Budget and Legislative Priorities – As I've reported in prior meetings the Governor's recommended budget included a 6% increase for higher education, with 1% being dedicated to STEM programs. In conjunction with the suggested increase the Governor asked that all public colleges and universities freeze tuition next year. And, that of course led to the Board action last month that would hold tuition flat contingent upon receiving the 6% increase.

But, the House of Representatives passed a budget bill (HB3) that only includes a 2% increase. This reduced amount was the result of a disagreement with the Governor's Office over the amount of revenue growth the state should expect during the coming year. The Governor's budget is based on a growth rate of 4.1%, but the House version is calculated on a 3.1% increase. But, HB3 has passed out of the House and has moved to the Senate for consideration, so we hope for a better outcome there.

In addition to the budget bills, we are keeping an eye on several pieces of proposed legislation that could impact us in one way or another. There are bills regarding health center fees, meal plans for residence hall students, conceal and carry on-campus, and a variety of other issues. But, none of them seem to be moving as fast as they were earlier in the session. Frankly, I think the complexities are beginning to emerge and cause some of the bill sponsors to re-think the wording and/or intent of the proposed legislation.

Great Game of Education – The Great Game work is continuing to move forward with the appointment of the Culture Committee to oversee the employee training effort, program deployment strategies, and ongoing support of the open book management process. Initially, the Culture Committee will focus primarily on training faculty and staff on the basics of open book management and financial operations. Ultimately, this process will lead to full implementation that will tie the Great Game to our Strategic Planning goals and objectives, while providing "line of sight" connectivity for all employees and a mechanism to provide documentary evidence of achievement for the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Missouri Department of Higher Education (MDHE) Audit – We were recently notified by the State Auditor's Office they are engaging in an audit of Higher Education Funding and Affordability. The scope of the audit will include MDHE's oversight of the tuition and fees charged at public colleges and universities in the state and will cover (but is not limited to) the prior seven years ended June 30, 2015. So, Linda and her team could be very busy answering requests for data regarding the MDHE audit.

<u>University Council</u> – As you recall, the University Council is comprised of a cross section of faculty, staff, and administrators and serves to consider campus wide "operational" policies and procedures. In an effort to self-examine some of our current procedures, and to consider improvements, we worked in small groups to answer a simple three part question:

What happens to MSSU students or potential students?

1) After being born, but before initial enrollment;
2) After initial enrollment, but before graduation;
3) After graduation, but before death.

The objective was to envision and perhaps create the ideal MSSU student "life cycle" from cradle to grave. We were not looking for random, accidental, or unpredictable behaviors, rather we were focused on:

1) What we do for students and potential students;
2) What they are required to do.

As you might imagine, this exercise generated energetic and insightful discussion from the groups (we were split into three groups to create manageable sized discussion panels). It also gave us an opportunity to participate in a "mini-game" within our own group.

The responses have not all been compiled yet, but our hope is to examine the responses to see where we may be able to identify bottlenecks, inefficiencies, and/or general areas of improvement that we can address in the future.