

Tax-increase campaign gains momentum

By TERRY JORDAN

A tax increase for education and reforms to higher education might be on the ballot in November. The two-part measure, called the Economic Survival Act of 1991, consists of Senate Bill No. 353, which calls for specific improvements and reforms in higher education, and Senate Bill No. 354, which would provide the funding for the package. Sen. James L. Mathewson, D-Sedalia, introduced the legislation on Jan. 24.

If approved, the plan would take effect in 1992. By 1994, it would raise an additional \$347 million annually, to be allocated as follows: higher education, \$247 million; elementary and secondary education, \$77 million; and job training and development, \$23 million.

"This is the most important issue facing the University this decade, and perhaps in our lifetimes," says Chancellor Haskell Monroe.

Q. Why support this measure?

A. Missouri ranks 48th in the nation in support of higher education per person—a particularly discouraging statistic when you consider that the state is ranked 27th in its ability to pay for public services. Because of chronic underfunding, MU is burdened with \$54.4 million in deferred maintenance. During the next 10 years, one-third of the University's current

faculty will retire. At current funding levels, Mizzou would not be able to replace that level of quality.

Also, between 1978 and 1988, the

percentage of the state's appropriations to higher education dropped 5 percent. Students and their parents have had to pick up a large part of the slack, and tuition at MU rose 159 percent in those same 10 years.

Q. How would Mathewson's plan help correct this situation?

A. The Economic Survival Act of 1991 would, among other improvements, enable more students to attend college or an advanced training institute, create schools that are more competitive, and provide training for a work force trying to keep up with changing technology. It also would freeze tuition for three years.

Q. What does MU stand to gain?

A. The University would benefit from increased funding for building and equipment maintenance, student aid, minority recruitment and research projects. "For every research dollar we spent, we could bring at least one back to the state in federal money," says state Sen. Roger Wilson, M Ed '86, D-Columbia. "That helps us all."

Q. How would the plan help the state's youth?

A. The measure could enable 25,000 more Missourians to attend college or an advanced training institute, Wilson says. "Statistics show that a college graduate will earn \$800,000 more in his or her lifetime than someone who never attended college, and will pay an additional \$48,000 in taxes," he adds.

Q. What are some of the reforms?

A. The Mathewson plan calls for stronger efforts to measure student academic performance, tying degree programs to the needs of business and industry, and giving more power to the Coordinating Board for Higher

**For
Missouri's
Future**



The architect

James L. Mathewson, D-Sedalia, president pro tem of the Missouri Senate.

Born March 16, 1938, in Warsaw, Mo., and educated in the Warsaw public schools.

Attended Redding (Calif.) Junior College and California State University in Chico.

In his own words: "I didn't graduate from college. I'm doing this to provide a better future for my children and grandchildren."

Proposed funding of the plan

Missouri Corporate Income Tax
— raise rate from 5% to 6% on income over \$335,000.

Missouri Income Tax
— cap individual federal income tax deduction at \$14,000.

Missouri Sales Tax
— increase rate one-fourth of a cent.

Cigarette Tax
— raise rate from 13 to 17 cents a pack.

Missouri Corporate Income Tax
— cap federal tax deduction at 50% beginning in 1993.

Education, including the ability to close programs.

Q. What is MU's reaction to these reforms?

A. The University has made gains in many of these areas already, says Dr. Gerald Brouder, deputy chancellor and interim provost. Tougher admission standards will take effect this fall. A total of 81 percent of the 1989 freshman class returned for their sophomore year, giving Mizzou the best retention rate among all public colleges and universities in the state. The black student population is up from 879 to 965, and the number of black freshmen rose 11 percent last fall. Assessment measures showed that MU students scored above the national average in most areas, particularly in engineering, nursing and health-related professions. And since 1986, MU has eliminated 13 degree programs and closed the College of Public and Community Services, redirecting its programs and fiscal resources to other divisions.

Q. Why is 1991 such an important year for this issue?

A. The measure has a better chance of passing in 1991 because it is not an election year, says state Rep. Ken Jacob, D-Columbia, who is proposing a bill in the Missouri House that is similar to Mathewson's plan. "This is the year. This is our window of opportunity," says Jacob, BS Ed '71, M Ed '76, MPA '86, JD '89.

Q. What groups support the plan?

A. Missourians for Higher Education, the Missouri Farm Bureau, the Society of Professional Engineers, Kansas City Consensus and the Civic Council of Kansas City have endorsed the package.

Q. What aspects of the plan are expected to be contested as it moves through the Legislature?

A. Most discussions are expected to center around governance of the higher education system, or the amount of power that should be placed in the Coordinating Board for Higher Education. Dr. Charles J. McClain, M Ed '57, EdD '61, Missouri commissioner of higher education, notes that the plan contains most aspects of the Missouri Business and Education Partnership Commission's final report. "But there are some differences between the two plans, and I hope we can work them out," McClain says. The funding structure also is expected to attract some attention.

Q. How many votes are needed to pass in the Legislature?

A. Passage requires 18 votes in the Senate and 82 in the House.

Q. What would it cost me?

A. The average Missouri resident would pay about \$60 more a year.

Q. Why vote for a tax increase in the middle of a recession?

A. The current economic situation points to the need for these types of improvements. Webb Gilmore, JD

'73, president of the UM System Board of Curators, says Missourians will pass a tax increase if the purpose is a good one. "Missourians never pass a tax increase just because times are good," he adds.

Q. What can I do to help?

A. Jim Snider, UM System lobbyist, suggests that alumni contact friends, relatives and acquaintances across Missouri and urge them to call or write their state senator and representatives. "Tell them that we deserve the chance to vote on this issue," says Snider, BS Ed '69, M Ed '71, JD '77. "Even if you're not for the plan, you can't argue with our right to vote. We're just asking that it be placed on the ballot." □

Groups show support

MU's varied constituencies — alumni, parents, students and friends — are working to help ensure the passage of Mathewson's legislation.

The MU Alumni Association; LINC, the Association's legislative information network committee; the MU Parents Association; and the Missouri Students Association all have begun projects to help in the campaign.

Alumni leaders across Missouri are being asked to contact at least 10 others in their districts, urging them to write or call their legislators. "If Missouri is going to attract businesses and jobs in the coming years, it must have the best educational system it possibly can," says Association President Bob Dixon, BJ '56, of Springfield, Ill. LINC, meanwhile, is asking more than 400 of its members to visit personally with legislators. "We want and deserve the chance to vote on the issue," says Chairman Joe Moseley, AB '71, JD '76, of Columbia. LINC also plans to sponsor legislative forums across the state in the fall.

The parents' group, with financial help from the Association, sent letters to more than 12,000 parents of MU students Feb. 1. The letters urge the parents to contact their legislators. "We're concerned about a number of issues, including a possible 12 percent increase in tuition this fall," says Harold Crumpton of St. Louis, past president of the MU Parents Association. "We think there's a better way." Students will begin a letter-writing campaign this spring and voter registration drives in the fall, says MSA President David Ridley, a sophomore arts and science major from Rolla.

"When all is said and done, the University has one function: to produce high-quality graduates who can improve our standard of life," says Chancellor Haskell Monroe. "This package can help us achieve that."

