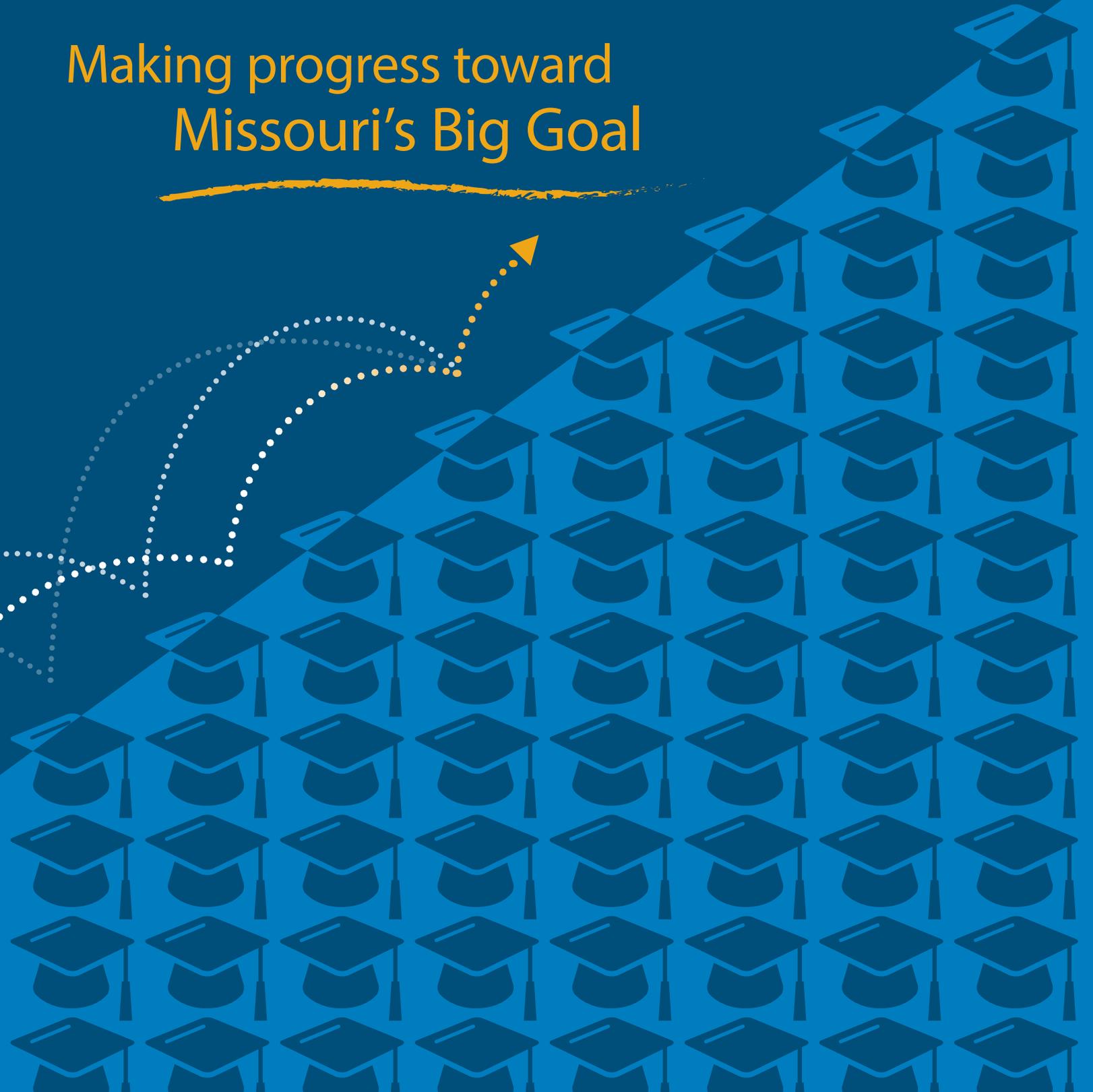


# Inside Missouri HIGHER EDUCATION

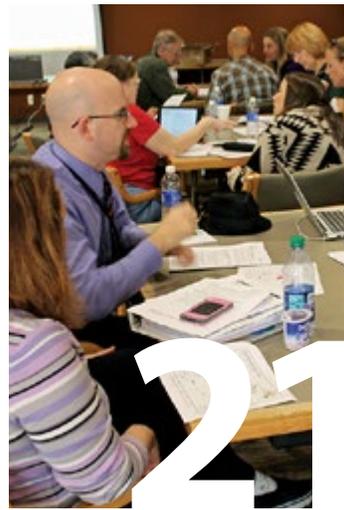
*News from the Missouri Department of Higher Education | November 2015*

Making progress toward  
Missouri's Big Goal



# Table of Contents

Inside Missouri Higher Education



24

- 3 A Message from the Commissioner
- 4  Quarterly Calendar
- 5  Features
- 15  Department News
  - 15 From the desk of the Deputy Commissioner
  - 18 Student Financial Aid
  - 20 Academic Affairs
  - 23 College Access
  - 25 Financial Literacy
- 28  Around the State

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A message from David R. Russell, Ph.D.

## Commissioner of higher education



**GLANCING THROUGH THE PAGES** of this issue of *Inside Missouri Higher Education* I am reminded once again why I have spent much of my career working in higher education.

Photos featuring students – young men and women in their first year or two of college as well as high school seniors about to embark on their own journey to college – reflect the purpose and the promise that higher education holds for all.

Those of you who work in Missouri’s high schools and higher education institutions have many more opportunities to experience the satisfaction – and the challenges – of interacting with students every day. But I would venture to say that the “business of education” can dominate the attention of even the most student-focused educators from time to time.

At the Department of Higher Education, we spend less of our time with students and much more with individuals involved in the workings of our higher education system – college administrators, academic councils, elected officials, legislative staff and concerned citizens.

While we don’t work with students on a daily basis, every time I hear someone question the value of higher education, I think about Missouri’s students and the research that continues to show the difference higher education can make in their lives.

Even during tough economic times, a college degree can mean greater financial security. Individuals with a bachelor’s degree can expect, on average, to earn \$1 million more during their lifetime than students who stopped at a high school diploma.

College graduates are more likely to stay employed as well. The unemployment rate for workers with a bachelor’s degree is about half the rate of high school graduates.

According to Georgetown University’s report *Good Jobs are Back: College Graduates are First in Line*, jobs that pay more than \$53,000 annually and offer benefits have grown the most as the United States recovered from the Great Recession. The Georgetown report states that nearly all of those “good” jobs are going to college graduates.

Higher education does a great deal more than help secure a person’s financial future. Individuals with a degree are more likely to make healthier lifestyle choices and live longer lives.

Without a doubt, higher education is a personal benefit to the student who completes a degree or certificate, but the impact extends far beyond the individual.

Higher education also is a public good that improves our society every single day.

College graduates are more likely to contribute to their community and participate in the political process. They more frequently engage in active thinking and pursue activities that promote racial understanding.

The higher wages earned by college graduates result in more tax revenue for all levels of government – without instituting new taxes or raising tax rates.

States with higher college enrollment rates experience less violent crime. College graduates are less likely to experience incarceration and rely on public assistance.

Colleges and universities conduct life-changing research and offer cultural events and community outreach services.

These benefits – private and public – remind us that we all have much to gain by ensuring our focus remains on students and our efforts are aimed at providing them with the best higher education opportunities possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David R. Russell". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

# November

- 11:** Veteran's Day.  
State offices closed.
- 17:** 2016 FAFSA Frenzy Site Coordinators Meeting,  
Jefferson City, Mo.
- 26–27:** Thanksgiving holiday.  
State offices closed.

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29	30					

# December

- 9–10:** Coordinating Board Meeting,  
Jefferson City, Mo.
- 11:** Study Missouri meeting,  
Columbia, Mo.
- 25:** Christmas Day.  
State offices closed.

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27	28	29	30	31		

# January

- 1:** New Year's Day.  
State offices closed.
- 1:** The 2016–2017 FAFSA is available.
- 16:** 2016 FAFSA Frenzy begins.
- 18:** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.  
State offices closed.

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
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Students from several Missouri colleges and universities field questions from seniors at Battle High School in Columbia during “Senior Boot Camp.” The high school hosted the event as part of its Apply Missouri activities to increase the number of students submitting applications to college.

# ‘Senior Boot Camp’ urges students to look ahead

## Apply Missouri events help high schools create a college-going culture

**IT’S THEIR LAST YEAR** of high school. Decisions about what they will do next loom large. For some students at Battle High School, the answer is clear – college is in their future. For others, questions still remain.

A panel of six students from several Missouri colleges and universities take their seats on stage at the high school in Columbia to answer questions from the senior class about the transition to college, what dorm life is really like and how tough the academics can be.

A student raises her hand in the auditorium filled with her fellow seniors.

“Is college as hard and scary as it’s made out to be?” she asks.

The answers vary.

“I think college is scary,” one student said. “You take notes in class and there isn’t always homework to lean on – just tests. It’s a big adjustment. It’s scary and fun at the same time.”

Another student replied, “Not at all, you just have to learn to manage your time.”

“It’s hard, but a different kind of hard. No one is checking up on you. You have to seek out resources and become more responsible,” a third student added.

The panel was part of “Senior Boot Camp,” one of several activities planned at Battle High School during its Apply Missouri event in October.

This is the third year the Missouri Department of Higher Education has sponsored Apply Missouri, a program focused on helping more Missouri students find the best fit for higher education and apply to college.

Originally called College Application Week, the program was opened to all Missouri high schools for the first time in 2015. More than 90 schools participated during September and October.

*(continued on page 6)*

# Apply Missouri *(continued from page 5)*

Each school plans its own activities to provide information about higher education options. Students are given time to submit applications to one or more colleges during the school day.

Apply Missouri activities spanned two weeks at Battle High School. High school counselor Amelia Fagiolo said many of her students would be the first in their families to attend college; many are underrepresented in higher education; and several hadn't considered college as an option.

"Our goal is get them to apply to at least one school," Fagiolo said.

All 326 seniors were invited to participate in each day's activities.

A panel of college professionals answered questions and conducted breakout sessions on a variety of topics. Students heard about Greek life, athletics and other on-campus organizations and opportunities. They also learned about admissions essays and spent time in the computer labs submitting applications to schools they are interested in attending.

Battle's Apply Missouri activities were developed after counselors and teachers considered questions they had been asked by the school's seniors.

Fagiolo invited the panel of college students to provide the seniors with a student point of view.

Time management was one of the most popular topics. The panelists talked about the importance of learning how to



Students at Waynesville High School fill the computer lab to submit college applications during the school's Apply Missouri event. Schools participating in Apply Missouri provide time during the school day for seniors to submit applications to one or more colleges they are interested in attending.

study – something they said they didn't always do in high school.

They encouraged the seniors to "put themselves out there" by getting involved in campus activities and visiting their professors during office hours for help with their classes. The students said taking advantage of campus resources was another thing that has made their college experience more enjoyable.

Tatiana Winters came to the panel discussion knowing that she wants to attend a four-year university but found the event helpful.

"This cleared a lot of things up," she said.

After panel members discussed the amount of class time compared to free time and how managing their time is one of the most important things they had to learn, Winters said the comments were "very eye-opening" but also eased her mind.

Although counselors spend time discussing college with the seniors, "they needed more help figuring things out," Fagiolo said. She hoped the activities created excitement and got students to think about their future.

Schools interested in participating in next year's Apply Missouri Program can register next spring on the Department of Higher Education's website.



Students at Normandy High School in St. Louis (top) prepare for their school's Apply Missouri event. A college fair (right) was part of Apply Missouri activities at Fulton High School. Students at Maryville High School marked a map of the United States (above) to indicate the locations of the colleges where they submitted applications. More than 90 high schools across the state held a variety of activities during Apply Missouri in September and October. This is the third year the Missouri Department of Higher Education sponsored Apply Missouri.

# Missouri's Big Goal

The percentage of Missourians with a degree or certificate continues to grow

## MISSOURI CONTINUES TO MAKE STEADY PROGRESS

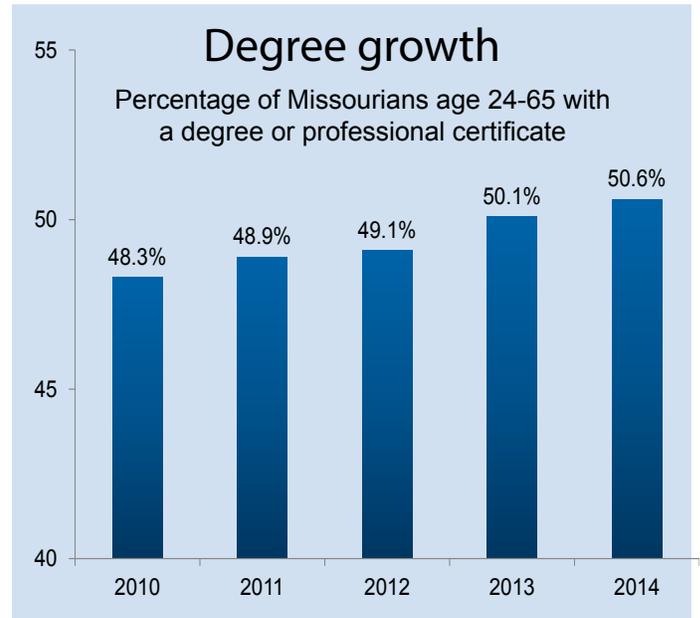
toward reaching its goal for higher education. More than half the state's working-age adults now have a professional certificate or degree.

In 2011, Gov. Jay Nixon and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education set a goal – Missouri's Big Goal – for 60 percent of working-age adults to have a two- or four-year degree or certificate by 2025. The goal is based on research that shows nearly 60 percent of jobs in the state will require a postsecondary credential by 2018.

The percentage of adults with a degree or certificate has been inching higher every year. Currently, 50.6 percent of adults age 24-65 has earned a degree or certificate.

Despite the growing number of Missourians with a certificate or degree, higher education officials say hitting the 60 percent mark will be a challenge.

"Reaching the Big Goal by 2025 will be not be easy, but the effort is essential to prepare Missourians for the future and enable the state to compete in a global economy," said David Russell, Missouri commissioner of higher education. "A knowledgeable and well-qualified workforce is key to maintaining a a good quality of life in our state."



Jones said Missouri will need to improve its high school graduation rate and increase college participation. More adults, including veterans, will need to enroll in degree or certificate programs. The state also will need to boost its college completion rates.

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**“A knowledgeable and well-qualified workforce is key to maintaining a good quality of life in our state.”**

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Higher education officials say Missouri will not be able to reach its degree-attainment goal without making some changes.

In June, Dr. Dennis Jones, president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, outlined several areas of improvement necessary for Missouri to reach its goal. Jones was a guest speaker at a public hearing for the development of a new coordinated plan for Missouri's higher education system.

Missouri's college completion rates have remained fairly flat in recent years. About 55.3 percent of students attending a public college or university earn a bachelor's degree within six years. About 37.7 percent of students earn an associate degree or transfer to a four-year institution within three years.

The percentage of adults age 24 to 65 who have earned a two- or four-year degree increased from 35.8 percent in 2010 to 38.1 percent in 2015.

*(continued on page 9)*

# Missourians with a degree

*(continued from page 8)*

Degree attainment among young adults is occurring at a greater rate. The percentage of Missourians age 24 to 35 with a two- or four-year degree has grown from 39.5 percent in 2010 to 42 percent in 2015.

“It is evident that our message about the importance of higher education is reaching Missouri’s young adults, but we need to quicken the pace of higher education attainment,” Russell said.

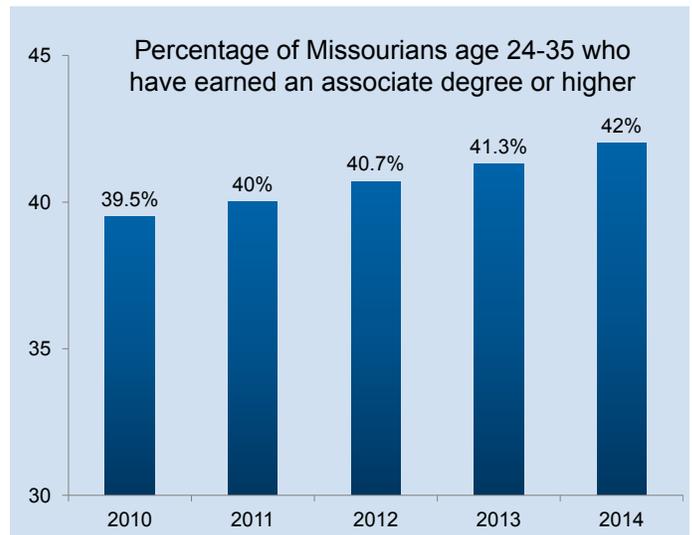
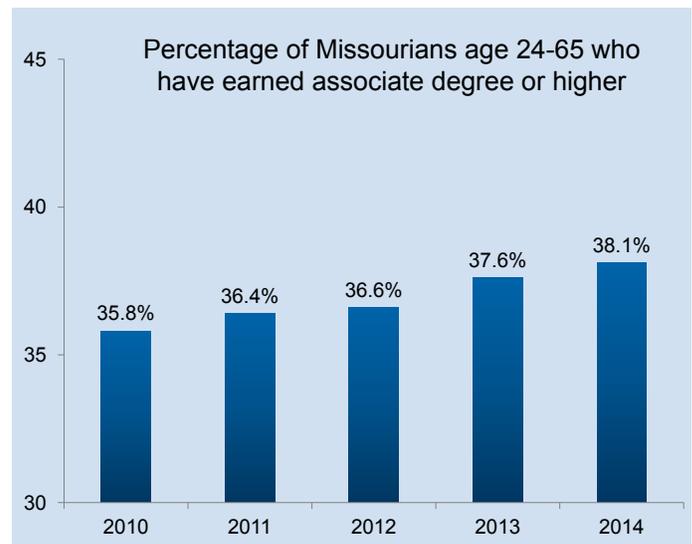
When professional certificates are included, the percentage of Missourians age 24 to 65 with a postsecondary credential increased 2.3 percent from 2010 to 2014.

Jones said increasing postsecondary attainment in Missouri will require a larger investment of resources and new approaches. His recommendations for the state’s higher education system include:

- Align finance policies with state goals.
- Use capital improvement funding strategically.
- Improve institutional productivity.
- Improve the design of state student aid programs.
- Strengthen partnerships among higher education institutions, economic and workforce development efforts, employers and research partners.
- Utilize different course delivery strategies in ways that maintain quality and can be scaled up.
- Develop expertise in serving new markets, especially adults students.

Increasing degree attainment is one of the primary goals of a new coordinated plan being developed by the Department of Higher Education. The plan will be presented to the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in December.

## Missouri's **BIG GOAL** FOR HIGHER EDUCATION





The Missouri Department of Higher Education's student ambassadors share their thoughts on planning and paying for college in department publications that are distributed to thousands of high school students. A new group of ambassadors is selected every two years.

# MDHE student ambassadors

## Finding the right fit for higher education...right here in Missouri

**TWO-YEAR OR FOUR-YEAR**, public or private, large or small, urban or rural. When it comes to higher education, Missouri offers a multitude of options.

Every year, more than 400,000 students pursue higher education in Missouri. In 2014, more than 153,000

students attended the state's public four-year universities; nearly 100,000 students chose community college; and about 132,000 students selected a private institution. Another 54,000 Missouri students attended private career schools.

When students find the right fit for higher education they are more likely to complete a certificate or degree.

The Missouri Department of Higher Education's access and success programs focus on helping students explore a

*(continued on page 11)*

# Student ambassadors

*(continued from page 10)*

variety of higher education opportunities so they can make a choice that works best for them. The department publishes a number of materials to help students and their families plan for college. The materials include information about choosing a career path, selecting a higher education institution and applying for financial aid. Department staff visit schools throughout the state to participate in career fairs and make presentations about planning and paying for postsecondary education.

The department enlists a group of Missouri college students to assist with the outreach effort. Every two years, a new group of student ambassadors is selected to be featured in the department’s publications, on its website and in social media.

“The experiences our student ambassadors can share resonate with many high school students who are in the midst of making some very important decisions about their future,” said David Russell, Missouri Commissioner of Higher Education.

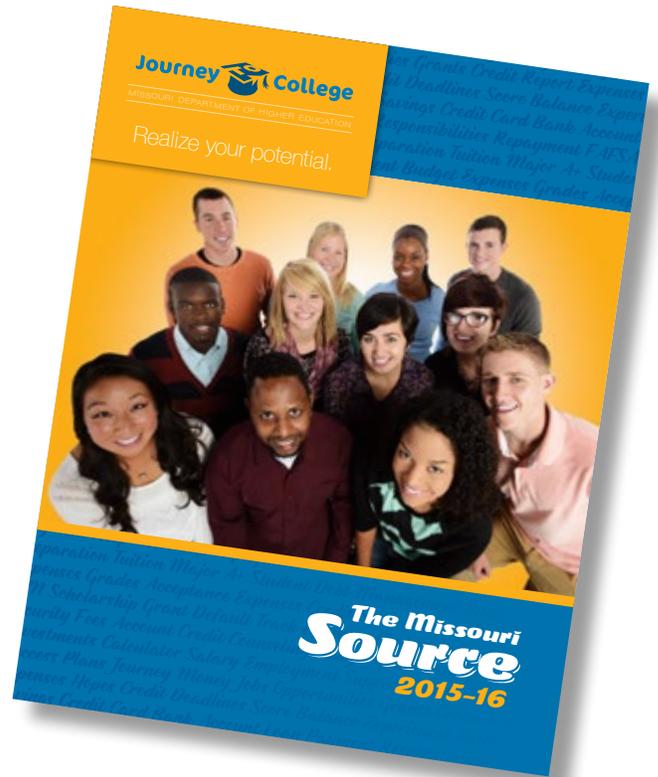
The latest group of student ambassadors will be featured in the department’s publications and online communications for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 academic years.

The current group of ambassadors includes 12 students ranging in age from 19 to 28. They attend colleges and universities across the state including Crowder College, St. Louis Community College, Metropolitan Community College at Maple Woods, Central Methodist University, Culver-Stockton College, University of Missouri in Columbia, Columbia College, Missouri University of Science and Technology, State Technical College of Missouri, Metropolitan Community College at Blue River, Evangel University and Missouri Western State University.

The students are pursuing a variety of degrees, from education to electrical distribution systems. Several are first generation college students. A number of them receive financial aid.

“While these student are similar in many ways to the hundreds of thousands of students attending college in Missouri, each has their own unique story to share,” Russell said.

*(continued on page 12)*



## Publications provide information about planning and paying for college

**EVERY YEAR, THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT** of Higher Education publishes a variety of materials to help students plan for college.

Nearly 400,000 booklets, brochures and fliers were distributed during the 2014-2015 academic year.

The publications are available to high schools, college access organizations and individuals free of charge, while supplies last. Department staff also distribute the publications at colleges fairs and presentations about planning and paying for college.

The materials provide information about choosing a field of study, selecting a college, university or other postsecondary school, applying for financial aid, developing money management skills, and other information.



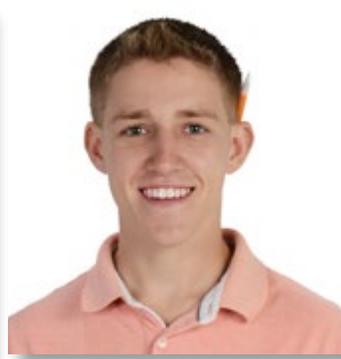
**ORDER PUBLICATIONS** from the Missouri Department of Higher Education.



Musdaf



Brian



Dalton



Kiona

### ***Musdaf Adan***

Musdaf Adan is a non-traditional student studying health information technology at Crowder College in Neosho. He didn't enter college immediately after graduating from high school but decided several years later that continuing his education was important to his future. Musdaf hopes to earn a bachelor's degree following his time at Crowder. "I want to further my education and have a good life," Musdaf said. "Attending college is a great step forward in your future."

Musdaf is making his dream of college a reality by utilizing financial aid. He believes in the power of positivity and sacrificing to achieve your goals. "If you have negativity then that negative idea will lead you in the wrong way," Musdaf said. "Always consider your primary needs, forgetting your secondary wants. Go to college, find the right career and change your life."

### ***Brian Barlay***

Brian Barlay is working toward a degree in international relations at St. Louis Community College, Meramec. Originally from Sierra Leone, Brian worked hard as a teenager to reach his goals. "I am attending college because I want my future to be bright," Brian said.

Brian hopes to join the Peace Corps and eventually work with the United Nations.

"Community college is a great way to start if you don't really know what you want to do with your life," he said. "Get involved in your school, take advantage of experiences, volunteer, give to your community."

### ***Dalton Caples***

Dalton Caples chose Metropolitan Community College at Maple Woods to earn an associate degree, with a concentration in biology. Dalton's interest in biology was piqued during a class. "I thought just how amazing living things were and how unique they were, and I just knew I needed to learn more about all these processes," he said.

An A+ Scholarship recipient, Dalton has been able to avoid student loans. He chose to attend college to be better prepared for the future and continue his love affair with learning. "I just love sitting in a lecture, learning about how everything works and having a better understanding of just how the world around me is put together," he said.

### ***Kiona Hughes-Sinks***

Kiona Hughes-Sinks attends Central Methodist University in Fayette. She currently is working on a bachelor's degree in sociology, with hopes of earning a graduate degree and working with disadvantaged youth.

"I believe education is vital to achieving your goals," Kiona said. "It's a way of allowing yourself to explore many opportunities, to grow as a person, attaining your goals and accomplishing your dreams."

Kiona is a first-generation college student, using the Access Missouri Grant and student loans to help pay her way. "Saving money for college can be a big burden when you think of all the costs," Kiona said. "Always remember, your life and your education matters. Let nothing get in the way of you taking the first steps to attain a college degree."

*(continued on page 13)*



Danielle



Adrienne



Lauren



Celena

### ***Danielle Lueckenhoff***

Danielle Lueckenhoff is seeking an elementary education degree from Culver-Stockton College. Her dream of becoming a teacher was inspired by watching her mom teach and by spending time as an A+ tutor.

She began preparing for college early, taking dual-credit courses and improving her study habits. She chose Culver-Stockton following a campus visit. "I love the opportunities that are available to students going to school in Missouri," she said.

Danielle is passionate about education. "College is never out of reach. If you want to go to college there is always a way to make it happen. You better yourself for the working world, and nobody can take your education away from you," she said.

### ***Adrienne Luther***

Adrienne Luther is attending the University of Missouri in Columbia. She is double majoring in journalism and art. She chose to attend college for the overall experience. "I knew it would better prepare me for the workforce and provide enlightenment to grasp exactly what my strengths are and what I really love to do. After four years, I imagine college will allow me to do what I love better and more professionally," she said.

Adrienne said she was initially a little hesitant about attending college so close to home, but now knows it was the right choice for her. "Even if at first you think you are going out of state, applying in-state is a great decision. It is considerably more affordable, and the opportunities in Missouri are as endless as you make them," she said.

### ***Lauren McCroskie***

Lauren McCroskie is a chemistry (pre-med) student at Columbia College. She chose the school for its academic excellence, softball program and small class size. Lauren said she likes attending college in Missouri, "because I'm far enough away from home that I can be independent and mature, but close enough that I can come home and be with my family."

Lauren said she prepared for college by working hard to maintain a 4.0 GPA throughout high school and taking college prep and Advanced Placement classes. "Be involved in your community and your school, and maintain the highest GPA you can manage. These things will help you attain scholarships. You will definitely appreciate all the time spent applying for them when you don't have to pay off loans," she said.

### ***Celena McElroy***

Celena McElroy is working toward a civil engineering degree at Missouri University of Science and Technology. "I chose this field because I've always been fascinated by the design of things," she said.

Celena is funding her education with grants, scholarships, and student loans. She received an Access Missouri Grant and a Minority and Underrepresented Environmental Literacy Program Scholarship from the Department of Higher Education.

Having overcome struggles with dyslexia, Celena encourages others to pursue their dreams. "My advice to everyone is to never ever give up," Celena said. "It would have been easy to just give up because of my dyslexia, but my mom refused to allow me to give up on myself. She helped me see all the possibilities within myself. Hard doesn't mean impossible."

*(continued on page 14)*



Ross



Kyle



Stephanie



Jessie

### **Ross Noe**

Ross Noe chose State Technical College of Missouri in Linn to earn a degree in electrical distribution systems. "I've wanted to be a lineman ever since high school. I like the challenge, variety and possibilities associated with the career," he said.

Ross chose to attend college to help him achieve his dream job. "I like attending college in Missouri because it's close to home and close to family," Ross said. He was able use the Access Missouri Grant to help offset some of the costs. To prepare for college, Ross said he worked hard and saved money. "I would advise others to work hard, stay focused and get involved. Anything can be achieved if it's something you truly want," he said.

### **Kyle Pereira**

Kyle Pereira attends Metropolitan Community College at Blue River. Studying to become a teacher, Kyle chose MCC because he knew it would save him money in the long run. He met the requirements to receive an A+ Scholarship that he could use at MCC. "I wanted to get a degree spending as little money as possible," Kyle said.

During his time at MCC, Kyle was a part of a teaching assistant program where he co-taught freshman orientation class. "I have never had so much fun in my life," he said. Following his passion for teaching, Kyle encourages others to do the same to reach their goals. "No college is out of reach. You should do it, no matter how scary or hard it sounds. It will be one of the most life-changing experiences. Just stay motivated," he said.

### **Stephanie SteenMartinez**

Stephanie SteenMartinez is a student at Evangel University in Springfield. A political communications major with a minor in international studies, Stephanie hopes her education will equip her with unique skills that she can use in whatever job she receives. "I am getting an education that gives me life skills to use in my chosen field, regardless of my title," she said.

As a third-generation American, Stephanie said she is excited to make her family proud and continue their legacy of higher education. She encourages others to save as much as possible and to seek out scholarships. "Do not get discouraged, there are literally hundreds of opportunities to receive financial help," she said.

### **Jessie Jean Walter**

Jessie Jean Walter is a student at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph. She is working on a degree in English education and said she hopes to make a positive difference in the lives of her future students. Jessie was a recipient of an Access Missouri Grant and several institutional and private scholarships.

She and her family took advantage of FAFSA Frenzy events to get assistance with the financial aid application. "This gave me the assurance I needed," Jessie said of completing the FAFSA. She also prepared for college by taking a number of dual-credit courses during her junior and senior years of high school. "I earned 32 completely transferable college credit hours before I even stepped foot on Missouri Western's campus," Jessie said.

From the desk of Leroy Wade

## Deputy commissioner



### AS THE MISSOURI DEPARTMENT

of Higher Education works to reach the goal of 60 percent of working-age adults possessing a quality postsecondary credential, the department has employed a number of strategies in the area of early preparation, including several that focus on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Those include FAFSA Frenzy, Missouri's version of the College Goal Sunday initiative; Apply Missouri, a series of high school events designed to get more students to complete an application to a postsecondary institution in a timely manner; and the FAFSA Completion Project, which seeks to provide information about FAFSA completion to high school counselors. Adding to this milieu of initiatives is the recent announcement from President Obama about what the White House is calling the "Early FAFSA."

Although the FAFSA has seen substantial improvements over the past several years, the U.S. Department of Education estimates that nearly two million college students who are eligible for a Pell grant never complete the complex form.

The department also estimates that nearly 1 million of the approximately 3.4 million high school graduates each year fail to complete a FAFSA, undermining the likelihood they will pursue postsecondary education.

Before we go too far down this road, I should make clear that not completing

a FAFSA is only part of the problem in getting more individuals into and out of postsecondary education, and it is only part of the solution.

Myriad factors that have little to do with student aid directly impact an individual's decision to pursue education after high school. While our ability to address those social and family factors is pretty limited, it is important that the application process not continue to be one of those barriers.

Why don't students complete the FAFSA, and why should they?

Experts agree one of the most common reasons students don't fill out the FAFSA is because they believe their parents make too much money. This misconception can be extremely costly for those families. "Everyone should fill out the FAFSA, because everyone is eligible for some form of financial aid, no matter their circumstances," says Abigail Seldin, co-founder of College Abacus, a free college cost comparison tool.

In a recent article in U.S. News and World Report, Seldin said most financial aid in the U.S. is awarded by universities rather than the government. Most institutions require that students complete the FAFSA to qualify for need-based or merit-based aid. It is important to be aware that many colleges offer merit-based aid that does not consider financial need. In those instances, the amount of money students' parents make doesn't matter, but the students can't qualify if they don't fill out the form.

In addition to the misconception about eligibility and in spite of recent improvements, completing the FAFSA still strikes fear and foreboding in the hearts of too many families.

Two issues, the Jan. 1 start date and the availability of income tax information, have been identified as particularly challenging. The Jan. 1 date, when students and families can begin the application process, is relatively late in the college selection process. This means students are making college-going decisions in the absence of information about financial aid eligibility. This leaves very little time to work with students to complete the application before college deadlines, which are often in early February.

Because the tax information required for the FAFSA is for the just-completed calendar year, most families have not completed their taxes in time for early FAFSA filing. Consequently, the process to retrieve tax information directly from the IRS is not available.

The good news is that in September, the president announced that both of these factors will be changing for the 2017-18 academic year. Starting with that year, students will be able to complete the FAFSA starting on Oct. 1 – three months earlier than is currently possible. That means students can begin to fill out the FAFSA on Oct. 1, 2016, for the academic year that begins in July or August of 2017. Additionally, the tax

*(continued on page 16)*

## Deputy commissioner *(continued from page 15)*

information required for completing the FAFSA will be for an earlier tax year, called “prior-prior year” in financial aid circles. Students who start their FAFSA on Oct. 1, 2016, they will be able to use the tax information for tax year 2015, which should have been filed by most taxpayers at least five months earlier.

These changes may appear to be more cosmetic than substantive; however, we believe when families receive earlier information about their aid eligibility, the application becomes simpler through the ability to retrieve

Administrators expects hundreds of colleges and universities to adjust their financial aid processes before the 2017-2018 academic year.

It also will be interesting to see the reaction of states to this situation. While many of my state aid colleagues around the country indicate they will not change their financial aid deadlines, many of those states use a first-come, first-served approach so deadlines are less meaningful. In states like Missouri, with a more structured process, adding three months to our filing period has

MDHE initiatives aimed at increasing college and financial aid applications. By beginning FAFSA completion in October, it will allow the alignment of FAFSA completion with Apply Missouri, our college application campaign. The extra three months in the fall will give high school counselors more time to work with students who are identified as needing extra assistance through the MDHE FAFSA Completion Project.

I am not suggesting that completing a FAFSA is the sole gateway to postsecondary education or that its

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**...we need to take every opportunity to simplify and streamline the financial aid application process and provide the assistance many of our under-served populations need to be successful.**

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tax information electronically. In all likelihood, more students will receive federal and other student aid, and we will see our postsecondary participation and completion rates increase. Additionally, these changes will likely reduce the workload for financial aid offices, estimated to be as much as 3 million total hours per year, by reducing the amount of time spent verifying tax return information.

There are challenges, however, with making all of these anticipated benefits a reality. For example, much of the benefit of the earlier filing date depends on whether states and colleges are able to align their processes to the new federal time line. The National Association of Student Financial Aid

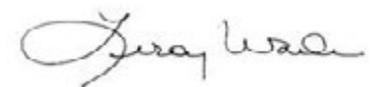
the potential to overwhelm available funding if many more students apply before the deadline. We are still studying the issue to try to determine the right approach for Missouri.

Many private scholarship organizations are considering adjustments to their processes. Scholarship America has indicated it will encourage its 1,200 scholarship and educational assistance providers to align their applications with the FAFSA time line. The National College Access Network, whose members serve more than 2 million students, is committed to use the extra time to reach 100 percent FAFSA completion among participants.

This initiative should provide greater support and linkages to the

completion by more students will lead directly to greater participation by Missouri citizens. If we are going to meet our college attainment goal, we need to take every opportunity to simplify and streamline the financial aid application process and provide the assistance many of our under-served populations need to be successful. This is just one more step on that road.

Missouri’s FAFSA completion rate for high school graduates is nearly 20 percentage points below the leading states. If we are going to remain competitive, we must strive to improve our completion rates.



# College affordability

## Tuition and fee increases in Missouri remain the lowest in the nation

**A NEW INDEPENDENT STUDY** shows that Missouri continues to lead the nation in efforts to hold down college tuition costs.

The College Board's 2015 *Trends in College Pricing* shows that tuition and fees at Missouri's public four-year institutions have had a lower rate of increase than any other state since 2008.

According to the most recent data available from the College Board, tuition and required fees at Missouri's public universities increased by just 9 percent between 2008-2009 and 2015-2016, the smallest increase in the nation. By comparison, the average increase nationally over the same period was 33.5 percent.

"This report reaffirms Missouri's leadership in keeping a lid on tuition hikes, especially when compared with the dramatic tuition increases seen in other states," Gov. Jay Nixon said.

In September, Nixon announced an agreement with the state's college presidents to freeze tuition undergraduates

### Percent of increase in tuition since 2008-2009: Missouri and surrounding states

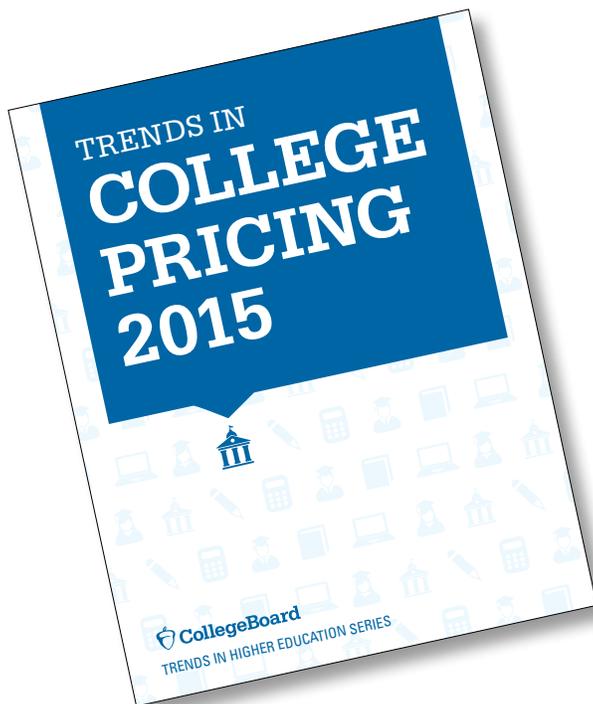
Missouri	9.2%
Iowa	12.9%
Nebraska	17.7%
Illinois	31.3%
Oklahoma	21.7%
Arkansas	22.6%
Kentucky	29.5%
Kansas	30.8%
Tennessee	50.2%

at Missouri public colleges and universities for the 2016-2017 school year. This is the fourth tuition freeze Nixon has announced since taking office in 2009.

Nixon also announced in September that his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2017 will include an additional \$55.7 million in performance funding for higher education, which would bring total state funding for colleges and universities to \$985 million next year.

According to the College Board report, 13 percent of full-time students nationwide attended public four-year institutions that did not increase tuition prices for the 2015-2016 academic year. Another 39 percent of students saw tuition at their institution increase less than 3 percent.

In addition to tuition information, the College Board's report includes information about higher education funding, institutional finances and student enrollment patterns.



**READ THE COLLEGE BOARD'S** Trends in College Pricing 2015 report.

# A+ Scholarship

## Changes made to help prevent funding shortfall for 2015-2016

**CHANGES IN THE A+ SCHOLARSHIP** for the 2015-2016 academic year are expected to prevent a potential funding shortfall and help avoid a situation that raised concerns for the program last year.

The changes will require students who receive the scholarship to complete 12 credit hours during the Fall 2015 semester in order to be eligible for the scholarship for the Spring 2016 semester.

In addition, all students receiving the A+ Scholarship award for the first time in either the Summer 2015 or Fall 2015 term must earn at least a 2.0 grade point average at the end of Fall term to be eligible for the Spring 2016 semester.

Students who do not complete the required number of credit hours during the Fall 2015 semester will be ineligible to receive the scholarship for the Spring 2016 semester. During the spring semester, students will need to complete at least enough college credit to total 12 credit hours when combined with the hours they earned during the fall term to regain eligibility for the scholarship.

For example, a student who completes nine credit hours in the fall would have to complete at least three credit hours in the spring to be eligible for scholarship for the next enrollment period.

A course is considered complete if a student is awarded a grade. A withdrawn course is not considered complete.

Students must still achieve a 2.5 grade point average by the end of their first academic year in order to be eligible for the A+ Scholarship the following year.

The changes to the A+ Program were adopted following a 30-day comment period that proposed two options. The majority of comments received by the Department of Higher Education preferred the option requiring the completion of 12 hours and the 2.0 grade point average. That option was adopted by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in September.



The plan currently applies only to the 2015-2016 academic year, but it could be adopted permanently depending on the impact of the change, according to Leroy Wade, deputy commissioner of the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

The board directed the department to monitor the results of the changes to help determine if they should be made permanent.

The popularity of the A+ Program continues to grow, Wade said. Last year, about 13,300 students received the scholarship, compared to about 12,500 students the previous year.

The increasing number of students using the A+ Scholarship is one reason department officials had anticipated a possible shortfall in program funds for the 2014-2015 academic year. Once A+ Scholarships were paid for the Fall 2014 semester, the department was able to determine that funding was available to cover the cost of tuition and general fees for all A+ Scholarship recipients for the Spring 2015 semester.

The program received an additional \$2 million dollars for Fiscal Year 2016 to help provide funding for the increasing number of students using the scholarship.



**FIND OUT MORE** about Missouri's A+ Scholarship and other student financial aid programs.

# FAFSA changes ahead

## Earlier start date and income information will benefit students' college decisions

**CHANGES TO THE WAY** families will be able to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid in the future are expected to make the process easier.

Beginning with the 2017-2018 FAFSA, students will be able to complete and submit the financial aid application as early as Oct. 1 every year rather than waiting until Jan. 1.

Students and their parents also will be able to report information, including income, from an earlier tax year.

Recent research suggests that implementing an earlier start date and using earlier income information will benefit students. The process will be better aligned with many college admission processes, and families will not need to use estimated income tax information. This will give families more time to explore financial aid options.

In many cases, the FAFSA application cycle is not aligned with college admissions application deadlines, which typically occur in the fall prior to the FAFSA launch. Deadlines for state aid can be as early as March. As a result, time is a critical factor for applicants qualifying for aid.

In addition to the timing of the launch of the FAFSA, the availability of an applicant's income and tax information may lead students – and, where applicable, their parents – to mistakenly think they are not able to file a FAFSA until they file their tax return. This can cause students to miss out on some federal, state and/or institutional financial aid.

Currently, FAFSA applicants provide income information from the "prior tax year." For example, 2016–2017

 [READ MORE](#) about the changes to the FAFSA.

applicants must report 2015 information. Beginning with the 2017–2018 FAFSA, applicants will provide income information from one tax year earlier, what is called the "prior-prior" tax year." This means that the 2017–2018 FAFSA will collect 2015 income information.

As a result of this change, more students and families will be able to complete their FAFSA using income information imported electronically from the IRS, using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT), rather than submitting applications with income estimates that may need correcting, or worse, waiting until the previous year's tax return has been filed.

Changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid		
When a student is attending college (school year)	When a student can submit a FAFSA	Which year's information is required
July 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016	January 1, 2015 – June 30, 2016	2014
July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017	January 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017	2015
July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018	October 1, 2016 – June 30, 2018	2015
July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019	October 1, 2017 – June 30, 2019	2016

# Measuring student learning

## Missouri one of nine states participating in national assessment pilot project

**HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS** learning at the college level?

That question was the subject of a new study conducted by educators on college campuses in Missouri and eight other states.

Participating states recently completed a pilot project that measured student learning based on course work rather than standardized test scores. More than 1,000 faculty members used rubrics to evaluate faculty instruction and student performance on class assignments such as projects, papers and research.

The assessments measured quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and written communications – three of the most important areas students must master to be successful in society and the workplace.

“The primary goal of this study is to develop ways to improve teaching and learning in the college classroom,” said Rusty Monhollon, assistant commissioner for academic affairs at the Missouri Department of Higher Education. “The project provided

valuable information – based on authentic student work – about the quality of the knowledge and skills gained in postsecondary education.”

Faculty representing nearly 70 colleges and universities of all types independently scored more than 7,000 samples of student work during the



year-long pilot project. The faculty members’ participation gave them an opportunity to refine their assessment skills, consider ways to improve instruction and share their knowledge with colleagues.

The project demonstrated that common assessment practices can be used across subjects, college campuses and states to produce valid results.

Missouri colleges and universities participating in the project were:

- University of Central Missouri
- Southeast Missouri State University

- Truman State University
  - Ozarks Technical Community College
  - Crowder College
  - Central Methodist University
- Missouri was selected to participate in the pilot project by the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association and the Association of

American Colleges and Universities, sponsors of the study.

Other states participating in the project include: Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Rhode Island and Utah.

Now that the pilot is complete, three additional states, Hawaii, Maine and Texas, will join the original nine states to continue the project for an additional year.

The next phase of the project will include faculty from 100 institutions assessing the learning demonstrated in work done by thousands of students.

 **READ MORE ABOUT** the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment.

# 2015 Mathematics Summit

## Administrators, faculty work on new 'math pathways' for Missouri students

### MORE THAN 120 COLLEGE

administrators and faculty members gathered for the 2015 Missouri Mathematics Summit in October to discuss ways to implement new math "pathways" for their students.

The event was the second math summit hosted by the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

The summit follows a report released by the department in June that recommends alternatives to algebra for some college degrees, including business, history and English. According to the report, math courses such as statistics and quantitative reasoning would be better suited for some disciplines.

"College algebra is not always the 'right' math for every student," said Rusty Monhollon, the department's assistant commissioner for academic affairs.

Monhollan said students are better served spending their time and money on math courses that will be of more benefit to them based on their chosen field of study.

Speakers for the summit included Amy Getz, the strategic implementation lead for the higher education team at the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin and Dr. Loretta Ussery Griffy, a mathematics and statistics professor at Austin Peay



Administrators and faculty from Missouri colleges and universities discuss strategies for developing and implementing new math "pathways" at their colleges and universities. More than 120 people attended the 2015 Mathematics Summit Oct. 30 in Jefferson City.

University and director for the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Breakout sessions included:

- Math Pathways for Humanities Majors
- Math Pathways for Social Sciences Majors
- Mathematics for Education Majors
- Math Pathways for Technical Education

A panel discussion on redesigning math courses included presenters from six Missouri colleges and universities:

- Ann Boehmer, East Central College
- Joe Howe, St. Charles Community College

- Mark McGhee, East Central College
- Dr. Chris McGowen, Southeast Missouri State University
- Nicole Nunn-Faron, St. Charles Community College
- Dr. Mary Shephard, Northwest Missouri State University
- Dr. Ruthi Sturdevant, Lincoln University



[READ MORE](#) about the Missouri Mathematics Summit.

# Early college

## Advisory committee appointed to oversee new dual-credit guidelines

**ADMINISTRATORS FROM 12** colleges and high schools have been appointed to serve on Missouri's new Early College Advisory Board.

The board was created to assist the Department of Higher Education with monitoring the state's dual-credit programs, which provide students with an opportunity to earn college credit while in high school.

The board members represent public and private two- and four-year colleges and universities that offer dual-credit programs and include:

- DeLaria Bretton, St. Louis University
- Kathleen Burns, University of Missouri-St. Louis
- Tarana Chapple, Metropolitan Community College
- Julie Downs, Mineral Area College
- Mary Ellen Fuquay, Missouri Baptist University
- Carla Mebane, University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Jim Masters, Monroe City R-1 High School
- Kevin Miller, Southeast Missouri State University
- Connie Morris, Knob Noster High School
- David Pyle, Carl Junction High School
- Amanda Stoecklein, State Fair Community College
- Sandra Wald, Central Methodist University



must have a master's level degree in the discipline they are teaching. Instructors with a master's level in a different area must have completed a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline in which they are teaching.

The new guidelines align Missouri's policy with guidelines established by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships and the Higher Learning Commission.

**The new policy will become effective Jan. 1, 2016.** Instructors for dual-credit classes employed for the Fall 2015 semester under the previous guidelines can teach in the Spring 2016 semester. After that time, dual-credit instructors will need to meet the new requirements for faculty qualifications.

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## Dual-credit classes are offered by 33 Missouri colleges and universities at more than 600 high schools in the state.

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A new dual-credit policy, approved in June by Missouri's Coordinating Board for Higher Education, was developed by officials from the Department of Higher Education, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and public and private colleges and universities in Missouri.

In addition to establishing the Early College Advisory Board, the new policy revised the guidelines for instructors who teach the dual-credit classes. In most cases, instructors

Enrollment in dual-credit classes in Missouri continues to grow. The classes are offered by 33 colleges and universities at more than 600 high schools in the state. More than 40,000 students enroll in dual credit classes each year.



**LEARN MORE** about the Department of Higher Education's dual credit policy.

# FAFSA Frenzy

Nearly 100 events planned to help students apply for financial aid

**MISSOURI STUDENTS** and their families will have an opportunity to receive help filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid at nearly 100 FAFSA Frenzy events next year.

The main FAFSA Frenzy event is set for Sunday, Feb. 28. Dozens of FAFSA Frenzy events will be held that day, but other events are scheduled throughout January, February and March.

During FAFSA Frenzy, financial aid

professionals are on hand to help attendees complete the FAFSA, the first step in applying for federal financial aid and most state financial aid. The FAFSA also is required for many of the scholarships offered by colleges and universities. For a complete list of FAFSA Frenzy events, visit [dhe.mo.gov/ppc/ffsites.php](http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/ffsites.php).



**FAFSA Frenzy**

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Department of Higher Education has sponsored FAFSA Frenzy for the past 12 years. The events have helped more than 12,000 students complete the FAFSA.

The department provides materials and training for coordinators who plan and conduct the FAFSA Frenzy events across the state. The site coordinators can order free promotional items, including signs, posters, banners, cups and wristbands.

Site coordinators recruit volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks – from promoting the event in the community and setting up the site to providing activities and child care for young children so their parents can focus on filling out the FAFSA.

Individuals interested in volunteering at a FAFSA Frenzy event can learn more and register at [dhe.mo.gov/ppc/fafsafrenzy.php](http://dhe.mo.gov/ppc/fafsafrenzy.php).



Staff from the Missouri Department of Higher Education prepare promotional materials for the 2016 FAFSA Frenzy. The department provides a variety of materials to FAFSA Frenzy sites throughout the state. FAFSA Frenzy helps students and their families fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.



**FIND OUT MORE** about Missouri's FAFSA Frenzy program.

# FAFSA Completion Project

## New Web tool can help ensure students successfully submit financial aid application

### TOO OFTEN HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

believe they have successfully completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid – only to discover weeks or months later that their FAFSA contained one or more errors.

An error on the FAFSA can cause students to miss important deadlines for state and federal financial aid.

To help ensure students in Missouri are successful in completing their FAFSA, the Department of Higher Education will launch the Missouri FAFSA Completion Project in January 2016.

“Research shows that students who complete the FAFSA – and learn about the student financial aid available to them – are more likely to attend college,” said Leroy Wade, deputy commissioner at the Department of Higher Education. “Qualifying for financial aid can help make higher education a reality for more Missourians, especially low-income students.”

The FAFSA Completion Project allows high school administrators and counselors to access a secure, school-specific Web page report to view their students’ FAFSA filing status and offer assistance, if needed.

The report will show one of three filing statuses:

- “No signature” will indicate that a student or parent did not sign the FAFSA, a common mistake that is easily corrected.
- “Error” will indicate that the U.S. Department of Education has determined that there is a mistake or missing information on the student’s FAFSA. A high school counselor can direct the student to his Student Aid Report to determine the nature of the error and correct it.



**LEARN MORE** about the Missouri FAFSA Completion Project.

- “Complete” will indicate that the student’s FAFSA is error free. The department believes the web-based tool will help overcome a barrier that prevents many students from considering postsecondary education. “Paying for college is often reported as the number one reason why students don’t pursue a higher education,” Wade said. “The FAFSA Completion Project is one way high school administrators and counselors can easily determine the students who need help with the FAFSA in order to qualify for financial aid.”

The FAFSA Completion Project Web page will be updated daily to provide the most current information possible.

School districts accessing the secured information on the Web page must agree to comply with federal privacy requirements and limit access to authorized individuals.

The Web page also will include general information about FAFSA completion rates at Missouri’s public high schools and links to other FAFSA- and financial-aid related websites.



# Reducing student loan default

## Missouri's default rate remains below national average

### THE PERCENTAGE OF MISSOURIANS

defaulting on their student loans continues to decline, keeping the state's default rate below the national average.

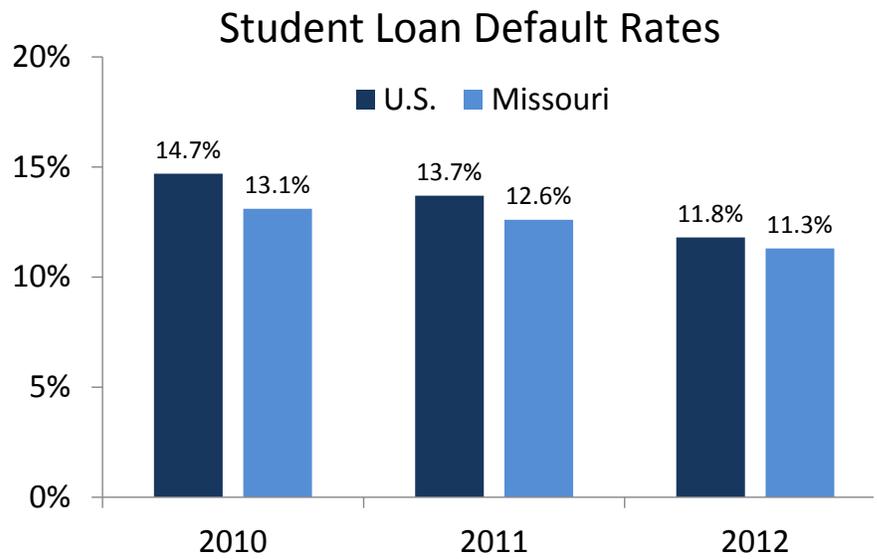
Figures from the U.S. Department of Education show that Missouri's three-year default rate dropped 1.3 percent, from 12.6 percent in 2011 to 11.3 percent in 2012.

The national student loan default rate also saw a significant decrease – from 13.7 percent to 11.8 percent – during the same time period.

"The continuing decline in default rates is good news for students, colleges and Missouri," said David Russell, Missouri commissioner of higher education. "The trend tells us that concerted efforts to help students make smart financial decisions are paying off both locally and nationwide."

The state's Default Prevention Grant Program, which is an initiative of the Missouri Department of Higher Education, focuses on reducing student loan default rates by promoting smart choices that can help lead students to a more secure financial future.

The default prevention grants provide funding and training to higher education institutions for student-focused financial literacy programs. Thirty schools were awarded grants totaling \$825,000 for the 2015-2016 school year.



"Missouri institutions are using these grants to educate student borrowers about the importance of minimizing their debt, following a spending plan and repaying their loans," Russell said.

More than 40 percent of the higher education institutions participating in the grant program during 2012 had a default rate below 10 percent. The previous year, less than 25 percent of institutions had a default rate less than 10 percent.

The U.S. Department of Education reported default rates for borrowers whose first loan repayment came due between Oct. 1, 2011, and Sept. 30, 2012, and who defaulted on their loans before Sept. 30, 2014. Nationally, more than 5.1 million borrowers began

student loan repayment during that time.

Missouri's student loan default rate was substantially lower than several surrounding states, including Arkansas, Iowa, Kentucky and Oklahoma.

More than 105,000 Missourians were repaying student loans during the reporting period. Just over 12,000 borrowers defaulted on their loans.

In addition to the Default Prevention Grant Program, the Department of Higher Education promotes financial literacy through publications and school presentations for students and their families.



**FIND OUT MORE** about Missouri's Default Prevention Programs.

# Default prevention

Creativity is key in developing unique financial literacy programs

## MISSOURI HIGHER EDUCATION

institutions that receive a default prevention grant work throughout the year to implement plans to reduce their student loan default rates. Here is a sample of some of the most creative and innovative practices the Department of Higher Education has seen so far during the 2015 – 2016 school year.



### *Tailgate connections*

Missouri State University's financial literacy team (Real L.I.F.E.) provided hot dogs and water to students attending the first tailgate of the football season in exchange for scanning the student's ID with the understanding that a peer mentor may contact them.

The team then researched participating students' accounts and reached out to offer assistance with resolving overdue balances, creating a semester budget, and setting up appointments with peer mentors.

Helping students with financial difficulties may prevent them from dropping out of school before finishing their degree. Retaining students and helping them borrow as little as possible is the ultimate goal of this project.



### *Award letter advice*

North Central Missouri College has been including a little something extra in their award letter mailings this year. A brochure that reads, "STOP – Borrow Smart" is communicating vital information to student borrowers at a critical time.

The brochure serves as a quick reference on how to plan ahead and graduate with less debt. It outlines questions students should ask before borrowing and providing resources with answers to these important questions.



### *Matching funds*

Avila University has proposed a "Match-it" contest to reward student borrowers who are able to make interest payments on their student loans while enrolled in school.

Every quarter this program will match the interest paid on a student loan, up to \$50. Any Avila student that provides proof of an interest payment (a receipt from their servicer), will be entered into this raffle. The hope is to

initiate a student's early preparation for repayment and show Avila's commitment to students' financial success.



### *Repeat performances*

Other schools receiving Default Prevention Grants are maintaining successful programs that have been in place for several years.

Jefferson College's "Cash Cab" financial literacy game continues to draw students and encourage early financial education.

Eden Theological Seminary is preparing for its third annual "Crock Star" competition where students with a tight budget cook a full family meal in a crock pot, competing to be crowned champion. Feedback on this event proves it to not only be educational but a way to connect with students who are hesitant to ask financial questions.

Whether connecting with students through games and activities or sending out direct mailers, the common factor in all of these efforts is researching a school's student body to design an effective default prevention program that fits a school's unique needs.

# Smart About Spending 101

by Marilyn Landrum

The holidays are just around the corner, and college students need to be prepared for extra expenses related to travel, gift giving and celebrations.

Financial literacy events focused on holiday budgeting could be beneficial for many students.

Do students have money saved to use for the holidays? If not, suggest that they determine how many paychecks they will receive between now and the holidays. After all of their needs are met, how much money do they have left to spend on holiday costs?

Remind students to decide who they will buy gifts for and how much they'll spend on each gift before they go shopping. Knowing this information will help them decide how much they

can spend on each gift and determine if their list is too long. They may have to cut a few people from their list.

Instead of giving gifts to friends, suggest they get creative and invite friends over, asking them to bring a snack. Plan some games and provide some inexpensive prizes. Their friends will enjoy getting together and probably aren't expecting an elaborate gift anyway.

Encourage students not to use credit cards to purchase gifts. If they have a credit card with a \$500 limit and max it out, it could take them almost a whole year to pay it off. Plus, it will cost them about \$45 in interest. If they don't have to pay off that loan, they could save that

\$50 monthly payment and be in good shape for the holidays next year.

The holidays also are a time when identity thieves lurk. College students tend to be a prime target for identity theft.

Advise students to keep their credit and debit cards safe along with their PINs. They should balance their account regularly and review their monthly statements for any suspicious charges.

With a little planning, the holidays can be celebrated debt free – a good way to start the new year.

*Marilyn Landrum is a default prevention and financial literacy specialist at the Missouri Department of Higher Education.*



...college students  
need to be  
prepared for  
extra expenses  
related to holiday  
travel, gift giving  
and celebrations.

## \$200 million in capital improvements planned at Missouri colleges

**MORE THAN \$200 MILLION** in improvements and renovations on Missouri's public college campuses were announced by Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon in August and September.

The projects are being made possible through Building Affordability, an initiative proposed by Gov. Jay Nixon and approved by the General Assembly during the 2015 legislative session.

"Through our Building Affordability initiative, we're making targeted

investments in higher education to increase the quality of our campuses while holding the line of tuition hikes," Nixon said. "Keeping Missouri a leader in college affordability will ensure our students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed without mountains of debt."

The capital improvement projects include deferred maintenance, such as replacing windows and mechanical, plumbing, and electric systems,

increasing energy efficiency and updating technology.

Building Affordability is a component of Build Missouri, a capital improvements initiative that will fund nearly 500 projects throughout the state through bond proceeds and other sources.

Build Missouri includes bond proceeds for repairs and renovations at state facilities, veterans homes, state parks and higher education campuses.

## ECC awarded \$1.2 million grant for workforce training center

**EAST CENTRAL COLLEGE** was awarded a \$1.2 million grant by the Department of Commerce to assist in the creation of the Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Workforce Training. The facility will be located adjacent to ECC's main campus in Union.

The grant funds, combined with institutional resources and money

raised with the help of the East Central College Foundation, will support renovation of the former Gala Center located just southeast of the campus.

The college purchased the property in April for \$1.2 million. The facility will allow the college to expand its technical education programs in industrial engineering technology and precision machining. Those programs currently

are housed at Four Rivers Career Center in Washington. The heating/ventilation/air conditioning program will be relocated from the main campus to the renovated space.

A Center for Workforce Development, labs and classrooms dedicated to workforce training also are planned for the renovated facility.

## MU offers tuition break to community college graduates for online degrees

**THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI** is offering tuition breaks for community college graduates who want to earn their bachelor's degree online.

The Mizzou Online Community College Tuition Award provides a 10 percent tuition reduction for online undergraduate programs to Missouri residents who are graduates of Missouri's public community colleges.

To be eligible, students must be

seeking a degree and accepted to one of MU's undergraduate distance programs. The tuition award reduces the amount of base tuition and applies toward a maximum of 150 cumulative hours of undergraduate credit.

MU already has an Internet access agreement with member institutions of the Missouri Community College Association. The agreement gives students access to community college

computer labs after their two-year program so they can work on their online degree from MU.

The university offers nine online options for undergraduate degrees: early childhood education in a mobile society, educational studies, general studies, health sciences, hospitality management, interdisciplinary studies, nursing (RN-to-BSN), radiography and respiratory therapy.

## Grant will fund Advanced Placement tests for low-income students

**MISSOURI IS ONE OF 38 STATES** to receive a federal Advance Placement grant to boost college- and career-readiness for low-income students.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education received a \$150,000 grant to help pay for students to take approved Advanced Placement exams

administered by the College Board.

Students can earn college credit while in high school by taking AP classes and earning high scores on AP exams.

The goal of the grant program is to encourage low-income students to take AP exams to obtain college credit, reducing the time and cost required to complete a postsecondary degree.

Based on the anticipated number of tests to be taken, the grants are expected to pay all but \$12 of the cost of each AP exam taken by low-income students. States may require students to pay a portion of the costs.

For more information about the program, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/apfee/index.html>.

## Community college program addresses health care worker shortage

**MORE THAN 4,200** Missouri students received training needed to enter the health care industry through the MoHealthWINS initiative, a four-year health care education program administered by the Missouri Community College Association (MCCA). The association worked with 13 Missouri colleges to provide the training.

MCCA managed a \$19.9 million federal grant, distributing funds to participating colleges throughout the state. With those funds, the colleges

were able to help students achieve nearly 11,000 industry-recognized credentials. The students received training in four areas: health informatics, therapeutic services, diagnostic services and support services.

Eighty percent of the students completing the program are now employed.

More than 229 businesses and agencies partnered with colleges participating in the MoHealthWINS colleges. The businesses provided

input on the design of the academic programs, offered internships and hands-on experience for students and in many cases offered employment opportunities upon graduation.

The federal funds were provided through the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training grant program. The program targeted Trade Act Assistance workers, veterans, unemployed, underemployed and low skilled workers.

## Missouri receives two awards at Midwest financial aid conference

**TWO MISSOURI PROGRAMS** received recognition at the 2015 Midwest Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (MASFAA) conference Oct. 4-7 in Iowa.

The Missouri Association of Student Financial Aid Professionals (MASFAP) Early Awareness Committee received the first annual MASFAA Access Award for its Money Matters Program. Moberly Area Community College received second place in the competition

for its UCAN2 project. The MASFAA Access Award recognizes excellence in innovative ideas and programming related to financial literacy at the high school and college levels.

The Money Matters Program was developed by Early Awareness Committee Chair CortneyJo Sandidge and her team during the past year. Updates were made to the activity previously known as Reality Store. The program was developed to target

relevant outreach to both high school and college students, seeking feedback to quantify and improve the program for use throughout the state.

MACC's UCAN2 program focuses on providing outreach to area youth. Students are brought on campus in order to learn more about college and begin to envision higher education as a part of their future.