



Board Report
10-21-16

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“15 to Finish” – The Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) held a statewide kickoff conference for “15 to Finish Missouri” on Oct. 12 at Missouri State University in Springfield to unveil their plans for the future. As you know, the “15 to Finish” movement is an outgrowth of Complete College America and attempts to encourage students to graduate in four years by taking at least 15 credit hours per semester. Or, 120 credit hours over a four year period.

We were allotted five seats at the conference which was very well attended by public college and university personnel from across the state (we actually had to move to a larger auditorium due to overcrowding). Dr. Carson, Dr. Creamer (Faculty Senate President), Dr. Nick Nicoletti (Faculty Senate President Elect), Darren Fullerton, and I attended on behalf of MSSU.

The clear message from MDHE was not “*if*” we intended to move toward “15 to Finish,” rather, it was “*when and how*.” And, the implication was that “*sooner is better than later*” and the “*how to implement questions*” should be figured out pretty quickly.

So, one of the first issues we will be required to deal with is the 120 credit hour graduation requirement, because we currently require 124 for most programs of study. This issue was discussed at a recent meeting of the University Council and it will be a major topic of discussion by several faculty and staff committees before we make any suggested changes. But, it appears that change is on the horizon so we are working to find the best outcomes for our students here at Missouri Southern.

University Council – As you know, the University Council is a 25 member cross section of personnel from across campus, creating a representative group to serve as: 1) the central clearinghouse and approval point for operational policies and procedures; and, 2) the “central huddle” for reporting and feedback for the Great Game of Education.

Membership on the University Council was expanded this year to include the Deans of each School and the Bursar’s Office. These added viewpoints will be very helpful as campus wide policies are considered and will provide a clear “line of sight” accountability link for the Great Game of Education.

In addition to discussing the “15 to Finish” initiative, the University Council received an update on the Great Game from Scott Cragin and Jeff Gibson. The update included a preview of the new and improved “scoreboard” that not only provides overall financial information, but also enables “unit level” drill down information via drop down menu bars. It will be ready for demonstration and implementation soon.

Great Game update – Training sessions for *Finance – Part I & 2* have been proceeding nicely with 57% of all employees already completing both sessions. These sessions are very informative and powerful because they are creative, clearly presented, and offered by “non-finance” faculty and staff members.

In addition to the straightforward training program, the questions from participants show a great deal of interest and insight on the part of faculty and staff. They ask very pertinent questions that often lead into the information planned for the next training module. The bottom line is that they are understanding and operationalizing the information, which is the overall goal.

State Budget Picture – Attempting to predict state revenue from month to month is tricky business, but one might assume the revenue targets are holding firm because Governor Nixon released about half of the appropriations that were restricted earlier in the year. Even though the prior restrictions (or withholdings) didn’t impact higher education, we can hope that the release of the restricted funds to other agencies is a signal that revenues are holding steady and we might finish the year without any further threat of withholdings.

But, no matter what happens with revenue, it’s worth remembering how little of the Missouri budget goes to higher education - relative to some of our neighbors. The following chart was developed by Ballotpedia, with information from the National Association of State Budget Officers (NASBO). If you follow the link you will find the “Full Report” under the Reports & Data tab, State Expenditure Report. Page 26 of the report shows that all eight states that touch Missouri spend far more on higher education than our state – even though we have a much greater population than many of our neighbors.

State spending by function as a percent of total expenditures, FY 2014							
State	K-12 education	Higher education	Public assistance	Medicaid	Corrections	Transportation	Other
Missouri	22.8%	4.8%	0.8%	35.8%	2.8%	8.5%	24.5%
Iowa	16.6%	26.7%	0.5%	20.9%	2.3%	7.2%	25.8%
Kansas	25.9%	17.6%	0.2%	22.4%	2.6%	11.4%	19.9%
Nebraska	14.4%	23.5%	0.5%	17.6%	2.5%	7.6%	33.9%

Source: [National Association of State Budget Officers](#)

Note: "Other" expenditures include "Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), institutional and community care for the mentally ill and developmentally disabled, public health programs, employer contributions to pensions and health benefits, economic development, environmental projects, state police, parks and recreation, housing and general aid to local governments."^[2]