



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



Room 433 - State Capitol Bldg. - Jefferson City, MO 65101 – Contact Barbara Mustoe Phone: (573) 751-2306

**Week of January 29, 2007**

## Striving For A's

### *Bringing Accessibility, Affordability, and Accountability to Our System of Higher Education*

---

JEFFERSON CITY — In an effort to gain control of escalating tuition rates for public colleges and universities, I have teamed up with several of my colleagues from the House and Senate to make higher education more affordable and accessible, while holding the institutions accountable for the quality of education they provide.

This week I introduced a comprehensive bill that will bring higher education into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First and foremost, the measure will allow more high school graduates to continue their education in Missouri. The measure will combine the two existing state scholarship programs into one, the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program, which will start off with \$25 million in funding. Furthermore, the legislation authorizes the allocation of \$335 million from the sale of the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority's assets to more than 20 projects on the campuses of Missouri colleges and universities. This is the closest thing to free money we have ever seen, and it will allow us to modernize and improve our infrastructure to compete with the world-class education providers in other states and nations.

Another important provision of the omnibus legislation will stabilize tuition rates by giving the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education more oversight of the tuition-setting process. Tuition increases will be linked to the rate of inflation if the state appropriations also increase by the same rate. If an institution boosts tuition beyond the rate of inflation, the Coordinating Board would have the power to fine the institution up to 5 percent of its state funding. The university or college could seek a waiver in exceptional circumstances, but if the waiver request is denied, the money collected from the fine will go toward the General Revenue fund. I expect that the specifics of this provision will undergo several rounds of changes as the bill continues through the legislative process.

-MORE-

Also under the legislation, the Coordinating Board will be charged with establishing performance standards to be used as a basis for state funding decisions. These accountability measures will be defined during the upcoming committee meetings. To increase transparency, the bill also requires colleges and universities to post certain information about course offerings including: the name of the course instructor, the instructor's experience, and what portion, if any will be taught by a graduate assistant. These aspects of the bill are necessary so that when families and students invest in a higher education, they can be assured that their investment will pay off.

By limiting tuition increases and expanding scholarship opportunities, we will enable more Missouri students to earn degrees. From the economic standpoint, the more students who can earn higher degrees, the more qualified our workforce will be. And the more qualified our workforce, the more likely it is that high-tech businesses will choose to set up shop in the Show-Me State. A strong economy is a good thing for all state citizens.

The bottom line is that Missouri families need help in trying to pay for college, and they need to be assured that what they get out of their investment is worth it. My measure is a significant step toward keeping the cost of college within reach and allowing the education our institutions provide to know no boundaries.

– END –

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper  
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate*