institute a \$5 per credit hour charge to students starting in the summer of 2016. From there, it would raise \$2 every year until reaching a maximum of \$15 per credit hour in 2022. This fee would be supported entirely by the student body of MU, which became a major talking point of the forum.

A question raised by many students was why the responsibility of supporting the library fell on students as opposed to administrators.

“When (Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin) came into this position, he quickly learned that there were not revenues within the campus budget structure to take away from departments and give to the library,” Gaunt said in response. “So his response was ‘you have to get a fee,’ because he’s not seeing anywhere else for revenues to come from.”

Gaunt said that while student fees would be paying for a majority of renovations, administration would eventually move to do their part by finding funding for an off-site storage unit.

Gaunt addressed the fact that Loftin has not yet attended any forums for the fee.

“I think he feels like he’s a lightning rod for criticism and that he would do more harm than good,” Gaunt said. “So we’ve been encouraged to reach out to students, and if this fee doesn’t pass, we at least have that from the effort.”

There was also a general air of defeat from graduate students who made up the majority of attendees at the forum. Many expressed their dissatisfaction with the efforts made by administration at MU to find other forms of funding.

“I think for a lot of graduate students, a significant number of us are graduate student employees, and so we’re living on very, very small stipends,” said Alex Howe, graduate student and Graduate Professional Council treasurer. “Any change in cost of attendance for school is going to affect us a bit more significantly than the majority of undergrads. \$40 a month just doesn’t exist in my budget.”

Another concern voiced by graduate students was the buildup of fees from different colleges within MU, as well as costs of attending. One fee which garnered a significant amount of attention was the supplemental fee for graduate students from the College of Engineering called the Engineering Excellence Fee, which is \$31.50 per credit hour for residents and \$73.50 for non-residents.

Gaunt and others in support of the library fee made it clear that the library fee is not in the same category as supplemental fees like the Engineering Excellence Fee. The library fee would technically be considered an activities fee.

“Graduate student employees in Arts and Sciences, for example, receive a waiver on the supplemental fee that is called the Arts and Sciences Course Fee,” Howe said. “By contrast, graduate student employees in engineering do not receive a waiver for the Engineering Excellence Fee.”

One question posed during the forum by Howe was where the line for student fees stops and how many services on campus would be supported by student fees. Howe claimed that one question Loftin asked of the Budget Allocation Advisory Council was what actions could be put to student fees.

Gaunt said the implementation of acts such as Senate Bill 389, which capped tuition rates at the Consumer Price Index, made many actions subject to funding by student fees.

“It really comes down to two things: state support of the university and then the state’s intrusion upon our ability to increase tuition,” Gaunt said. “There just aren’t revenue options for people who run the university. It almost doesn’t matter in some ways if it was tuition or fee, it just comes down to if the amount is reasonable.”

The last major concern expressed was whether or not there could be legislation passed to help the university receive the funding it needs to support the library.

“The library receives funding partially through the general operating budget,” said Rachel Bauer, vice president of the Graduate Professional Council. “That general operating budget does come from allocations from the state. So, as we’ve seen in the last couple of years, the state is cutting back on some of those allocations and so the budget at the university is getting smaller. When the budget is getting smaller, that’s going to affect every part of the institution and it’s hitting the library hard.”

Organizations that currently work on lobbying for legislation are the Associated Students of the University of Missouri and GPC.

As the forum drew to a close, there was a feeling of resignation surrounding the student attendees. With no administrative support for the library at the current moment, many students felt that it was clear they would have to support the library without assistance.

the maneater

Discussion surrounding Jefferson statue a plus for people petitioning

Student groups have formed petitions both in support of and against the statue.

The statue of Thomas Jefferson sits on a bench just outside the Residence on the Quad, gazing at out at the quad he inspired. As one of the writers of the Declaration of Independence, he fittingly has a quill in his right hand, in mid-scribble on a piece of paper.

Now, several groups on campus are using Jefferson's tools, pen and paper, against him: to determine whether his statue should stay on campus.

On Oct. 20, the MU College Republicans organized a #StandWithJefferson movement and started a petition to keep the statue in the Quad, which 143 people signed during the two-hour event. Two weeks earlier on Oct. 7, members of the University of Missouri Student Coalition for Critical Action organized the #PostYourStateOfMind movement. They posted sticky notes labeling Jefferson as a "slave owner," "misogynist" and "rapist."

Graduate student Maxwell Little started a petition to remove the statue, which 106 people have signed since early August. He said he started the petition because he believes the statue symbolizes a separation of class and race.

MU is the first state university built on land bought in the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson's epitaph has rested at MU since the late 1800s. In 2013, the Smithsonian restored the grave marker, which was rededicated Oct. 9.

The College Republicans draped an American flag on the statue's shoulders and posted sticky notes that read: "Thank You," "Freedom Fighter" and "President." They worked in conjunction with Amy Lutz of the Young America's Foundation to generate the idea for the event.

After reading some of the sticky notes posted by the #PostYourStateOfMind event, MU College Republican President Skyler Roundtree made several counterclaims about Jefferson.

According to the website of Thomas Jefferson's plantation in Virginia, Jefferson fiercely opposed slavery, calling it an "abominable crime." Jefferson owned slaves — he inherited them from his father — and did not participate in the formal slave trade. However, he did sell some of the slaves who ran away from his plantation.

He signed a law in 1807 prohibiting "the importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States," and endorsed a gradual emancipation process in his private journals.

Jefferson also drafted the first Virginia Constitution and made an effort to end slavery in his draft in 1776: "No person hereafter coming into this county shall be held within the same in slavery under any pretext whatever."

This draft was not adopted by the state.

In another Virginia State Constitution draft in 1783, Jefferson again tried to end slavery. "Nor to permit the introduction of any more slaves to reside in this state, or the continuance of slavery beyond the generation which shall be living on the 31st. day of December 1800; all persons born after that day being hereby declared free," he wrote.

Little cited the fact that Jefferson publicly denounced slavery but owned approximately 267 slaves over his lifetime, which helped him become the second-richest man in Abarmarle county

in Virginia. While Jefferson did not set the majority of his slaves free upon his death, he did grant freedom to seven slaves in his will.

Of the seven slaves he freed, at least five were related to Sally Hemmings, who was a descendant of Jefferson's father-in-law, according to several sources. DNA tests between Jefferson's descendants and Hemmings' descendants were inconclusive, but it is well documented that Jefferson may have been the father of her four children, all of whom he freed between 1822-1826.

Roundtree wanted to focus the discussion on the positive side of Jefferson.

"Thomas Jefferson in history stands as a memoir of what we came from and what we fought through," Roundtree said. "By no means whatsoever is our nation's history perfect or flawless, but it serves as a memoir to what we've overcome and I feel like statues (like Jefferson's) are a memoir of that."

And the support for the Jefferson statue from other students encouraged Roundtree.

"A lot of times people just accept the status quo without looking into it, so when I see all these students gathering together, it makes me feel like taking a stand has importance," Roundtree said. "Whenever we stand together and voice our unanimous opinion, I think it's really cool when people can come together under that."

While the #StandWithJefferson movement was a peaceful event, later that day, things got heated on Twitter. The College Republicans tweeted a picture posing with the statue and petition, and Twitter user @kennedyxpress called out club member Jasmine Wells.

"And a black girl got the nerve to have been in the picture and sign the petition #UncleTom," she tweeted.

Reuben Faloughi, the founder of the Student Coalition for Critical Action and an active member of social justice movements this school year, said people need to be more cognizant of and careful about what they say.

"I think we have to be careful to criticize ideas and not people," Faloughi said. "Because to an extent, we're all miseducated in our own different ways, and there's a certain way to deliver certain messages. But I definitely understand the sentiment from both sides."

The notes sparked discussion with people passing by the statue on their way to class.

"The point of that action was to engage in discussion, not necessarily to remove the statue," Faloughi said. "For people who were unaware, they were able to walk away with some knowledge."

Little said he believes the statue symbolizes UM System President Tim Wolfe's views toward minority students.

“As you can see it takes peaceful demonstrative action for him to acknowledge our concerns after several attempts of reaching out formally,” Little said in an email. “It symbolizes the hypocrisy here at MU, the recent claim of ‘One Mizzou’ is a clear example.”

While Little knows that the petition may not necessarily succeed, he already sees the petition as a success because of the awareness it has created.

“Students are being heard, not only by MU executive administrators, but we are being heard nationally,” Little said. “#ConcernedStudent1950 here at MU are being heard and we are pushing for more shared governance. Even if the petition does not succeed, historically marginalized student concerns are being addressed by putting peaceful pressure on university administrators’ to act and not just talk. This is a great accomplishment.”

Anyone who wants to participate in either movement may sign either petition. Little’s petition to remove the statue is here, and those who want to sign the MU College Republicans’ petition to keep the statue can attend their meetings 7 p.m. Wednesdays.

the maneater

MU Coalition of Graduate Workers in the process of unionizing

Eric Scott: “If we aren’t able to devote full attention to working, it lessens our ability to provide high quality education to undergraduates.”

The Coalition of Graduate Workers, a branch of the Forum on Graduate Rights, is in the process of unionization after affiliating with the Missouri National Education Association and the National Education Association.

The coalition’s goal is to organize graduate students to give them power to improve their working conditions through collective bargaining.

Eric Scott, co-chairman of the coalition, said he has two visions for the unionization of graduate student employees: to secure collective bargaining rights and create a good legal contract with protections and benefits, and to create a place where graduate students come together to work and advocate for themselves.

A collective bargaining agreement secures dignified working conditions, benefits and protections for all student workers. Collective bargaining is the process by which wages, hours, rules and working conditions are negotiated and agreed upon by a union with an employer for all the employees collectively whom it represents.

The Coalition believes this campaign will “create lasting gains for graduate student workers and those who depend on them at MU,” according to a news release dated Oct. 1.

“The bottom line is that our working conditions are undergraduate working conditions,” coalition co-chairman Connor Lewis said. “We want to make sure that undergraduates have access to world-class education.”

Graduate students are mentors and teachers to undergraduates, Scott said.

“If we aren’t able to devote full attention to working, it lessens our ability to provide high quality education to undergraduates,” he said.

The Missouri constitution is unique in stating “that employees shall have the right to organize and to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing,” per Article 1, Section 29.

The coalition recently began collecting signatures to petition for an election on unionization, said Lewis. The coalition has organizers in every department asking for signatures.

Lewis estimates there are around 2,800 graduate student workers at MU. Although the coalition only needs 1,401 signatures to receive the election, Lewis said they are aiming for 2,000.

The coalition is trying to stay flexible with their timeline but “our hope is to make sure we have an election this academic year,” Lewis said.

Scott said the coalition is basing some of its vision off other public universities of the same size in the Midwest.

“Our biggest inspiration is the University of Iowa,” Scott said. “They have been extremely successful in their ways of running and structuring their union.”

Iowa’s union, the Campaign to Organize Graduate Students has been around since spring of 1998 and strives to provide “better healthcare, fair salaries, wavers and a grievance procedure for graduate employees,” according to its website.

(COGS) is involved and invested in keeping itself running. Everyone is active and engaged in the campus rather than just paying dues and voting, Scott said. This is the MU coalition’s hope for its future union.

Lewis said he believes the graduate students’ rights movement has a place with the other social justice movements on campus lately.

“We have a role to play in making sure we have a more equitable campus environment,” Lewis said.

Scott agreed, and is making sure minority graduate students find a home and a voice within the Forum on Graduate Rights and the coalition.

“It’s different in some ways because we’re talking primarily about working conditions and the status of employees,” Scott said. “It’s important for movements to work together to be active and engaged in fighting for social justice on campus.”

However, Scott said some people are hesitant about the idea of a union on campus due to its connotation of retaliation against the university, but he assures there are legal protections against this.

“Every graduate student worker has constitutional rights to organize according to the Missouri constitution,” Scott said. “I hope everyone takes advantage of this right.”

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Strauss: Quiet, please — it's discipline time at Mizzou

By [Joe Strauss](#)
Oct. 29, 2015

Credit Gary Pinkel with offering a master lesson in passer protection.

Or, to be more accurate, a lesson in program protection.

Missouri’s head ball coach went (kind of) public Wednesday morning about his program’s tumultuous quarterback situation as Pinkel confirmed a report in Tuesday’s Post-Dispatch that he has lifted the four-week suspension of former starter Maty Mauk for violating team rules. Just don’t ask Pinkel why he reached the decision now with his program engaging in a scratch-and-sniff offense that advertises a freshman quarterback scrambling behind a dysfunctional line and throwing to a slow-developing receiving corps.

Missouri, at 4-4 no cinch to achieve bowl eligibility, has been party to the lowest-scoring FBS game each of the last two weeks and remains without a touchdown since Oct. 3.

By the time the Tigers tee it up next Thursday night against Mississippi State they’ll have endured more than a month since reaching paydirt.

Pinkel on Tuesday denied any link between Mauk’s reinstatement and his team’s offensive torpor.

Actually, Pinkel addressed virtually nothing related to Mauk’s situation, which consumed seven questions of a truncated five-minute conference call.

“I don’t discuss disciplinary issues,” Pinkel said, as if his refusal to address an issue that has disgusted coaches and teammates will make it go away.

No public record exists for the violation(s) that placed Mauk in exile while the Tigers lost by a combined 40-12 to Florida, Georgia and, yes, Vanderbilt.

In the past, lack of public record has granted Pinkel license to deny, obfuscate and enable. (Do the initials DGB stir the memory?) Pinkel doubled down on the approach Wednesday by reminding reporters, “It’s just the consistency of how we do things. There’s a plan in place if anything happens, what we do and how we handle it. We always do what the right thing is.”

What a gig. No wonder Pinkel is the SEC East’s highest-paid coach. The university receives value for someone who also serves as judge, jury, censor and resident Dr. Phil.

One assumes it was “the right thing” to allow prized receiver Dorial Green-Beckham to remain eligible until he laid his hands on a co-ed in April 2014. DGB already had been part of an on-campus pot bust and was no first-timer to intimidating women. However, when CoMo police filed an incident report — The Humanity! — Pinkel was forced to act within a climate where university abuses of Title IX statutes had become a scalding issue.

The suicide of swimmer Sasha Menu Courey, preceded by an alleged sexual assault against her by members of his program, and failure to investigate an earlier sexual assault by star running back Derrick Washington occurred under Pinkel’s watch.

As in all potential disciplinary cases, the initial choice was to keep it in “family.”

This is, of course, the same coach who had little issue disclosing on national TV James Franklin’s unwillingness to accept an injection of painkiller as the reason for him failing to start a 2012 game. Protection, as we’ve learned this season, can be inconsistent.

Consecutive SEC East titles galvanized Pinkel’s credentials as a coach. No one has won more games at the school. Success has made Pinkel a more likable figure. This appears a step backward.

The most recent incident involving Mauk has become fodder for rampant rumor, most of which concern the player harming himself more than others. If Pinkel chooses not to detail cause for the suspension, fine. Extending the embargo to issues of playing time and why he opted to end Mauk’s exile now only feeds suspicion about motivation.

The coincidence between the suspension and Mauk’s father, Mike, undergoing surgery to address colorectal cancer can’t be ignored.

But neither should Pinkel ignore predictable, responsible and fair questions regarding this latest disciplinary matter.

It has nothing to do with protecting his players to answer where Mauk resides on the depth chart. Discussing his status, however, would ignite speculation about the redshirt junior’s likelihood of transferring and what it means for freshman Drew Lock, the program’s future who has absorbed a black-and-blue present in Mauk’s absence.

Pinkel considered Mauk’s ability to stay sharp when barred from practice as “a disciplinary measure.” That makes about as much sense as closing Tuesday practices due to a “lack of interest” by media. Rubbish.

Safe to say the media’s absence has hardly proved a competitive tonic; the lack of prying eyes dovetails with Mizzou’s touchdown drought.

Pinkel did confirm Mauk would apologize to the team Wednesday afternoon. One wonders if Columbia's Bieber also will be allowed to address his situation to reporters, a reasonable move for a player who for three years has cooperated with the pens-and-lens set in good times and bad.

Mauk's on-field unpredictability exasperated coaches long before his suspension. Whether Pinkel is willing to write off this season to advance development for 2016 is an increasingly salient point. Problems are numerous enough that there appear few guarantees for the '16 offense regardless of who's under center.

Mauk, 17-5 as a starter in pieces of three seasons, carried a 51.8 percent completion rate and an atrophied 5.95 yards per attempt into his suspension. Lock, more comfortable within a pro style offense but less adept at improvisation, owns a 50.7 percent completion rate and 5.02 yards per attempt against four SEC opponents. He's been sacked 15 times and thrown for three touchdowns against as many interceptions.

How different might this season be without the intrigue at quarterback?

"At the end of the day, what I teach our kids in this program — and they're going to apply it for the rest of their life — there's no excuses for anything," Pinkel said. "There's no reasons. We still have a responsibility to win football games. We don't talk about that. We don't say, 'Woe is me' or anything like that at all. We don't do that. Bottom line: Move the next guy over and up."

Arkansas coach Bret Bielema's conference call had run long immediately preceding Pinkel. Bielema disclosed the suspension of two players for spotty class attendance. Pinkel lasted seven questions.

Then, abruptly, before anyone on the conference call could punch "1" to ask another question, he was gone.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia prepares for heavy traffic on game day

ELIZABETH SAWEY, 13 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Bus riders, commuters and Columbia Public Schools students will all feel the effects of the Missouri vs. Mississippi State football game on Nov. 5.

The crowd the 8 p.m. game is expected to draw into town and the traffic congestion it is expected to create will change bus service, parking lot access and schools' closing times.

COMO Connect bus routes

All of COMO Connect's fixed bus routes will be free Nov. 5 until 6 p.m., according to a city news release. The city hopes to reduce the number of personal vehicles on the roads that would cause citywide delays. Daytime and ParaTransit services will end at 6 p.m., two hours earlier than normal.

The city is also offering transportation service to and from the stadium for \$1.50 each way, according to the release. Downtown routes will begin at 6:15 p.m., and all routes starting at hotels, restaurants and shopping centers have set pick-up times, according to the COMO Connect website.

"The bus routes to the stadium make it easy for customers to skip driving, and we hope it helps make a dent in the traffic these events tend to create," Drew Brooks, the city's multi-modal manager, said in the release.

MU

Faculty, students and staff who normally park in lots that are used on football game days will need to move their cars by 4 p.m., said Nathan Hurst, convergence media strategist with the MU News Bureau. Students with passes for these lots were notified by email earlier this month. Faculty that normally park in one of these lots and teach after 4 p.m. have been notified and given alternate parking.

The lots will open to football parking pass-holders at 4:30 p.m. but will need to be cleared for regular parking by 7 a.m. Friday. Hurst recommended that students move their cars to any lots north of Rollins Street and do so earlier than 4 p.m. He said this will alleviate traffic and make it easier for everyone.

Tiger Avenue and Parking Garage #7 structures will not be open to the general public for this game, Hurst said.

All classes on Thursday and Friday will be held as normally scheduled, Hurst said. It is up to each professor to decide whether to cancel a class.

Columbia Public Schools

Public school students will be released from school 2-1/2 hours earlier than normal on Nov. 5 , said Michelle Baumstark, Columbia Public Schools community relations director.

The district decided releasing school early would be the best way to keep buses and young drivers out of football traffic.

"Safety needed to be a priority for us," she said.

The last time students were released from school early for a football game was in 2009 when Missouri played Nebraska on a Thursday night, Baumstark said. University officials told the school district that mid-week games might happen once every three years. The district will take that into consideration when creating school calendars in the future, she said.

Tiger Line Shuttle

MU will adjust the Tiger Line shuttle routes and schedules beginning at 4 p.m., said Tom Stokes, enforcement coordinator for MU. The Hearnese and Reactor Field loops will end at 4 p.m., and the Trowbridge Loop will end at 6 p.m.

The Reactor Field Loop will not run its normal night service at all. The Campus Loop night route will run as normal, excluding the Hearnese Center Loop, Stokes said. Hearnese will be added back to the route one hour after the game ends, he said.

Daily  Mail

**Why a cigarette is so tempting after a drink:
Nicotine undoes the sleepy feeling we get
from alcohol, scientists reveal**

Many pub-goers are tempted by a crafty cigarette when enjoying a well-deserved drink.

But now scientists have shed light onto why drinking alcohol can leave many of us craving a nicotine fix.

Smoking can stop us feeling sleepy when drinking alcohol, a study has found.

Specifically, researchers from the University of Missouri discovered nicotine cancels out the sleep-inducing effect of alcohol.

They claim it could explain why so many drinkers are also smokers.

'One of the adverse effects of drinking alcohol is sleepiness,' said Dr Mahesh Thakkar, lead author of the study.

'However, when used in conjunction with alcohol, nicotine acts as a stimulant to ward off sleep.

'If an individual smokes, then he or she is much more likely to consume more alcohol, and vice-versa. They feed off one another.'

Smoking is a major contributing factor to the development of alcoholism, with more than 85 percent of U.S. adults who are alcohol-dependent also nicotine-dependent.

Previous studies show - when used together - nicotine and alcohol increase the pleasurable side effects.

This is by activating an area of the brain known as the reward centre, leading people to drink and smoke more.

During the latest research, rats were given alcohol and nicotine while fitted with sleep-recording electrodes.

The researchers found the nicotine stimulated a response in the brain which weakened the tiredness induced by alcohol.

According to the World Health Organisation, more than seven million deaths each year are attributed to alcohol and nicotine use.

It is hoped the research will not only be used to help heavy drinkers and smokers, but also for people with mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, which often is associated with smoking.

'We have found that nicotine weakens the sleep-inducing effects of alcohol by stimulating a response in an area of the brain known as the basal forebrain,' said Dr Thakkar.

'By identifying the reactions that take place when people smoke and drink, we may be able to use this knowledge to help curb alcohol and nicotine addiction.'

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

FACT CHECK: Lt. Gov. Kinder right about Nixon's veto overrides

ALLISON GRAVES, 19 hrs ago

“After today, @GovJayNixon will have been overridden more times than all previous governors in #MO history #moleg”

--Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, *Sept. 16 tweet*

The Missouri General Assembly entered its yearly veto session on Sept. 16. In it, the Republican-led body voted to override 12 bills vetoed by Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat.

Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, a GOP candidate for governor, said the amount of bills overridden in the Sept. 16 veto session represented a historic achievement for Nixon.

"After today, @GovJayNixon will have been overridden more times than all previous governors in #MO history #moleg," Kinder said in a tweet.

We wondered if Kinder was right. Is Nixon Missouri's most overridden governor of all time?

We reached out to Kinder's director of communications, Jay Eastlick, who sent us a list of Missouri governors and the number of times they were overridden. He gathered the information from Anne Rottmann, an administrator at the the Senate Legislative Library.

Before the Constitution of 1875, Eastlick said, a simple majority was enough to override a veto. Veto sessions became annual events in 1989. During a veto session, the General Assembly may

override any veto issued after the regular session if two-thirds of the members in each chamber agree. The list includes nine governors.

It turns out Kinder is right. Not only is Nixon the most overridden governor in Missouri history, more of his vetoes have been overridden than those of all previous governors combined. (The chart below lists Missouri governors and the number of overrides of vetoed legislation. The chart does not include overrides of line item appropriations.)

Nixon vetoes have been overridden 34 times in the past six years: one each in 2011 and 2012; nine in 2013; 11 in 2014; and 12 this year. Between 2012 and 2013, there was a significant spike in vetoes.

Legislative makeup under Nixon

Of the 34 total overrides, 23 occurred after 2013. That's almost 68 percent of all overrides. Missouri's political climate and the makeup of the General Assembly, especially the House of Representatives, has undergone a noteworthy change during Nixon's current term.

The numbers show a small steady increase in Republican seats in the House. We wondered about the significance of this shift in power, so we reached out to a few experts to speak about the veto process and Missouri's political climate during Nixon's time as governor.

Marvin Overby, an American politics professor at MU, said the partisan divide does have an impact on veto overrides.

"Any executive (governor or president) facing a legislature in which both chambers are controlled by the opposition will likely be in a position to a) use the veto pen more often and b) face a larger number of overrides."

Nixon faced a Republican-dominated General Assembly for nearly half his tenure as governor.

Between 2009 and 2012, the Republicans in the House of Representatives did not hold a veto-proof majority because they didn't occupy two-thirds of the chamber. Every year since,

Republicans have maintained a two-thirds margin in the General Assembly. The Senate has maintained a two-thirds margin since Nixon's first year in 2009.

In addition to the legislative makeup, Peverill Squire, an American politics professor at MU, said the relationship between the governor and the legislature contributes to number of vetoes and veto overrides.

"The governor has not enjoyed a close relationship with the legislature and that has contributed to the number of bills he has vetoed and the number of those vetoes that have been overridden," Squire said. "But partisanship rather than personal relationships really drives the number of overrides."

So, legislative makeup affects veto overrides and the bills that are vetoed in the first place, but is Kinder's claim significant?

Overby said there are many ways to interpret the number of times Nixon has been overridden.

"From Kinder's perspective, the number is notable because it is the most in state history. But from another perspective, it would be reasonable to ask about the percentage of vetoes overridden," Overby said.

Except for 2015, Nixon vetoes were sustained more often than they were overridden.

Although 34 veto overrides is a historic number, Squire said it is worth noting that the GOP failed to override the governor on a number of key issues.

Overby echoed Squire and said the more interesting question is how Nixon can sustain any vetoes given the makeup of the General Assembly.

Overby said the reason vetoes were sustained depends on a multitude of factors: "a) Nixon's skill in choosing which bills to veto, b) splits within the GOP caucuses in the chambers and c) the fact that vetoes and overrides are not always sincerely about policy ... sometimes they are about politics."

Scott Holste, Nixon's press secretary, noted that Kinder's claims leaves out details.

"...the General Assembly has sustained several vetoes on the Governor's key priorities, including Right to Work in 2015, two school voucher bills, and numerous tax break giveaways that would have done serious damage to the state budget..." Holste said.

Holste also said lumping all the veto overrides together misses the point.

"The bills that have been vetoed have been vetoed for a number of different reasons," he said. "In some instances, they are vetoed because of technical errors; others are vetoed because of constitutional problems; others because of unintended consequences."

Our ruling

Kinder said Nixon has been overridden "more times than all previous governors in Missouri history." Thanks to the growing Republican majority in the legislature and the number of bills Nixon vetoed, that is indeed correct.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Andrew Fastow to give ethics lecture on Friday

JACK WITTHAUS, 12 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Andrew Fastow will speak at the Trulaske College of Business on Friday, but don't feel bad if you didn't know about it.

Not even the Kenneth L. Lay Chair in MU's Economics Department knew until Wednesday when a reporter called him that Fastow, the former chief financial officer of Enron, would be speaking on campus. Lay, who grew up in Columbia, was Enron's founder and chief executive officer.

The event has been promoted on posters throughout the lobbies in Cornell Hall. But few outside the Business School seem to have heard about Fastow's visit, and details about the talk have been hard to come by.

Those who know he's coming have mixed opinions about his talk at the Orin Ethics Symposium titled, "Pride and Repentance: The Enron Story."

Trulaske spokeswoman Ashley Burden said in an emailed statement that Vairam Arunachalam, director of the School of Accountancy, invited Fastow as a relevant speaker for the ethics symposium.

She said she couldn't speak to any negative reaction to his talk. She also said she couldn't find out by Wednesday's deadline how much Fastow is being paid to speak.

Fastow has given speeches at ethics symposiums around the country since his release from prison in 2011. When he was CFO, Enron was one of the biggest companies in the U.S. The energy trading company reported billions of dollars in revenue and had about 20,000 employees.

In 2001, Enron declared bankruptcy, and it was later discovered that the company was involved in a massive accounting fraud, with the help of former "Big 5" accounting firm Arthur Andersen. Company stock prices plunged, thousands lost their jobs and many of Enron's highest ranking officers were slapped with federal charges.

Fastow, now 53, pleaded guilty to two counts of wire and securities fraud and spent six years in federal prison for his involvement with Enron. He was released in late 2011.

Kenneth Lay went to Hickman High School and studied economics at MU. He died suddenly in 2006, months before his scheduled sentencing after his conviction for six counts of fraud and conspiracy and four counts of bank fraud.

The Kenneth L. Lay Chair, Joseph Haslag, said he's grateful for the resources Lay gave to support basic research and to hire faculty for the Economics Department. He said he hopes he's doing wise and scholarly things with the resources.

Haslag said he applauded Fastow's redemptive process but didn't have any particular opinion on his visit.

Many people within the Business School said they were looking forward to hearing Fastow speak. Assistant finance professor Adam Yore said he plans to attend the talk.

Yore does research in corporate governance, and Enron is often cited as an example of corporate failure, he said.

With high pressure to perform, Yore said people in corporate governance might feel inclined to cut corners. He said he thinks Fastow will teach him and students a lot.

"There's no textbook on (living an ethical lifestyle)," Yore said. "How do you teach that?"

Accountancy assistant professor Nate Newton said he saw positives in hearing about Fastow's experience. But he said he didn't believe Fastow should be paid to speak.

In an emailed statement, Burden said she expects "good attendance" at the event Friday.

"He's got good information to share," she said.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

'Scary Tales' helps locals learn about Columbia's spooky history

JENNIFER ALDRICH, 9 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Cindy Mustard stood in front of the Sanford F. Conley House on MU's campus Wednesday night and told the legend of the ghost that haunts its walls.

Mustard is the great-granddaughter of Sanford F. Conley, and legend says that Mustard's Great Aunt Sally died when the house was built. Mustard lived in the house for two years and was told to never open the attic door because the "nasty, cranky old lady's" ghost could escape from the bricks between which she is said to be buried.

About 60 people toured Columbia on Wednesday night as a part of the "Scary Tales" tour hosted by the Columbia Historic Preservation Commission.

The secretary of the commission, Brian Treece, guided the tour to help teach people about Columbia's history in a unique way.

"When you're able to reacquaint the public with history, they are more inclined to preserve it," Treece said. "The tour develops a connection between people and history."

Treece also said that Halloween and scary stories helped make for an interesting depiction of history.

"Halloween presents an opportunity to share history in a new, modern, compelling way that you don't always get in a textbook," Treece said.

Stops on the tour included the "Residence on the Quad," current home of Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin. The house is supposedly haunted by Alice Read, the wife of former university president, Daniel Read. According to Treece, Alice is a "happy ghost." Treece said that according to "The Haunted Broonslick: Ghosts, Ghouls and Monsters of Missouri's Heartland" by Mary Collins Barile, Alice's residence in the home is her "permanent homecoming."

Jackie and Robert Remis of Columbia attended the tour. They had been on “spooky” tours across the United States and even in London, but this was their first in Columbia. They especially like the storytelling aspect of themed tours.

“For a tour, it ends up being more theatrical. And the emotional aspect of seeing something makes you remember things better,” Robert Remis said. “It’s a fun way of learning.”

Jackie Remis said that being able to be up close to the buildings and the history makes the experience more fun.

“You can appreciate the architecture, historical perspective,” Jackie Remis said.

Treece pointed out other historical, and supposedly haunted, places, including the Columns, the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity house, McAlester Annex, the Shack, and McAlester and Parker Halls.

The last stop on the tour, the Missouri Theatre, is said to be haunted by an opera singer named Carlotta, who died after falling offstage. According to legend, a construction worker was standing on scaffolding when he suddenly slipped. He was caught by another set of scaffolding, and believed it was Carlotta that saved him.

“Scary Tales” is one of four tours hosted this year by the commission. The third tour, “Vocabulary of Architecture,” will be at 10 a.m. on Nov. 7.

The Chronicle of Higher Education

How a 40-Year-Old Idea Became Higher Education’s Next Big Thing

By Dan Berrett

OCTOBER 28, 2015

NO MU MENTION

One of higher education's elder statesmen could see a shake-up coming. An odd bit of administrative protocol, the credit hour, had outlived its usefulness, he thought. It forced students to bide their time for weeks, months, semesters — even if they had already mastered the material.

They should be free to move through college by demonstrating their achievement, he wrote, instead of deferring to time spent in class. A new day was dawning, wrote Walter A. Jessup, who was the leader of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching — the group responsible for creating the credit hour in the first place.

"American higher education," he predicted, "appears to be well on its way to another stage of development."

That was 1937.

American higher education still hasn't gotten there.

Meanwhile, the concern that Mr. Jessup outlined has only intensified in the 78 years since, magnified by the growing conviction that a bachelor's degree is now the ticket to the middle class, the escalating costs of earning a degree, and shifts in demographics that are sending more adult students and those from first-generation and low-income backgrounds to the nation's campuses.

These pressures are intersecting with another mounting concern: educational quality. Together, these forces are feeding an unusual bipartisan consensus, and they are prompting higher-education leaders to take a fresh look at an old idea: competency-based education. It allows students to make progress at their own pace by demonstrating what they know and can do instead of hewing to the timeline of the semester. While this model has long been used to expand access and lower costs, particularly for adult students, it is now attracting attention as a way to shore up academic rigor.

But this surge in interest has also sparked questions. How effective a method is it for students with varying levels of preparedness, or is it really only suited for the academically talented who can learn on their own? Can it assure educational quality, or is it just being offered to the disadvantaged as a cut-rate version of the full college experience?

The story of how competency-based education has become the latest Next Big Thing after being around for four decades is a tale of timing, of money and politics, and of shifting academic norms.

Advocates for competency-based learning have seen Big Things get hyped in the past, only to flame out. Still, they hope that this model of learning can ultimately achieve a grand goal: staking a claim to, defining, and substantiating quality in higher education.

Just maybe, the new stage of development that Mr. Jessup envisioned decades ago may finally be arriving.

A generation or two after Mr. Jessup's prediction, a different sort of challenge confronted higher education. The end of the Vietnam War and broadening opportunities for women meant that adults who were older than the core demographic of 18- to 21-year-olds were flocking to college. But with jobs and families, they did not have the luxury of spending hours each week in a classroom. Competency-based education as a concept began in that era, the 1970s, with programs emerging to serve those older students. Places like Excelsior College (then Regents College), Thomas Edison State College, DePaul University's School for New Learning, and the State University of New York's Empire State College were among the first to offer such programs. They wanted to expand access.

Then, as state support for higher education dropped and tuition and student-loan debt rose, so did concerns about cost.

Those two goals, access and cost, have dominated years of efforts to remake higher education. Now, a third goal — educational quality — is driving change.

Competency-based learning may be able to achieve all three goals, say its supporters. And, they add, it is quality that matters most. "Its potential is for a much higher level of quality and a greater attention to rigor," says Alison Kadlec, senior vice president of Public Agenda, a nonprofit organization that is playing a leading role in the growth of this model.

"The worst possible outcome," she said, "would be that competency-based education becomes a subprime form of learning."

Ms. Kadlec and others see historical parallels to past efforts that have hit snags. Online education comes up often as a cautionary tale. In its early days, its full potential, to connect students and make their learning visible, often remained unfulfilled; instead, many instructors simply replicated their lectures online.

That account was echoed by Linda M. Harasim, a professor of communications at Simon Fraser University, who was an early adopter of online teaching and has chronicled its evolution. She initially hoped that online teaching would enable students to collaborate and network with one another, and make education more effective.

Instead, she says, administrators saw online learning as a way to cut costs, particularly in its early years. "Online was simply more efficient," Ms. Harasim says. "We didn't think about it being more effective."

The trajectory of community colleges decades ago also suggests parallels to competency-based learning today. Community colleges dwelt for decades on the margins until their moment arrived, in the 1960s, with an average of one new community college opening nearly each week.

The goal of increased access inspired much of the growth, says John E. Roueche, president of the Roueche Graduate Center at National American University and an emeritus professor of community-college leadership at the University of Texas at Austin. "So many colleges got committed to notions of equity, access, and opportunity, and 'Come on in the water's fine,'" he says. But they paid too little attention, he argues, to ensuring that students succeeded once they got there. Quality suffered.

"The results of that were just pitiful," he says. "Atrocious attrition."

For years, access and affordability continued to be the chief goals for competency-based-education providers. They inspired the founding, in 1997, of Western Governors University, when the governors of 11 states signed on to a virtual college that would allow students, chiefly in remote areas, to acquire skills for in-demand jobs in fields like information technology, teaching, and nursing. People could gain inexpensive access to a practically focused education at a time of decreasing public spending. The model called for technology-enabled, self-paced learning using the competency-based approach.

The idea took a little while to gain traction. Enrollment didn't crack 1,000 for four years, but then it took off.

A decade later, Western Governors had more than 40,000 students. This year, enrollment topped 62,000.

Western Governors has become the colossus of the field, and it has spawned, in unforeseen ways, much of the recent interest in competency-based learning.

A decade ago, during debate over the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, Western Governors pressed the federal government to tweak regulations so that financial aid could be awarded to students in competency-based programs that weren't tied closely to the credit hour. Instead, money could be made available for something called direct assessment. It meant that a college could measure what a student knows and can do, and allow the student to proceed and receive aid accordingly. Mastery of skills or content could be demonstrated by things like projects, papers, examinations, presentations, performances, and portfolios.

The tweak was one item among a slew of regulatory decisions made about accreditation. But it forced people to think through how a pure competency-based approach fits in the context of traditional regulations.

"It was," says Michael J. Offerman, a former president of Capella University who advised the Education Department on the new rules, "the first time any of us had to wrestle with what direct assessment meant." No groundswell of interest followed the change. Western Governors even declined to use it; the credit hour was still the common currency, and the government had yet to issue guidance to help colleges make sense of the new language.

Seven years later, Southern New Hampshire University became the first institution to apply for consideration as a direct-assessment provider. It was approved the following year, and just a few others have followed. But what ultimately mattered most was the broader signal that the Education Department was receptive to innovation. Momentum has clearly accelerated since then.

In 2013, the University of Wisconsin started offering a homegrown version of the competency-based model, called the Flexible Option. It allows students to earn competency-based versions of an associate degree in arts and science, and bachelor's degrees in nursing, biomedical sciences diagnostic imaging, and information science and technology. Nearly 500 have enrolled.

For many observers, Wisconsin's foray into competency-based learning marked that model's entry into higher education's mainstream. For months, administrators in Wisconsin's extension program fielded multiple calls each day from other colleges seeking advice.

Other public institutions, including Purdue University and the University of Michigan's medical school in Ann Arbor, have since adopted competency-based approaches in interdisciplinary and health programs, respectively. Last year, the University of Maine at Presque Isle made this approach the standard for all of its programs.

Meanwhile, state and federal politicians have been trumpeting competency-based learning's promise.

President Obama has highlighted it. In a major policy speech in Buffalo in 2013, he laid out his agenda for higher education. His ideas for rating colleges and tying students' loan repayment to their earnings dominated the headlines, but the president also made a point of encouraging colleges to innovate. His first example was competency-based learning, referring specifically to what Southern New Hampshire and Wisconsin were doing.

"The idea would be if you're learning the material faster, you can finish faster, which means you pay less and you save money," he said, to applause.

Southern New Hampshire and Wisconsin belong to a network of providers that are working together to lead the competency-based model's growth. Instead of being isolated actors doing their own thing, says Amy Laitinen, director for higher education at New America, a think tank, institutions are working together. "They want to affiliate and grow the movement and the field," she says.

Ms. Laitinen's 2012 paper, "Cracking the Credit Hour," has been widely credited with crystallizing the shortcomings of the existing system and the need for an alternative (she also seized on Walter Jessup's and the Carnegie foundation's early recognition of the credit hour's failings).

Persuasion alone won't spark the growth of competency-based education. Its advocates have come to believe that it also needs a firm push. "It could play out organically," Ms. Laitinen says, "but we want it to happen intentionally."

The Lumina Foundation has been a major player in this bid for intentionality, donating \$13 million over the past two years, chiefly to support efforts to bring together institutions and policy makers to share ideas about how to spread programs and remove regulatory barriers.

In contrast to many past efforts to spark change, Lumina's motivation to support competency-based learning grew out of concerns about educational quality, says Kevin M. Corcoran, Lumina's strategy director. That mode of education emerged as a natural outgrowth of Lumina's work in recent years to champion two efforts, the Degree Qualifications Profile, which sets out the skills and knowledge that students should achieve during their pursuit of different degrees, and Tuning, which seeks to determine the core material and skills for particular disciplines. About 600 colleges nationally have adopted these two efforts, and faculty members have been at their core, defining and assessing what matters in student learning.

Lumina and Public Agenda have modeled their work on health-care reform. Each quarter, they bring together academic leaders, usually at the Hilton at O'Hare airport, to kick off recurring 90-day cycles in which they design experiments, analyze the results, and report on findings. The group has focused on big questions: How can it identify good program design or assessment? How do colleges' processes and business practices need to change? What evidence base do they need to demonstrate educational quality?

Some basic principles of quality and rigor have emerged, says Charla S. Long, a higher-education consultant working with Public Agenda. Among them: careful planning of courses and programs, with faculty members' roles designed to take full advantage of their time and talents. Assessments, she added, should be reliable and tied to what matters to each discipline. They should be administered frequently, informally, and summatively, not as a single, high-stakes exam. "One test isn't quality," she says.

While these principles have been guiding many programs, the people who run them recognize that solid evidence is still needed. "We haven't had enough players to substantiate data," says Ms. Long.

But that is starting to change.

New programs keep emerging. A pair of participants in the Lumina-funded network started offering a degree together in organizational leadership last year, to stave off an anticipated shortfall of middle managers in the Rio Grande Valley. The partnership of South Texas College and Texas A&M University at Commerce has experienced unexpectedly strong demand, and some friction with faculty, both of which illustrate the model's promise and the lingering barriers to change. Students can pursue the degree on either campus. South Texas's program began last year with 40 students, and 22 of them graduated. Administrators projected that enrollment this year would double, to 80. Instead, it hit 181.

Faculty members at both colleges worked together to develop curriculum, determining what students should be able to do at the end of their courses and then working backward to identify the learning outcomes for general-education requirements and for specialized subjects like organizational behavior and change management. Pearson, the publishing company, is responsible for providing the assessments and assignments for each competency.

Not all faculty members have bought into the idea. Five of the approximately 30 instructors who initially committed to the program have dropped out, says Kevin M. Peek, an economics professor and chair of the bachelor's program at South Texas.

"Even more problematic," he continued, were the several others who were "unwilling to even consider the possibility of collaborating with us."

Rosemond A. Moore, chair of the accounting, economics, and business-administration program at South Texas, often visited other departments to promote the partnership. Some of her colleagues loved the notion of competency-based learning, she said, and wanted to expand it beyond the joint effort with A&M. At other meetings, she says, "I'd go and literally take a pounding. I'd come out beaten and bruised."

Professors asked her if the program was rigorous or of high-enough quality. It also seemed to unsettle their sense of their roles. "Because it was so different," she says, "they felt like the power was being taken away from them."

The pacing of the program is individualized, with students proceeding through the syllabus according to their own timeline, focusing on curricular areas they choose and as it fits their schedule.

Mr. Peek described a typical exchange of messages he has with students. "You might be talking today about banking. A little later you're discussing imports and exports. With another, it's supply and demand," he said. "You have 10 or 11 students asking you different things at different times."

It may not be the kind of professorial work he originally envisioned doing, but he sees its benefits for students. "The instructor ends up being a facilitator more than a traditional teacher," he said. The program, he added, "is a logical, organic extension of how education is evolving."

Rebecca Olympia Millan, an associate professor of English at South Texas, can see its value, too, as well as its shortcomings.

The model works, she says, for some students — the self-motivated, and those who already know the material or can teach themselves. There are those whose progress would be derailed if stretched out over time, says Ms. Millan, who has seen that happen plenty of times. Many students, she says, could have plowed through the material if given the option.

"They know this stuff," she says. "A lot of times, they don't need me."

She also worries about when competency-based learning is not carried out effectively. When programs are too compartmentalized, they become examples of what she calls the "McDonaldization" of education, where the instructor does little more than check off a box affirming that a student knows the material. That approach doesn't work for a lot of students.

"I see a dichotomous picture play out," Ms. Millan says. "Either they succeed or they don't."

Many more competency-based programs are sure to come.

Hundreds of faculty members and administrators gathered in Phoenix this fall for what was billed as the first meeting of its kind, of a broad swath of competency-based providers. It was organized by Public Agenda and supported by higher education's rising powers and old guard: Lumina, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Educause, the American Council on Education, and the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Nearly 600 institutions are seriously exploring this mode of learning, a huge jump from three years ago, when about 20 colleges were offering it, according to Mr. Offerman, who has studied the model's growth and development. Seven colleges have won approval from the Education Department to award financial aid for students who earn credits on the basis of demonstrated learning instead of time. Another three institutions are being considered. Four state systems of higher education are taking a close look at adopting the mode of learning.

The conference seemed to fill a need; a majority of attendees were there as newcomers, hoping to connect to others and looking for help in building a program. For many longtime observers of competency-based learning, the conference marked an exciting and fraught moment. The meeting signaled energy and progress, and also risk. "There's a real danger," Ms. Laitinen said, "in being seduced by innovation without making sure the quality piece has been paid attention to."

Perhaps, in a decade or two, every degree program will use the language of competency, and students will be working in a new currency of learning, one in which they are able to substantiate what they know and can do.

Short of that, some like Mr. Offerman hope, the legacy could be simpler, providing a model for greater experimentation with financial aid and more flexibility and innovation permitted by regulators.

But many government officials remain cautious, even as the Education Department has shown its willingness to experiment. An audit by the department's Office of Inspector General in September raised concerns about the role of faculty members and about the frequency and nature of the contact between instructors and students. Similarly, some critics of competency-based learning fear its broader implications for education; while they concede that this approach may encourage faculty to set clear standards about what students know — thereby establishing a "floor" of quality assurance — it can also place a low ceiling on expectations.

Writing 78 years ago, Mr. Jessup's colleagues at the Carnegie foundation emphasized how much teaching matters. It is more than a process of checking off boxes attesting that students learned, on their own, at some point.

"His business is not to check knowledge," they wrote, describing the job of a professor. Instead it is "to put matters in true perspective, to explain less obvious connections and relationships, to open up fresh insights, and to trace unsuspected applications that will cause ideas to put down permanent roots.

"His purpose," they continued, "should be to lead the way from knowledge to wisdom."

The Chronicle of Higher Education

Vast Budget Deal, With Good News for Education, Passes the House

By Kelly Field

OCTOBER 28, 2015

NO MU MENTION

Lawmakers in the House of Representatives passed a bill on Wednesday that would temporarily lift caps on both military and domestic spending, providing an additional \$40 billion for nondefense spending — including education programs — over the next two years.

The measure, which the Senate is expected to approve this week or next, would provide two years of relief from "sequestration" — the across-the-board budget cuts that took effect in 2013 — while raising the nation's debt limit for a year. It would also provide \$8 billion over two years for international aid through the "Overseas Contingency Operation" fund, a complicated move that would free up that money for other nondefense priorities.

President Obama is expected to sign the legislation into law.

While it's unclear how much of the new money will go to education, advocates for students and colleges hope that the increase will allow lawmakers to reverse cuts contained in the spending bills for the 2016 fiscal year offered in both chambers.

Passage of the budget deal means that lawmakers will need to set new spending limits for each of the appropriations committees, including the panels that oversee education and research programs. The fiscal year began on October 1, and since then the federal government has been operating under a continuing resolution that maintains last year's spending levels.

The House bill contains several policy riders, including one that would allow debt collectors to use automated dialing to call delinquent student-loan and other debtors' cellphones, a method the collectors already use to call landline phones. President Obama has pushed for such a change in the past, though some consumer advocates worry it will lead to abuses of borrowers.

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