



NEWS RELEASE

State Senator Gary Nodler
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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General Assembly Approves Senator Nodler's Omnibus Higher Education Act

*Measure Expanding Scholarships, Building Campuses and
Curbing Tuition Hikes Heads to the Governor*

JEFFERSON CITY – A comprehensive measure making Missouri public colleges more accessible, affordable and accountable has cleared the Senate and House and is now on its way to the governor for his signature. Introduced and advanced in the Senate by Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, Senate Bill 389 limits increases in college tuitions, expands scholarship opportunities and funding, and enables the construction of top-flight facilities on Missouri college campuses.

“Senate and House leaders came into this session pledging to restore higher education to its rightful position as a top priority this year and we’ve fulfilled that pledge with passage of this legislation,” said Sen. Nodler, who chairs the Senate’s Education Committee. “Senate Bill 389 will improve the future of all Missourians by allowing more students to access a top-quality education today.”

The omnibus legislative package combines two existing scholarships to create Access Missouri. Funding for the needs-based scholarship program will grow from \$25 million to nearly \$75 million.

The plan also implements the governor’s Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative, which uses funds from the sale of some assets held by the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (“MoHELA”) to construct and maintain buildings on Missouri’s university, college and community college campuses. Projects in Sen. Nodler’s 32nd Senatorial District include \$18.9 million for a health sciences building at Missouri Southern State University, featuring added class and clinic space for Allied Health program

graduates; and a dental hygiene distance-learning program run by Missouri Southern State University. An additional \$200,000 will go towards a Missouri Power Resource Center which will be a collaborative effort between Missouri Southern State University, Missouri Technology Corporation, University of Missouri-Columbia, University of Missouri-Rolla, Missouri State University and EaglePicher Technologies, LLC.

Crowder College will benefit with \$2 million including funds that will assist in the completion of the Missouri Alternative and Renewable Energy Training Center. Statewide, nearly \$260 million will go to fund 28 university and college building projects, with an additional \$30 million to community college campuses, and \$15 million for business research hubs affiliated with universities.

The measure also gives the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education more authority including oversight of tuition increases. Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year, if a university increases their tuition at a rate greater than inflation, as defined as the Consumer Price Index, the Coordinating Board could fine the institution up to 5 percent of their state appropriation. Furthering school administration accountability is a provision of the bill establishing competency tests for entry level courses throughout the state, resulting in smoother transitions and transfers between schools. The bill also increases information accessibility to students, including making them aware of which professors will be teaching their classes.

Sen. Nodler noted that passage of the bill required the work of many.

“I’m thankful to the colleagues of mine in the House and Senate who overwhelmingly chose to put Missouri’s higher education system ahead of the national curve,” Sen. Nodler said. “What we have here today is a legislative package strongly endorsed by legislators and the governor, and highly regarded by academic members. The prospects for Missouri’s students and Missouri’s future just got brighter.”

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