

Health Center charges insurance providers

The Student Health Center is now charging insurance providers to make up for the budget shortfall

BY TAWANDA KANHEMA
Staff reporter

The Student Health Center is underfunded and overstretched, with a 50 percent annual budget shortfall of more than \$220,000 and hardly enough resources to pay staff salaries. Combined with a cut in state funding, this has forced the health center to start billing health insurance providers for student clinic visits in a bid to make the health center sustainable and more viable.

The health center's operating budget for the 2009-10 academic year for staff salaries and supplies is \$504,769, against an income of only \$284,000 generated from the Student Health Fee. This leaves a shortfall of \$220,769 between expenses and revenues.

Health center director Brenda Higgins said the center is operating on a "shoestring budget" and has settled for the billing of student health insurance policies as a last resort after considering a number of options to generate more income.

She said billing health insurance providers is the most cost-effective way of generating income for the health center while still guaranteeing quality service and minimizing costs for students, most of whom already have health insurance policies.

"The University is paying our salaries and operating expenses, so we are not making any money," Higgins said. "We are not breaking even. Billing insurance [providers] is one way of taking advantage of insurance without disadvantaging students."

Student health fees not going far

The health center handled 6,355 visits in 2009, of which 5,021 were returning patients and 1,334 were seen for the first time. A typical office visit costs between \$130 and \$140, according to the health center, meaning that the \$25 fees paid by just above 5,000 students would only be enough to cover

the expenses of half that number.

Before the introduction of the new billing system, the health center had only been recovering money spent for lab work and procedures, because students had not been paying an office visit fee.

"Those funds that we received for laboratory and procedures actually just went to pay for those supplies and to allow us to pay for the lab work run by an outside provider," Higgins said. "Therefore, we were really not bringing in any income and the University was supporting our salaries."

Students will continue paying the \$25 health fee to cover counseling services. Billing insurance, therefore, is expected to leave a few dollars in the center's pocket, allowing it to pay its own salaries or at least reduce the financial burden on Truman's overstretched general fund.

Compared to other schools, Truman still has one of the lowest student health fees, and two schools, Northwest Missouri State

University and University of Central Missouri, already have shifted to billing health insurance companies.

State funding cuts upset old order

The state of Missouri had for some time been trying to compel state schools to bill student health insurance policies for all student health needs. However, some schools, including Truman, resisted this move and argued against the passing of a new bill, citing the amount of work involved in working with insurance companies.

The state's argument had been that student health expenses should be paid by insurance because 90 percent of parents already were paying premiums to health insurance companies, leaving little reason for the state to subsidize the expenses of insurance companies.

"We protested because billing insurance companies is quite a

complex process, and there is a lot of training required, but we have come to a point where it is the best option," Higgins said.

David Rector, Budget Director, said the health center has run on a 50 percent annual shortfall margin for a number of years and that there are no indications of the impact of billing insurance companies.

"The 2009-10 shortfall is still an estimate as it is based on student enrollment, but the shortfall has been comparable for several years," Rector said. "I have not seen projections yet which show the impact of using health insurance."

Students express privacy concerns

While moving health expenses to family health plans has its own advantages, some students have expressed concerns with the submission of all of their health expenses to parent-run family plans, saying this would jeopardize their privacy. Higgins said students' confidentiality would be maintained, adding that in the event that a student was concerned with confidentiality, they would have an option to not bill the service to their insurance, and service would be provided at a discounted rate in some cases.



Photo Illustration by Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

"We are not breaking even. Billing insurance providers is one way of taking advantage of insurance without disadvantaging students"

Brenda Higgins
Student Health Center Director

Former employee pleads guilty

Former Truman employee pleads guilty to child porn charges

ANDREA HEWITT
News Editor

Glen Ketterlinus, 56, of Kirksville plead guilty Dec. 14 to four felony counts of production of child pornography, according to a U.S. Department of Justice press release.

Jan Diltz, spokesperson for U.S. Attorney's office, said Ketterlinus appeared in U.S. district court Monday, and sentencing is set for March 10.

Ketterlinus is a former design assistant for Truman's publications department and also worked as the other technology coordinator at the University Career Center. Ketterlinus' contract with Truman was not renewed July 1 after he was arrested in June.



Glen Ketterlinus

"Possession of child pornography carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and/or fines up to \$250,000," according to the release.

The charges were brought on Ketterlinus as part of Project Safe Childhood.

"Project Safe Childhood is a Department of Justice initiative launched in 2006 that aims to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated

sexual exploitation crimes against children. The threat of sexual predators soliciting children for physical sexual contact is well-known and serious — the danger of perpetrators who produce, distribute and possess child pornography is equally dramatic and disturbing," according to the project's Web site.

The Kirksville Police Department received a grant through Project Safe Child to fund and maintain a computer lab to help assist in the charging of producers and viewers of child pornography, said Adair County Prosecutor Mark Williams.

"Once they see someone [viewing or sharing child pornography] ... they just start chatting with them or following them on the computer," Williams said. "Then we find out where the computer is and

who is on it. Once they pick a case they want to follow up, they bring in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, so it's a multi-agency investigation between the Kirksville Police Department and the FBI to track down the computer and the user on the computer that is looking at child pornography or offering it."

The punishments for producing and viewing child pornography are harsher in the federal system, he said.

"For instance, Ketterlinus, due to what he's done, has a mandatory minimal sentence of 15 years in a federal penitentiary, versus, the way the case developed here for us, we only would have been able to charge him with a class D felony with a maximum carry out of a four-year sentence," Williams said.

NEWS | In Brief

KPD is investigating robbery

The Kirksville Police Department is investigating an armed robbery that occurred early Jan. 6 at the north branch of the Bank of Kirksville. The victim told police she was dropping money in the night deposit box when the first suspect approached her, wearing dark clothing, and approximately 5 feet 4 inches to 5 feet 7 inches tall.

He showed her his pistol and demanded money. She gave the first suspect her money, and he and a second suspect fled south on foot. Kirksville police have been unable to locate the suspects. If the public has information that might help the case, they are encouraged to call 660-785-6945 or anonymously at 660-627-BUST.

Trial date set for Griffin

Junior Brandon Griffin's trial date for charges of two Class C felonies is set for April 22. Griffin was indicted in October on charges of sexual assault and deviant sexual assault.

Each count carries a punishment of incarceration, either in the Missouri Department of Correction for up to seven years or up to one year in the Adair County Law Enforcement Center, up to a \$5,000 fine or any combination of incarceration and fines, according to the indictment.

Griffin has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Truman hosts book discussions

Truman will host The Big Read from January to April. The Big Read consists of book discussions and other activities related to the theme of the book "The Things They Carried" by Tim O'Brien. The book is free for those interested in reading it and participating in book discussions. To get a copy of the book and sign up for a discussion group, call Mona Davis at 660-785-4387.

Truman places in Recyclemania

Truman has placed in the top 25 nationally in four categories of the Recyclemania contest. Recyclemania is a competition and benchmarking tool for college and university recycling programs to promote waste reduction activities. Truman finished seventh in paper recycling, eighth in cardboard recycling, 17th in bottles and cans and eighth in per capita classic division.

Equestrian team places first and third

Halfway through its season, the Equestrian Team is ranked third in western team competition and first in its region in English team competition. The team, made up of about 90 members, practices Monday through Friday at the University Farm and travels across the Midwest to about four shows a year. The western team will compete Feb. 28 at Kansas State University, and the English team will compete March 19 and 20 in a show hosted by Augustana College (Ill.) and Illinois State University.

Student Senate | In Brief

- Student Senate passed a money motion in the amount of \$400 to spend on the educator of the year.
- Student Senate passed a resolution in regard to the Perimeter Access System that stated Student Senate thinks convenience should not be sacrificed for safety, additional funds should be sought for the completion of the system, and on-campus residents should have input in which entrances are upgraded as money becomes available.

Crime | Reports

- 12/11 A burglary was reported at West Campus Suites.
- 12/13 Freshman Zachary Brelford was issued a Missouri Uniform Complaint and Summons for Minor in Possession of Intoxicants.
- 12/13 A burglary was reported at West Campus Suites.
- 12/15 A theft was reported from the Student Recreation Center.
- 12/29 A theft was reported at Magruder Hall.

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