

## [The Columbia Daily Tribune](#)

# Nixon defends approach on higher-ed cuts

## Governor denies micromanaging.

By [Janese Silvey](#)

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When Gov. Jay Nixon ordered a statewide review of college degree programs that graduate only handfuls of students, University of Missouri faculty members cried foul.



Jay Nixon

Why start with academics, some questioned, suggesting instead that the state first ask universities to review top-heavy administrative structures.

Nixon shot down the idea yesterday.

“It’s not in the best interest of quality education for me to attempt to micromanage institutions,” he said.

That’s ironic, said Stephen Montgomery-Smith, a math professor and member of MU’s American Association of University Professors. “The irony of Nixon’s response is obvious since, of course, micromanaging is precisely what” the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Coordinating Board for Higher Education “are actually doing,” he said.

Under Nixon’s charge, the higher education department is requiring colleges to submit to the state a whittled-down inventory of degree programs that produce, on average, fewer than 10 bachelor’s degrees, five master’s degrees and three doctoral degrees a year. MU is still reviewing its list of 75 programs that fit those criteria, but other institutions have submitted reports to the state. So far, colleges and universities have agreed to eliminate 61 degree programs across the state.

Nixon said those institutions are voluntarily sacrificing degrees. “This isn’t some ‘eat it’ from the governor,” he said.

The goal is to avoid mission creep, Nixon said. He used UM’s Rolla campus as an example, saying the

Missouri University of Science and Technology should stick to what it knows and not try to expand into the humanities. With five or six people in a program, he said, there's "no way you're going to deliver the kind of excellence necessary."

Tell that to the faculty within MU's School of Accountancy, though. The school, which awarded one doctorate last year, is considered one of the top accountancy programs in the country, ranking ninth in a Chronicle of Higher Education report.

"The degrees are more than products. The quality of education and research training of students matter greatly, and most people recognize this," said Sudarshan Loyalka, a curators' professor of nuclear engineering.

Victoria Johnson, an associate professor of sociology, said she fears Missouri lawmakers don't understand the nature of a public land-grant university.

MU would have no financial shortages, she said, if it could charge tuition for the actual costs of education at a high-quality research university.

"Because MU is a public institution, the state is obligated to subsidize the lost cost of tuition to keep tuition low while maintaining the quality of the university," Johnson said. "The legislature has not lived up to its public obligation over the last decade, and the quality of the university continues to erode. It may not be politically popular to increase state revenue for higher education, but you get what you pay for."

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