

February 5, 2009



Senator David Pearce – Serving Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon Counties

Website

Cutting Funding for Higher Education Capital Improvements a Mistake

Last week the governor dropped a bomb on five of Missouri's public universities, including the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, when he sent out letters informing them that many of the capital improvement projects funded through the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative were either suspended indefinitely or under review.

In UCM's case, funding for the [Morrow-Garrison Complex](#), a \$15 million renovation that will serve as classroom space for students in the Department of Health and Human Performance, is currently being reviewed by the Missouri Office of Administration. Depending on what is decided, funding for the project may stop altogether. The governor pointed to less-than-projected funds generated from the state student loan authority, MOHELA, as the cause for the cuts. The continuing sale of MOHELA's assets was intended to directly fund the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative, which in turn funds capital improvement projects for the state's public higher education institutions. Currently there is \$120.9 million in the account.

The governor is inconsistent on the issue of higher education funding. Just a short week prior to these letters making the rounds at our universities, he made a pledge not to cut higher education funding as long as state colleges and universities do not raise tuition on their students. The governor may not consider the suspension of capital improvement projects as "cutting funding," but that is exactly what it is.

Perhaps we should look into other available avenues for funding, whether it be

potential federal stimulus money—a great way to spend any possible funds the state may get, because it is a one-time expense for economy-boosting projects that create jobs and improve education—or cutting less crucial programs and services, rather than once again, letting higher education take the fall.

Slashing the funding for these capital improvement projects, such as the Morrow-Garrison Complex, is a complete disservice to higher education and the people of Missouri. We talk of wanting to create jobs and stimulate economic growth, and yet what will become of the more than 40 people who were told by the president of UCM to leave the Morrow-Garrison work site after learning about the funding cuts? What about the hundreds of other jobs at work sites across the state? This is not a long-term solution to any of our financial problems, and will only hurt us more in the long run. If we are truly serious about jump-starting this economy and increasing the quality of education in this state, we need to prove it to the people of Missouri by our actions.

Higher education has been a long-time priority of mine and it's easy to see why. Without it, our children cannot compete in an increasingly global economy and our state will not prosper. Most jobs these days require some type of advanced or specialized education. We cannot keep taking from our colleges and universities and making them settle for second-rate facilities, and we certainly cannot and should not abandon half-completed multi-million dollar construction sites across the state. As long as I am in the Senate, I will fight for the University of Central Missouri and the other fine public universities in our state.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. Because we are here to serve you, we look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

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