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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



Alden gets 5-year extension

BY VAHE GREGORIAN
OF THE POST-DISPATCH
11:04 AM, 07/20/09

Riding the crest of arguably the most successful athletic year in Mizzou history, the University of Missouri has extended athletics director Mike Alden's contract for five years through June 30, 2017.

"Mike Alden's accomplishments at Mizzou have been nothing short of amazing," MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said in a statement released Thursday, adding, "We hope extending Mike's contract will help assure this continued success in all areas."

The extension calls for no immediate increase to Alden's base salary of \$287,735 (approximately ninth in the Big 12) or guaranteed overall income of \$537,375 (approximately fifth in the conference).

After June 30, 2010, Alden's salary will be subject to annual review. But according to terms of the contract, increases "if any, will be limited to the average increase in salaries of the Columbia campus for the same period."

Alden enters his 12th year at MU off a springboard of widespread success among his programs.

Last school year, Mizzou claimed Big 12 titles in softball and soccer. The men's basketball team won the Big 12 tournament and advanced to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament, and the football team won its second straight Big 12 North title.

Moreover, MU athletic programs have thrived academically in recent years, with all 23 football seniors graduating last year. Overall, the program is

consistently among the Big 12 leaders in Academic Progress Rates. According to the school, MU last year ranked as the national leader among BCS public institutions in the rating.

"I firmly believe (the extension) is a direct reflection of the outstanding job that our coaches, staff and student-athletes are continuing to do here," Alden said in a statement, adding, "This allows us the opportunity to continue to be here for a long time, and we're very grateful for that."

The★Star

THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Posted on Thu, Aug. 06, 2009

Mizzou notes: A.D. Alden gets five-year extension

By MIKE DEARMOND

COLUMBIA | Extra money from Mike Alden's five-year contract extension as Missouri's athletic director will come only if Mizzou athletes continue to excel in athletics and academics.

The extension, which MU Chancellor Brady Deaton announced Thursday, will run through June 30, 2017. But Alden, starting his 12th year as athletic director, will still receive the same base salary of \$287,375 with a guaranteed annual income of \$537,375.

And, according to MU's statement regarding the extension, the guaranteed amount ranks Alden fifth among athletic directors in the Big 12 Conference.

"Under Mike's leadership, Mizzou athletic programs have made significant strides in the classroom, leading all BCS schools in academic performance and doing a remarkable job on the field as well," MU system president Gary Forsee said in that statement.

Alden said: "This is a direct reflection of the outstanding job that our coaches, staff and student-athletes are continuing to do here.

"Mizzou is home for myself (wife) Rockie and (son) Jake; it's where we've always wanted to be.

"This allows us the opportunity to continue to be here for a long time."

Any extra pay for Alden will depend on whether Missouri continues to achieve academic, athletic and financial goals of the department and on Alden's remaining at the school for the next five years.

MORE MU NOTES

•**STILL HONORING O'NEAL:** Zaviar Gooden, a redshirt freshman linebacker from Pflugerville, Texas, will wear the late Aaron O'Neal's No. 25 this season and throughout his career in what coach Gary Pinkel hopes will become a tradition. When Gooden completes his career, another freshman linebacker will be assigned No. 25 in honor of O'Neal, who collapsed and died after a summer workout as a redshirt freshman.

Last season, which would have been O'Neal's final one as a Tiger, a different player wore the number in each game.

•**FREEMAN ON HOLD:** Chris Freeman, a 6-foot-7, 325-pound freshman offensive lineman from Trotwood, Ohio, is not on MU's current roster.

"He's still going through the (NCAA) eligibility center," Pinkel said. "We've got to wait and see how that works out."

•**RED JERSEYS:** Linebacker Josh Tatum and wide receiver T.J. Moe wore protective red jerseys in MU's first practice Thursday. Tatum underwent back surgery in May and Moe foot surgery in February. Both are expected to be back to full speed before preseason camp ends.

•**PAY-PER-VIEW GAMES:** A specially designated Fox Sports pay-per-view channel will provide live coverage of two Missouri football games this season. The Tigers' games against Bowling Green at 6 p.m. Sept. 12 and Furman at 1 p.m. Sept. 19, which were not selected for any other broadcast coverage, will not pre-empt Fox Sports Midwest's regular programming.

That assures Missouri's first five games will be televised, and that's a first. ESPN will carry the Sept. 5 game against Illinois in St. Louis, a Sept. 25 game at Nevada and the Oct. 8 home game against Nebraska.



Alden's MU contract extended to 2017

Thursday, August 6, 2009

Advertisement

The University of Missouri has extended Athletic Director Mike Alden's contract by five years.

Alden's contract, which had run until Aug. 31, 2012, will expire June 30, 2017. The extension is "designed to support the continuation of Alden's successful, quality athletic programs and his priority on student-athlete academic performance and sound financial management," according to an announcement from MU on Thursday afternoon.

The extension does not guarantee any salary increases, but it gives Alden the potential to earn bonuses if he achieves specific performance goals and remains at MU for at least five years.

Alden is currently guaranteed a salary of \$537,375, which includes a base salary of \$287,375. He is entering his 12th year as MU's athletic director.

13 reader comments

The opinions expressed below are those of the readers who submitted them and not those of the Tribune's reporters or editors. Readers are solely responsible for the content of their comments.

Hawk1 says...

Too bad.

August 6, 2009 at 5:34 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



Adam says...

I know that he'll never win over some of his detractors, but Mizzou is smart to keep Alden. He has been instrumental in making football successful at Mizzou. Mizzou's fundraising and facilities have improved drastically during his tenure. Several smaller programs, like wrestling, baseball, and softball, have experienced great success the last 10 years.

The one major blemish on his record is the Quin Snyder saga, but Alden seems to have learned from those mistakes, and he has rectified that situation by hiring (and retaining) Mike Anderson. Mizzou's athletics as a whole have never been in better shape.

Now let the whining about AD pay versus professor pay commence.

August 6, 2009 at 5:36 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



Duke12 says...

If there were as many qualified Div. 1 athletic directors as there are professors, I am sure the pay would be similar.

August 6, 2009 at 6:25 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



Betweenthelines says...

"Whining"....good one. It's only money. What do we really care? More than half of the world's inhabitants make \$2 per day or less. At half a million per year, that's only about 684% of the "average" human on this planet. I'm glad I'm so much closer to the "average"....bet I'm way happier and I know I have much less to worry about.

August 6, 2009 at 6:26 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



Duke12 says...

Even in those countries where people make 2 bucks a day, there is still a rich guy somewhere. And the disparity between those workers and that guy making all the cash is a lot bigger than the disparity between us and people like Mike Alden.

August 6, 2009 at 7:55 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



dspfzf says...

Professor pay at Mizzou pails in comparison to other public universities at their level, but that's not AD's fault. That is the General Assembly's responsibility to help the University of Missouri attract and retain the best talent possible.

August 6, 2009 at 8:15 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



Politico says...

Alden is great for MU, and I am happy to see this happen. Alden's salary as I understand it will be paid out of the sports budget, which he has greatly increased revenue to his rebuilding of our program. Anyone familiar with the system can also tell you that happy sports alumni give not only to sports, but to the UMC as well. Granted he had the "Q-word" (he who shall not be named) fiasco...but other than that, he had done a great job for men and women's sports. Not sure why he keeps the women's basketball coach, but oh well.

August 6, 2009 at 8:35 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



hadenuffl says...

To a large extent the Snyder years were brought to us by Bill and Nancy Laurie, remember Paige arena? Cut from the same cloth.

That said, it's a sad commentary when an educational institution doubles as a farm team (plantation, if you will), for the NBA and NFL. At least MLB has a legitimate farm system. Why not do away with the hypocrisy about these "student" athletes and call it what it is; play without the pay.

As for Alden, what kind of message does this send to academia, when the Athletic Director, who has no academic standing, or, respect for that matter, makes 5-10 times what a professor or asst professor makes?

August 6, 2009 at 9:49 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



skeptical says...

It says that there are far fewer excellent athletic directors than professors. Supply and demand. To echo Politico, "Anyone familiar with the system can also tell you that happy sports alumni give not only to sports, but to the UMC as well."

In a fair world, professors get paid more. But it's not, and it never will be, so we might as well take advantage of the fact that having a good athletic director generates money for the University and the city of Columbia come game day.

August 6, 2009 at 9:58 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



Travelnman says...

Hadenuff, first of all it's your opinion (certainly not fact) that Mike Alden has no respect among academia. I personally know that is not correct. As far as what kind of message it sends how about that those who are good enough to reach the very highest levels of their profession usually are very well compensated?

Perhaps you are unaware that there are several times as many full professors at the University of Missouri than there are BCS school athletic directors in the country. Perhaps you are also unaware that Mike Alden is responsible for generating the vast majority of the revenue for the department he heads and that he is in charge of an approximately \$50 million per year department. You might also be unaware that Mike Alden like every other major college athletic director almost certainly works far more hours than all but a small handful of professors. Or that almost everyone including those who seem to know virtually nothing about his job nevertheless are continually critiquing him on it in the media.

One last thing; since he's been AD he's brought in many times his compensation in new revenue. How many of your professors can claim the same?

Btw, before you accuse me of being a shill for him or whatever I have never met the man though I did send him a couple emails a few years ago asking a question that was promptly answered.

August 6, 2009 at 11:29 p.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



tremors says...

Is he REALLY worth that much \$\$\$? Geeez! In Columbia, a person can make \$60,000 and live fine. Yes, \$100,000 would be better...but, half a million? Can we say excess! Mmmm? Like they said...it's ONLY money...yours, mine, everyone elses.

August 7, 2009 at 7:50 a.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



RMH says...

I know professors who teach two seminar classes a semester and make over 100g's a year. I think Alden works more than 7 times harder than they do. If every professor had the press down their backs daily they would probably lose their jobs. Stop complaining and support the total team effort for 'all we call Mizzou'.

August 7, 2009 at 7:51 a.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))



Max Power says...

Whether you like it or not, sports are the only thing most people talk about when referring to colleges and universities. I've never heard anybody taunt another person about how their J-school is going to whip up on the other's nor have I seen a lot of tailgating on campus outside of classroom buildings. If "your" sports team loses however, you're madder than a wet hen. I've done it and it's silly. There is something very wrong with that.

Sports (college and pros) make the world go 'round. The revenue generated is astronomical because we as a nation (world?), are so obsessed with sports that we will pay outrageous prices to attend events, buy jerseys with our favorites player's name on the back (even thugs with jail time), etc. As such, people associated with these sports teams typically make outrageous salaries. That's just how it is and how it will always be. If it upsets you, you may want to look into a sports career.

Parting note: It is sad to think that Michael Vick jerseys will most likely start to be produced again in the near future. He can throw a football 70-yards though--that's all that really matters, right? Also, have you checked out what it costs to attend a Sprint Cup race? Yikes! Better coverage at home on the boob-tube I say. Boogedy Boogedy Boogedy!

Disclaimer: Max Power is not looking for an argument. Have a good one.

August 7, 2009 at 8:03 a.m. ([link](#) | [suggest removal](#))

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU extends Alden's contract until 2017

By Dieter Kurtenbach

August 6, 2009 | 8:10 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **The MU Board of Curators** agreed Thursday to extend MU Athletic Director Mike Alden's contract from 2012 until 2017.

The extension will offer *no raise* for Alden, whose base salary will remain at \$287,375. However, the contract includes several incentive-based bonuses.

In the new contract, payments will be made to Alden if the athletic department reaches academic and financial goals set out in annual meetings between Alden and MU Chancellor Brady Deaton. The payments will go into an "incentive and retention account" that Alden cannot access until 2014.

If academic goals are met, Alden is entitled to a bonus of two months salary. Half would be paid to Alden at the end of the fiscal year and half would be placed in the account. If the financial goals are met, Alden is entitled up to three months salary, all of which would be paid to the retention account.

In the end, Alden could earn nearly \$120,000 per year towards the retention account. On top of that, \$100,000 will be deposited each year into the account by the university as a "retention incentive."

Along with the retention fund, the university will deposit \$200,000 annually into an annuity for Alden. These deposits will be made until 2016 and can be accessed by Alden at any point during the contract.

Apart from his base salary, Alden will receive \$50,000 annually for remaining the athletic director. That clause has been in place since 2002.

With the new extension, Alden could earn up to \$757,375 per year, though he would not receive all of that money immediately. That figure does not include bonuses Alden could earn based on the performance of the MU football and men's basketball teams each season.

Deaton expressed his admiration of Alden's performance as athletic director in a release.

"Mike Alden's accomplishments at Mizzou have been nothing short of amazing," Deaton said. "He is responsible for building MU's Intercollegiate Athletics to its current status of being a national leader in Division I athletics. He has assembled an outstanding team of coaches, staff and student-athletes, who not only are committed to succeeding athletically, but also are committed to social responsibility and academic success. We hope extending Mike's contract will help assure this continued success in all areas."

Mary Jo Banken, executive director of the MU news bureau, said that the poor economy and the MU hiring freeze made it impossible for the university to increase Alden's base salary, but that the bonuses should make up for it.

Alden replaced former athletic director Joe Castiglione in 1998 when Castiglione accepted the same position at the University of Oklahoma. Before that, Alden had been the director of athletics at Southwest Texas State University since 1996 after spending 11 years working in the Arizona State University athletic department.

Contract extensions are nothing new for Alden. Since taking the MU athletic director job in 1998, he has had seven amendments to his initial contract. This contract extension will be his sixth.

In Alden's time as athletic director, he has faced his fair share of criticism. Quin Snyder, who was Alden's pick to succeed legendary men's basketball coach Norm Stewart, was plagued by scandal during his time with the Tigers. Snyder resigned in 2006 after Alden reportedly sent broadcaster Gary Link to tell Snyder he would not be retained at the end of the season. Alden's handling of the situation put his job in jeopardy.

Alden kept his job though, and MU athletics has thrived recently. Last year, the Tigers won Big 12 tournament championships in basketball, softball and soccer, while the football and baseball teams reached their conference championship games. MU also

became only the third Big 12 school to have a player drafted in the first round of the NBA, NFL and MLB drafts this year.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



08.06.2009 10:39 am

Gov. Jay Nixon continues to push autism insurance bill

By: Tony Messenger

COLUMBIA — A month ago, **Gov. Jay Nixon** said he would use all the power of the governor's office to pass mandatory autism insurance coverage legislation when the General Assembly reconvenes in January.

Today he took his bully pulpit on the road, urging lawmakers to pass a bill similar to one that passed the Senate 29-2 last session with clear, bipartisan support. That bill never came up for a vote in the House, a point Nixon made again this morning at the **Thompson Center for Autism in Columbia**.

"That bill never came up for a vote," Nixon said. "Quite frankly, that was just wrong."

Nixon planned other stops in St. Louis and Kansas City today.

Various lawmakers in both parties have blamed House Speaker **Ron Richard**, R-Joplin for standing in the way of the bill last session.

Richard, who earlier this summer appointed an interim committee to study autism insurance legislation, said through a spokeswoman that he could not yet offer support or criticism of Nixon's proposal because he didn't have enough information.

The spokeswoman criticized Nixon for not giving the speaker's office enough information about the governor's proposal.

Nixon said he would support a bill that required coverage of autism spectrum disorders; that provided specific coverage of applied behavioral analysis therapy, that didn't cap the number of visits on a patient seeking that form of therapy, and that couldn't be canceled because a patient was diagnosed with autism.

His proposal is roughly similar to the plan that passed the Senate.

Janet Farmer, director of academic programs the Thompson Center, which is funded by the University of Missouri, said that autism is the only one of 12 developmental disorders not being covered by most insurance policies. She credited the applied behavioral analysis therapy with being successful in helping autistic children become more functioning.

Many of the families who use Thompson's services, Farmer said, struggle to pay the fees.

"The gaps of coverage cause tremendous economic burden," Farmer said.

Richard has said that he hopes his interim committee comes up with legislation that everybody can support. Nixon challenged that simply isn't going to happen, and lawmakers should support the bill that passed so overwhelmingly in the Senate last year.

"Let's not kid ourselves," Nixon said. "This is not a bill everybody will support. The insurance industry is not going to support this."

Insurance lobbyists opposed the bill last year because they said a mandate of coverage would increase costs to all consumers.

Nixon's director of insurance, **John Huff**, said at the Thompson Center today that such increases will be minor, no more than 1 percent of premium costs, he said.

Tags: autism, Gov. Jay Nixon, insurance, Janet Farmer, ron richard, Tony Messenger

The★Star

THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Posted on Thu, Aug. 06, 2009

Governor wants mandatory insurance coverage for autism in Missouri

By JASON NOBLE The Star's Jefferson City correspondent

COLUMBIA | Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon called Thursday for mandatory insurance coverage for autism, saying the legislation can't wait any longer.

A bill requiring coverage of autism treatments breezed through the state Senate but failed in the House earlier this year.

"A bill that guarantees that insurance providers will cover the most effective treatments for autism must pass this (upcoming) legislative session, and it must include substantial provisions that make real differences for real families," Nixon said in an appearance at an autism clinic affiliated with the University of Missouri.

He also visited Children's Mercy Hospital in Kansas City and an autism center in St. Louis.

Nixon, a Democrat, outlined four requirements that he said are critical to an autism insurance bill:

- Health insurance carriers must provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism.
- Coverage must include specific therapies, and benefits must be capped at no less than \$35,000 a year.
- Coverage must have no limits on how often a patient can visit a doctor.
- Carriers cannot refuse or terminate coverage because of an autism diagnosis.

The Republican-sponsored bill that passed the Senate this year largely met these criteria, and Nixon said Thursday he would have signed it had it passed the House.

The reforms are critical for families with autistic children, Nixon said. Often, without insurance coverage, these families are forced to ask "impossible questions" about how to afford treatment.

In Columbia, the governor was joined by Myles and Lora Hinkel, whose son, Blake, has autism.

"We've sat down late at night (and asked ourselves), 'Do we mortgage our home? Do we move into an apartment? Does Lora stop working? Do I approach my parents yet again for a thousand or \$5,000?' " Myles Hinkel said.

In his comments, Nixon offered a sharp rebuke of the House's failure to consider the bill in floor debate this spring after it passed overwhelmingly in the Senate and was approved by two House committees.

A spokeswoman for House Speaker Ron Richard said the bill was not brought up for a vote because Richard did not have "a strong consensus" to ensure its passage.

In a statement, Richard, a Joplin Republican, chided Nixon for presenting a plan so similar to the one already introduced in the legislature and promised the issue would get a fair hearing.

"Despite Gov. Nixon's recent comments, it is our understanding that all stakeholders are working hard for a compromise and are closing in on a real solution," Richard said, noting the work of an interim committee on the subject.

Nixon, however, said he isn't interested in compromise with one principal stakeholder: the insurance industry.

"This is not about trying to find a bill that every insurance lobbyist in Jefferson City is going to sign off on," he said. "This is about doing something that's right, correct, proven and needs to get done."

Insurance companies contend mandated autism coverage would unfairly raise insurance premiums for all customers.

"If this is a cost society wants to take on, it's not just the insurance-buying public that should be paying for it," said Calvin Call, executive director of the Missouri Insurance Coalition.

The legislative session begins in January.

To reach Jason Noble, call 573-634-3565 or send e-mail to jnoble@kcstar.com.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Gov. Nixon details guiding principles for autism legislation

By Nick Omland

August 6, 2009 | 1:13 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Gov. Jay Nixon made Columbia his first stop Thursday on a tour to outline his priorities for autism legislation.

Those priorities are:

- Health insurance carriers would provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism-spectrum disorders, a range of neurological disorders that can affect communication, behavior and interpersonal relationships.
- The coverage would include applied behavioral analysis therapy, possibly with a cap between \$35,000 and \$55,000 on yearly benefits for it.
- Coverage would have no limits on the number of visits to an autism services provider or for autism-related services.
- Carriers would not refuse to renew or otherwise restrict coverage based solely on autism diagnosis.

"We want to send a clear message that this isn't just about passing an autism bill," Nixon said during his stop at **MU's Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders**. "It's about passing a bill that will do something.

"I wanted to clearly lay this out at the beginning of the debate," Nixon said.

Nixon was to continue his tour Thursday with stops in Kansas City and St. Louis.

The Missouri Senate passed a bill on autism insurance earlier this year, but the House did not vote on it. The Missouri General Assembly will likely take up autism coverage legislation when members meet again in January, Nixon said.

"The hurdle was the fact that Republicans were carrying water for insurance agencies, instead of listening to their constituents," said Rep. Mary Still, D-Columbia.

Myles Hinkel, who has a son with autism, offered a firsthand account of straining to afford treatments. The 6-year-old boy, Blake, sat with his mother and brother at the event, frequently trying to communicate and at one point escaping his mother's grasp and touching the base of the podium from which the governor spoke.

"You can see how an experience like this could be overwhelming for him," Hinkel said later, gesturing to where his squirming son had been seated before his wife took the two boys out. "But what you haven't seen is how much therapy has helped him."

Hinkel said treatments for his son cost a minimum of \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year.

One argument by insurance agencies against legislation that would require them to cover autism is how much it would raise premiums. John Huff, director of the state Department of Insurance and Professional Registration, said that based on information from other states with autism coverage guarantees, premiums wouldn't rise more than 1 percent.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Technological advancements increase human interaction in online classes

By Jenn Ballard

August 6, 2009 | 12:16 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Students in Peggy Wright's human biology class this fall will find themselves cutting up sheep hearts and using microscopes in a different kind of laboratory: their own homes.

Wright, a biology professor at Columbia College, is offering an online course that allows students to do experiments at home with a \$175 lab kit by LabPaq.

The 13 assignments range from simple questions on friends' phenotypes to dissection of a sheep heart. Students are expected to read each lab, take a quiz, complete the lab, do a report and participate in online discussion.

Through advancements in technology, online classes offered in Columbia have been able to provide direct interaction and communication using new audio and video programs that create an environment similar to on-campus courses.

Since 2005, **Columbia College, Stephens College and MU** have seen a combined growth of more than 50 percent in online enrollment. In 2005, total online enrollment at the three schools was about 46,000, compared to more than 71,000 this year.

Columbia College has a nationally known online program, which had an enrollment of 60,000 for the 2008-2009 school year, said Gary Massey, associate dean for adult higher education and online campus for Columbia College.

Massey said the growing popularity in online courses often comes from personal experience.

"As people become more comfortable with the online format, they're like, 'Wow, I wish I would have known about this before,'" he said. "It's just growing in leaps and bounds."

Wright's eight-week, two-credit online biology course starts Aug. 10. For the first day's discussion question, Wright will ask her 20 students to describe their "lab" to ensure they pick the most appropriate place possible, emphasizing that the safety she enforces in the classroom is just as important in her students' own homes.

She set up her lab in her pantry, where she also videotaped and photographed herself performing every experiment to provide visual examples for her students. Wright, who has prepared for her fall courses since January, hopes her hard work pays off.

"That's the challenge for a lab in this format. In a normal lab, I'm right there to answer questions and oversee them," she said. "I hope that the way I built it will provide enough of that."

Meanwhile, this summer, Stephens College has developed its newest online program, Residential Online Summer School, which has "quadrupled beyond expectations" with 79 enrollments, said Amy Gipson, vice president for marketing and public relations.

Before, mainly adult and professional students took online courses, but this summer, the online program offers this same opportunity for traditional, on-campus students, said Zak Birchmeier, coordinator of instructional support at Stephens.

Tara Giblin, a natural sciences professor at Stephens, started teaching an eight-week online version of her Crime Scene Analysis class this summer. The course involves watching videos, discussing crime evaluation in smaller online, interactive groups and participating in go-to meetings, which are live "conference" calls during which Giblin is available for voice chat and discussion.

Stephens freshman Heather Maddock liked the discussion groups.

"I think that they provide a nice way to interact and share opinions," she said. "By doing this, we have been able to work together to write summaries and solve cases."

Senior Tawna Kerr enjoyed the meetings.

"The conference call sessions have been hugely helpful," she said. "Hearing her explain the topic and being able to ask questions at the same time while I'm watching her presentation is incredible. It is just like being in the classroom."

This summer, Stephens expanded its leadership program from a master's program in business administration to an 18-month master's degree in strategic leadership that will be almost completely online, with the exception of a few in-person meetings each semester.

Susan Bartel, department chairwoman of graduate business programs, finds students often benefit from doing coursework on their own schedule. She looks forward to further-evolving technologies.

"The gap between on-campus courses and online courses is getting smaller and smaller," Bartel said.

In its graduate program, Stephens had 347 online-only enrollments and 30 hybrid, or online and on-campus, enrollments this summer, Gipson said.

At MU, eight schools offer online programs in 40 degrees, said Dolores Shearon, marketing director for MU Extension, which administers the online programs. About 5,000 MU students take online courses each year. Most individual classes are taken by undergraduate students, while most online degrees are completed by graduate students, she said.

Linda Esser, an MU library science professor, uses a program called Wimba, which provides online voice conferencing for her children's and teen literature courses.

In each course, students must choose to interact weekly in one of three 90-minute sessions or attend the one session offered on campus. Esser has found each group has its own personality because "no two groups have the same discussion."

Esser said this type of interaction has advantages.

"It's easier to evaluate their progress. It renewed my faith in teaching, honestly," said Esser, an MU professor for 10 years who has gradually begun to work more with online-only classes. "I've really enjoyed it. I'd forgotten how much I missed interacting with students."

Kay Libbus, an MU professor of nursing and women's studies, plans to use live video conferencing through a program called Adobe Connect beginning next summer. Nursing

doctoral students, whose average age is 45, will be better accommodated through the online program, she said.

"We're a bit nervous, but we're also very optimistic," Libbus said.

Online classes have advanced not only at the college level. Columbia Public Schools Superintendent Chris Belcher hopes to develop plans for responsible high school upperclassmen to take both online and on-campus classes next spring.

Eventually, high school students will be able to complete coursework for roughly two to three courses a semester at home, but major exams will be taken on campus, Belcher said. He hopes this approach will prepare students for online courses in the future.

"This is a prime opportunity to change the structure of high schools," he said.

The recent passage of Senate Bill 291 for virtual classroom development offers an opportunity for school districts to receive state aid payments for students taking online classes at the primary and secondary level, said Curt Fuchs, coordinator of education support services for Missouri's Virtual Instructional Program.

Fuchs said the original legislation was passed in 2006 and online classes were offered in Missouri in fall 2007. Missouri is the 24th state to institute a statewide program for online education. Since it began, Missouri's online enrollment has risen 30 percent.

Fuchs said online education will also benefit home-schooled students and smaller school districts that may not be able to offer certain classes.

"I think you're going to see a rapid growth in online education," Fuchs said.