

Spectrum

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Best-kept benefit secret: Employee educational assistance



A deep discount on a college or graduate education is among the best—and best-kept secret—benefits for University of Missouri employees and retirees. Yet, despite the significant financial and personal benefits to completing an undergraduate degree or pursuing graduate work from the University of Missouri, few employees take advantage of this tremendous program—less than 3 percent in the fall 2008 semester.

Employees may be reluctant to adjust their work schedules or attempt to juggle homework assignments with family and volunteer obligations, but consider this: the average American with a bachelor's degree can expect to earn nearly \$1 million more than a high school graduate over a lifetime, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. A master's degree translates to \$1.3 million more than a high school diploma and \$2.2 million more for a doctoral degree.

Spectrum recently sat down with three employees who have benefited enormously from the educational assistance program, and they all had one message: “If I could do it, anyone can do it!”

Their stories, below, will no doubt inspire other employees to pursue a degree from the university.

Rebecca's story

Ten years ago, Rebecca Day was a single parent, struggling to raise two children while working a full-time and a part-time job. Day had been with the university for two years when her boss encouraged her to pursue a bachelor's degree through the Employee Educational Assistance program. Day was one of the first [MU In The Evening](#) students, enrolling in 2001 and

completing a degree in general studies in 2005. Not satisfied there, Day went on to earn a Master's of Education in 2006.

“Because of the university's Employee Educational Assistance program and the determination of my boss, my whole life has changed,” said Day. “If it had not been for this university paying for my school, I'd still be struggling. It's just a wonderful opportunity that people don't know is there.”

As coordinator of information systems for cardiopulmonary services, Day oversees the department's software, new projects, ECG systems and all aspects of computer services—a job she loves.

In addition to her position at the university, Day is also a part-time information systems instructor at Stephens College and an online instructor for The Art Institute. She credits the educational assistance program with her professional and personal successes.

“It is has opened up many doors for me and given me all kinds of opportunities to advance myself. When I look back to 2001, I think: Wow! I've not only matured intellectually...I've just expanded my horizons.”

Day, who has a nearly-perfect grade point average, advises working parents who wish to continue their education to take online classes if possible and spend a few hours in the evening after children have gone to bed doing homework.

“If I can do it, anyone can do it!” Day said. “Employees don't understand what an opportunity this is for them. Check into it; it's great.”

Mary's story

For Mary Simon Leuci, assistant dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and program director for Community Development Extension, earning a doctorate of education from the University of Missouri has given her a personal satisfaction of learning, which she feels has made her a better person and leader.

Leuci has worked for Extension for more than 22 years and holds a bachelor's degree in agriculture with a focus on plant sciences and a master's degree in adult and higher education, also from MU.

In addition to her duties as assistant dean, which include creating internship opportunities and integrating teaching and research with Extension, Leuci provides administrative program leadership to community development faculty on the MU, UMSL and UMKC campuses, and 20 faculty community development specialists across the state.

Eight years ago, Leuci decided to pursue a doctorate to give her “more tools to work with” in her career. She looked at various distance education programs across the country and found them to be too expensive. With her daughter's future college education to consider, she did not want to take out a loan for her own education. When a colleague suggested Leuci enroll in the

university's cooperative [Educational Leadership Program](#), Leuci was please to discover the program not only met her criteria and was highly ranked, but with the help of the Employee Educational Assistance program she would be able to obtain her degree without sacrificing her family's finances.

Co-workers often ask Leuci about her experiences with the educational assistance program. "I tell them it's fantastic," she said. "You have a university benefit that if you had to go out and buy otherwise would be quite costly."

Leuci's advice to employees who are considering going back to school is to think about their other commitments and be motivated and ready to learn. She also found the support of her husband, friends, family and co-workers to be invaluable. "Because we're an institution of higher education, it's been my experience that we're also very supportive of employees seeking to enhance their education," she said.

Leuci's greatest motivation to complete her doctorate? To show her daughter the value of education and that it is possible for her to have a family and a career, while still continuing to learn and better herself.

Bill's story

Bill Ghiselli, now retired, joined the faculty of UMKC as an assistant professor with hopes of conducting research on animal behavior. When he realized that type of research wasn't going to be feasible, he had to redirect his research interests, which meant taking additional graduate-level courses.

Ghiselli, who holds a bachelor's degree from San Francisco State University and a master's and doctoral degree from the University of Pittsburgh, turned to the university for help with tuition. Through an earlier version of employee educational assistance in the mid-70s, Ghiselli was able to take classes at the University of Kansas for half the cost.

Ghiselli pursued coursework in human development and family living and worked in the full-term human nursery at KU's medical center—a move that changed his direction from animal research to development disabilities in humans. "It shot me off on a new academic track," Ghiselli said.

He acknowledged that going back to school is difficult, especially for older employees and those with families. For faculty members continuing their education, Ghiselli recommends a year's sabbatical, if possible. "Otherwise," he said, "it's work all day, school all night."

Who is eligible to receive Employee Educational Assistance?

All regular employees and employees retired from the university can receive a 75 percent discount for up to six credit hours of University of Missouri college-level courses per semester and up to three credit hours in the summer session. For more details on the Employee Educational Assistant program, see the [employee handbook](#) or tune in to our [podcast](#) with Vice President for Human Resources Betsy Rodriguez.

Can employees take classes “just for fun?”

The savings are even greater for those who would like to take a course “just for fun” or without receiving credit (or having to worry about grades); there is no cost for employees to audit a course.

What about educational fee reduction for spouse and dependents?

Spouses and dependents of employees who have been employed full time by the university for at least five years are eligible to receive a 50 percent reduction of educational fees for up to 140 hours of University of Missouri college-level credit hours. For the average undergraduate course load (120 hours), this benefit translates to a savings of nearly \$15,000. For information regarding educational fee reductions for spouses and dependents of employees, see the employee handbook or click [here](#).

Faculty members and student honored at Presidential Awards Ceremony



Drs. Harris and Spilling with President Forsee; Photo by Bruce Mathews

The University of Missouri System honored six faculty members and one student in an awards ceremony hosted by UM system President Gary Forsee and his wife, Sherry, on June 4, 2009, at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. President Forsee congratulated the award winners and thanked them for their contributions to their professions and dedication to the university.

Curators’ Award for Scholarly Excellence

The Curators’ Award for Scholarly Excellence is given annually to the author of the most outstanding book by a faculty member from any one of the four campuses and published by the University of Missouri Press.

University of Missouri Board of Curators Chair Bo Fraser presented the Curators’ Award for Scholarly Excellence to Tom Quirk, professor of English at the University of Missouri-

Columbia, for his book *Mark Twain and Human Nature*. Quirk's book is a meditation on Twain's understanding of human nature and how it evolved and deepened, as well as the social and scientific context that shaped Twain's thinking. An editor on other books about Mark Twain called Quirk's book "essential reading for any student or scholar" and "one of the most important books attempting to come to terms with the evolution of Twain's 'gospel of man'—especially his preoccupation with human nature—to be written."

Presidential Award for Research and Creativity

This award recognizes a faculty member with a sustained record of national and international quality research and creativity.

The Presidential Award for Research and Creativity was presented to Miles Patterson, professor of psychology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Patterson is a leading international scholar in the area of nonverbal communication and has systematically developed a program of research that includes three major theories, two of which have been published in *Psychology Review*, the most prestigious and selective theory outlet in psychology. Patterson is the author of 89 publications, including two books, 20 chapters in scholarly publications and numerous empirical, review and theoretical articles.

Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching

This award recognizes a faculty member for long-term contributions to teaching.

John E. Adams, professor of chemistry at the University of Missouri-Columbia, received the Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching. Adams, who teaches general chemistry courses containing as many as 900 students, is known for delivering captivating lectures as well as ensuring students complete hands-on work to better prepare them in their field. An early adopter of integrating the Internet into his curriculum, Adams now uses a variety of technologies, including podcasts and RSS feeds, to keep his students engaged. "Students love to be taught by professors like Dr. Adams," said one former student. "He breathes life and excitement into a classroom and has an insatiable desire to see students succeed in their lives and careers."

Thomas Jefferson Award

This award honors a faculty member who best exemplifies the ideals of Thomas Jefferson.

The Thomas Jefferson Award was presented to David Geary, curators' professor in the psychological sciences department at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Geary is a world-renowned experimenter, theoretician and synthesizer who has made numerous contributions to the understanding of the human mind, its evolutionary basis and the need for education. Geary has been the recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Faculty Research and Creative Activity in the Behavioral and Social Sciences in 1996, and was named the Frederick A. Middlebush Professor of the Social Sciences from 2000-2003. He was named a curators' professor in 2005. As one nominator said of Geary: "His intellect is unsurpassed, his grasp of diverse material in all its complexity is amazing, and his ability to see how the larger issues fit together is awe inspiring."

Faculty Entrepreneur of the Year Award

This award honors a faculty member for a record of entrepreneurial innovation that demonstrates commercial utility, contributes to the public welfare, and brings visibility to the University of Missouri.

University of Missouri-St. Louis chemistry professors Wesley R. Harris and Christopher D. Spilling were presented with the Faculty Entrepreneur Award. Spilling and Harris have developed a device to help protect the nearly half million premature infants born each year from the toxic effects of aluminum used in intravenous feeding solutions. Along with colleagues from the University of Kentucky, Spilling and Harris formed the private firm ALKYMOS to further develop and bring this and related technologies to market. Their venture has already yielded two patent applications and a license for patent rights. The technology could be in hospitals as early as 2010. In the words of one nominator: "Their ability to translate insightful fundamental chemical research findings from the development of a product for routine applications in human applications via a new company is a premier example...of faculty entrepreneurship."

Student Entrepreneur of the Year Award

This award honors a University of Missouri student who has shown entrepreneurial potential.

University of Missouri-Columbia student Corey Daniel Rimmel was honored with the Student Entrepreneur of the Year Award for his business venture Hot Box Cookies, which, as the only late-night cookie delivery company in Columbia, has enjoyed great success. Rimmel opened Hot Box Cookies Oct. 17, 2008, after crafting a business plan, obtaining a Small Business Association loan and securing a prime downtown location. Rimmel expects to graduate with a bachelor's degree in business administration in May 2010, and is involved in numerous extracurricular activities, including serving as recruitment chair for Zeta Beta Tau fraternity and a volunteer coach for a seventh grade basketball team. "Corey has done more than simply develop a new technology or process to be patented," said one nominator. "He embodies the true entrepreneurship spirit by accepting the necessary risks to implement the idea."

C. Brice Ratchford Memorial Fellowship Award

This award recognizes a faculty member who personifies the creativity, vision and leadership exhibited by the late Dr. C. Brice Ratchford, president emeritus of the University of Missouri and dean of cooperative extension.

Michael Quart, vice provost for Extension and director of cooperative Extension, presented Ronald Turner, executive vice president emeritus of cooperative Extension, with the C. Brice Ratchford Memorial Fellowship Award. During his tenure, Turner demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to advancing the university's land-grant mission through Extension, international education and agricultural economics programs. Turner participated in the peace efforts in Ireland, the positioning of the University of the Western Cape as an important resource in advancing anti-apartheid in South Africa, and as a consultant for the U.S. Higher Education Association Committee on Iraq. Turner is also responsible for the establishment of numerous inter-agency agreements, centers and activities. According to one nominator: "The hallmark of Ron's leadership is the tremendous demonstration of accountability to do the right thing, make the right decision or go the extra mile."

Caring for Missourians gets a boost from one-time funds



The University of Missouri, along with the state's other public four- and two-year institutions, received a boost to the Caring for Missourians initiative in the form of one-time funds last month. The initiative's original goal was to gradually increase health care-related class sizes by an average of 20 percent to address the state's shortfall of health professionals.

The university's share, \$24.3 million, will allow the university to increase health care programs graduates on a temporary basis. Here's a breakdown of how the funds will be used, by campus and college or school (detailed descriptions of proposed use of the funds appear below):

- MU Health Professions: \$1.6 million
- MU Medicine: \$6 million
- MU Nursing: \$1.7 million
- UMKC Dentistry: \$2.1 million
- UMKC Medicine: \$5.6 million
- UMKC Pharmacy: \$2.2 million
- UMKC Nursing: \$1.8 million
- UMSL Nursing: \$1.8 million
- UMSL Optometry: \$750,000

Note: While the Missouri University of Science and Technology does not offer health care education programs, University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee and Missouri S&T Chancellor John F. Carney III are exploring options to use the funds to improve health care in Missouri.

Department of Physical Therapy at MU

The Department of Physical Therapy will create an additional clinical skills laboratory, and purchase necessary equipment and distance education technology. These changes will allow the

department to support an increase in class size from 40 to 44 for the doctorate of physical therapy (DPT) class beginning in June 2010.

Department of Occupational Therapy at MU

The Department of Occupational Therapy will expand lecture room capacity, create a new skills laboratory and teaching laboratories, hire a fieldwork coordinator and purchase distance education technology. These changes will allow the occupational therapy class size to be expanded from 24 to 30 on a permanent basis starting in the Fall 2009 semester.

Department of Communication Science and Disorders at MU

The Department of Communication Science and Disorders will hire three half-time instructors for three years, fund renovation costs and purchase equipment for a teaching laboratory for master's and doctoral students. Over the course of three years, these changes should enable the department to add eight students at the undergraduate level, four at the master's level, and three at the doctoral level. Additionally, the funds will be used to develop a distance education program, which will permanently add eight undergraduate students per year.

Department of Cardiopulmonary and Diagnostic Sciences

The Department of Cardiopulmonary and Diagnostic Sciences will fund faculty positions to temporarily increase class size in the bachelor's of health sciences respiratory therapy program from 16 to 20 students per class beginning in the fall of 2010. The department will also fund one additional faculty member and the purchase of equipment needed to permanently expand enrollment in the master's diagnostic medical ultrasound program by five students per year. The remaining funds will be used for renovations and equipment replacement in the radiography teaching laboratory, which will allow for an increase of four students in the radiologic sciences program in 2010, as well as the purchase of distance education technology to promote expanded online instruction and to allow for the development of online courses in the new master's program in nuclear medicine. The increase in class size will result in a corresponding permanent increase in the number of graduates in the two-year radiologic sciences program from 15 to 19 in 2013. The increase in the class size of the two-year respiratory therapy program will result in a temporary increase of four graduates in the 2013 graduating class. The increase in the class size of the two-year master's in diagnostic in ultrasound program will result in a temporary increase of five additional graduates in the 2013 graduating class.

MU School of Medicine

The MU School of Medicine will create new problem-based learning labs and increase faculty resources to accommodate a larger class size; create the Mizzou Preparation for Medical School program, with the goal of helping rural, socio-economically disadvantaged, minority and other nontraditional students gain admission and achieve success in medical school; enhance academic support to successfully graduate enrolled medical students; and develop new learning methods and training sites. These changes will allow the medical school to increase class size by eight students per year for two years, resulting in a total of 16 additional physicians by 2015.

MU School of Nursing

The School of Nursing at MU will increase the number of nurses in the accelerated bachelor's degree and doctoral degree, with a focus on preparing nurses for the workforce and to serve as

nurse educators. This effort will allow for the education and training of 10 accelerated BSN students and 10 doctoral students who will be prepared to become nursing faculty members.

UMKC School of Dentistry

Beginning this fall, the School of Dentistry at UMKC will renovate facilities to make room for additional students in preclinical laboratories. The school plans to add a total of 17 new students from fall 2010 through fall 2013; five students in fall 2010 and four students per year in 2011, 2012 and 2013. New students admitted to this expanded class will be heavily recruited from disadvantaged backgrounds.

UMKC School of Medicine

The School of Medicine at UMKC will initiate a one-time enrollment increase and aggressive, sustained retention efforts to increase its average graduating class size from 90 to 105 over a three-year period. The school will also facilitate creative approaches to the use of scholarships and waivers to help attract the most highly-sought after students in Missouri.

UMKC School of Nursing

UMKC's School of Nursing will increase enrollment and graduation in the MSN program, with an emphasis on the role of nurse educators, by 12 students each year. The school will also increase enrollment in the doctoral program education by a minimum of three students each year. Additionally, the school will expand online access.

UMSL College of Nursing

The College of Nursing at UMSL plans to hire a combination of non-tenure-track faculty and temporary staff, renovate existing space and purchase new equipment to support an increase in enrollment. Additionally, the college will seek creative approaches to build on collaborative relationships between the three schools of nursing within the University of Missouri System in the area of graduate education. These changes will allow for an increase of 16 BSN students, 10 MSN nurse educator students and five doctoral students over the next several years.

UMSL Optometry

The College of Optometry at UMSL will hire additional non-tenure-track faculty, provide additional tuition assistance, and invest in new technology and laboratory equipment to support an increase of 16 additional optometrists between 2014 and 2017.

News briefs



University of Missouri-St. Louis professor elected to the National Academy of Sciences

Robert Ricklefs, curators' professor of biology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, recently became the only Missourian elected to the National Academy of Sciences for 2009.

Established in 1863, the National Academy of Sciences is an honorific society with more than 2,100 members, nearly 200 of whom have won Nobel Prizes. Election to the academy is considered one of the highest honors bestowed upon a scientist or engineer.

"It is a great honor and responsibility," said Ricklefs, who has been a professor at UMSL for more than a decade. "I think it also is a testament to the high quality of faculty at the University of Missouri-St. Louis."

UMSL Chancellor Tom George commended Ricklefs on his accomplishment. "This is clearly a tribute to his prowess as a scientist and academician, and reflects well on the overall caliber of our young institution," said George. "Ricklefs is indeed part of a very select group." Ricklefs has authored or co-authored four books, including two popular textbooks, nearly 300 papers and more than 80 articles. His research interests include evolutionary biology with a focus on the diversification of birds, their growth and life histories, but he has also studied the evolution of plants and other organisms.

He has received numerous awards, including the Fellows' Award from the St. Louis Academy of Sciences and the President's Award for Research and Creativity from the University of Missouri System.

Ricklefs earned his bachelor's degree from Stanford University and doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania.

University of Missouri System reorganization

Last month, University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee announced plans to streamline administration at the system level—a move that will allow the system to invest more of its resources in strategic priorities, such as distance education and economic development/intellectual property. A reduction in system staff, coupled with the continuation of the hiring freeze and current cost-reduction guidelines, will provide budget support for these strategic priorities.

Forsee approved plans to eliminate 22 positions at every level of the UM system office, including human resources, finance and administration, government relations, academic affairs, the president's office and the board of curators office. This number includes the seven positions eliminated from the University of Missouri Press in March.

"It is always difficult to make decisions that either eliminate positions or add more work to already productive employees," Forsee said. "As stewards of the state's resources, we are obliged to look carefully at our organizational structure and dedicate resources to our top-level strategic priorities. It is important to enter the next fiscal year with a clear plan for our future - one that focuses on our mission and provides the necessary resources."

Individuals whose positions were eliminated as result of the reorganization have received [transition assistance](#) and access to health care commensurate with their years of service to the university.

The systemwide hiring freeze and other cost-reduction guidelines are still in effect, though the individual campuses of the University of Missouri System retain the ability to address critical positions and vacancies as needed.

Capital projects planned

The General Assembly gave final approval to [House Bill 22](#) last month, providing funding for various capital projects at the University of Missouri. These projects include all of the remaining Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative projects, including Ellis Fischel Cancer Center, Benton-Stadler Hall at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and a number of facilities at the UM agricultural research centers across the state.

Ellis Fischel Cancer Center will be relocated from its existing location on Business Loop 70 in Columbia to University Hospital. The new Ellis Fischel will be housed on the first two floors of the Patient Care Tower, planned for the north side of the hospital, behind the main lobby. The eight-story tower will also include space for support services, operating rooms, pre- and post-operation bays, and private patient rooms. Construction on the tower will begin July 2009 and is slated for completion by Dec. 2012. The total cost of the tower is \$203 million, \$31 million of which will be funded by the state.

Students present research at the state Capitol

Fifty-three students from all four campuses presented their research at the annual Undergraduate Research Day at the state Capitol in April. The event showcases the unique opportunities undergraduate students from the University of Missouri have to participate in research with faculty. Students display their research projects on posters and are available to share information about their educational experiences and opportunities with legislators.

“This is a unique opportunity for our students to share their research experiences as the university,” said Kandis Smith, UM assistant vice president for academic affairs. “It is also a great opportunity for them to shine and for our legislators to see the exciting work our students and faculty are doing across the university system.”

Research topics ranged from construction of an ethanol sensor to establishing the authenticity of questionable museum artifacts to the problem of space trash. Many of the students also presented their research at campus, regional and national symposia and conferences.

In addition to demonstrating the benefits of hands-on learning, Undergraduate Research Day organizers say the event provides leadership development, improves collaborative problem solving and promotes professional development.

With more than 47,000 undergraduate students, the University of Missouri plays a major role in undergraduate education in the state.

New student representative to the board of curators appointed

Missouri University of Science and Technology student Laura Confer was appointed to the University of Missouri Board of Curators by Gov. Jay Nixon at the June 4 board meeting. Confer, 19, will be a junior at Missouri S&T in the fall and is studying mechanical engineering.

“I’m honored to be appointed to this position and look forward to serving the students, faculty and staff of the university,” said Confer. “I would like to thank the governor and the Intra-Student Council of the four campuses for giving me this opportunity to serve.”

Confer is a 2007 graduate of Rockwood Summit High School in Fenton, Mo. She serves as a leader in Missouri S&T’s Preview, Registration and Orientation (PRO) program for incoming students, and as a campus service officer. She has also served as vice president of Phi Eta Sigma, an honorary society.

Confer has replaced Tony Luetkemeyer, who was appointed student representative to the board in 2007.

Research news



MU researcher helps complete bovine genome sequence

Jerry Taylor, professor and Wurdack Endowed Chair of Animal Genomics in the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, worked with a group of international researchers to sequence the bovine genome.

Taylor led the development of the bovine “HapMap,” which shows genetic diversity among different breeds of cattle. The bovine genome project took six years to complete and consists of 22,000 genes, making it more similar to the human genome than that of mice or rats. To read more about Taylor’s research, click [here](#).

UMKC researchers study circadian rhythms of fruit flies to better understand human sleep disorders

Researchers at the UMKC School of Biological Sciences found similarities between the “cellular machinery” that regulates circadian rhythms in fruit flies and a corresponding component in humans.

The circadian rhythm is an “internal clock” present in humans and most animals responsible for an organism’s daily biological activity, including waking up at the same time every day. Jeffrey

Price, associate professor of molecular biology and biochemistry, and his team published their findings in the prestigious journal *Genetics*. To read more about Price's research, click [here](#).

Researchers at Missouri S&T look for ways to curtail the effects of explosives on buildings

Researchers at Missouri S&T, along with researchers at 10 other universities, are part of the Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence program ALERT (Awareness and Localization of Explosives-Related Threats).

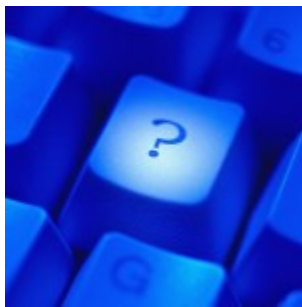
John Baird, associate professor of mining and nuclear engineering and the project's principal investigator, leads explosive detonations to simulate the effects of explosives on buildings and other large structures at the university's experimental mine. To learn more about ALERT and Baird's research, click [here](#).

UMSL partners with two other universities to form research alliance

The University of Missouri-St. Louis has teamed up with the Institute for Urban Research at Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville and RegionWise at Saint Louis University to create the Applied Research Collaborative (ARC), a regional data service center for local government and nonprofits.

The mission of the collaborative is to assist local governmental and nonprofit organizations with community improvements using local data. ARC will also issue reports on regional trends and host conferences on regional issues. To learn more about ARC, click [here](#).

Reader question of the month



What is your department doing to keep expenses low? Has your department found a clever way to cut costs? Maybe you started a grassroots campaign to shut down computers at the end of the workday, your department is reusing sticky notes or your co-workers remind each other to turn off their lights when they leave their offices.

Spectrum wants to hear from you! Let us know what your department is doing, and we will publish the best money-saving tips in the next issue.