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SEMO and 3 Rivers Discontinue Courses at Malden Locations

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Southeast, Three Rivers Discontinue Offering Courses at Malden Sites

Malden, Missouri - Southeast Missouri State University and Three Rivers College (Three Rivers) today announced they are discontinuing offering courses at their Malden campuses as the two institutions shift their efforts to align with current trends in student learning.

Southeast President Carlos Vargas and Three Rivers College President Wesley Payne cited budgetary needs, declining enrollments and a decrease in demand for face-to-face and interactive television (ITV) course offerings at their Malden facilities for their decision to cease face-to-face and ITV coursework there, effective at the end of the spring 2018 semester.

The presidents said the two institutions will shift their delivery to online offerings while also encouraging Malden area students to continue their coursework at their nearby locations. Vargas emphasized that face-to-face and ITV educational offerings will remain readily available at Southeast's regional campuses in Sikeston and Kennett. Payne added that Three Rivers students in the Malden area will be able to continue face-to-face and ITV instruction at their locations in Dexter, Kennett, Sikeston and Piedmont, Missouri, and at the main campus in Poplar Bluff.

Although Southeast Missouri State University-Malden has served thousands of students over the years, Vargas said Southeast's total headcount at its Malden campus has steadily declined. In fall 2010, fall unduplicated headcount at the Malden campus was 248. By fall 2017, total unduplicated headcount had dropped to 106. This spring, just 91 students are enrolled in at least one course at Southeast's Malden campus, he said.

Three Rivers' Malden facility has experienced similar enrollment declines. In fall 2010, Three Rivers students were enrolled in 1,380 credit hours of coursework, accounting for 92 full-time equivalencies. That number dropped to 620 credit hours, or 41 full-time equivalencies, by fall 2017, Payne said.

Vargas and Payne also referenced the popularity of online coursework, which allows students with busy lives to stay on target with their academic goals while balancing the demands of family and work. Vargas said there are more Southeast students today enrolled as online students from Stoddard and neighboring counties than those enrolled at the Malden campus.

He also cited the growing number of high school students earning dual credit, which has more than doubled since 2012, as a contributing factor to declining numbers who attend Southeast's Malden campus.

"While this has been a very difficult decision, it also has been an opportunity to evaluate shifts in technology and reorganize our instructional offerings consistent with the needs of today's students," he said.

Vargas said Southeast has been strategic in its budget reduction decisions in an effort to minimize the impact on students and faculty. Of the 91 students currently enrolled at Southeast's Malden campus, 48 are taking coursework only in Malden. He said he is encouraged knowing nearly half of them already take coursework both at Malden and at another Southeast location. In addition, 86 percent of the students currently enrolled at Southeast's Malden campus reside in Dunklin, New Madrid and Stoddard counties, making travel to Southeast's regional campuses in Kennett or Sikeston accessible to continue their education.

"I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks and sincere appreciation to the Crisp Bootheel Education Center Advisory Board, the citizens, and the city of Malden who for more than 30 years have offered their unwavering commitment, both financially and with their steadfast dedication to and support of our campus here," Vargas said. "While the magnitude of the University's budget needs necessitates this refocusing of our instructional efforts, I am encouraged that Malden students will still be able to pursue

their educational goals close to home.

“While this is an announcement I regret having to make, I take some comfort in knowing our regional campuses in Sikeston and in Kennett, and Southeast Online, will continue to serve the needs of the many first-time, first-generation and non-traditional students in the Malden area who wish to pursue their educational dreams in the Bootheel without traveling to Cape Girardeau,” he added.

Student Informational Session

Coursework at Southeast’s Malden location will end with the close of spring 2018 final exams on May 11. Southeast’s Malden campus will continue its normal operating hours through June 29. An informational session for Southeast Malden students is planned for 4-6:30 p.m. Jan. 30 at the Malden campus. Administrators and academic advisors will be on hand to answer questions and explain the timeline for changes in instruction and other options to continue coursework. Students may come and go any time during the session as it is convenient for them.

Coursework at Three Rivers-Malden will end with the close of spring 2018 final exams on May 17. Normal operations will continue through May 25. College staff will be available during normal hours of operation to answer questions and assist students in planning future coursework.

Future Plans for Southeast Missouri State University-Malden

Moving forward, Southeast will continue to operate its Malden facility for non-credit events, including career development workshops. Online course advisement for Malden area students will continue to be available through Southeast Online as is currently the practice. Operation of the Bootheel Youth Museum will continue as well, Vargas said.

Agricultural rice research conducted in the Rice Research Greenhouse at the campus will continue in partnership with the Missouri Rice Research and Merchandising Council and Southeast’s Department of Agriculture. The 1,500-square-foot greenhouse, which opened on the east side of the building last spring, provides laboratory and research space for producing new high-yielding, public domain rice varieties in southeast Missouri. A USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant helped support construction of the greenhouse which is within close proximity to the Missouri Rice Research Farm on Highway J between Malden and Glennonville, Missouri.

Vargas said Southeast may also use the vacated instructional space for events, workshops and satellite space for the University's Economic and Business Engagement Center (EBEC) activities, specifically its Agriculture Technology Virtual Incubation program. This initiative encourages innovation and offers support to the agriculture industry, a sector vitally important to the Bootheel economy. Incorporating technology advancements in agriculture operations, including the use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), are playing an increasing role in the region's agriculture industry. The Incubation Program assists small businesses, including those in the agriculture industry, with capitalizing on these opportunities by providing additional services and expertise.

Future Plans for Three Rivers College-Malden

Three Rivers currently operates in leased facilities, and while the closing of the location means that there will no longer be a physical presence in the city, students will be served at locations in Dexter and Kennett. Students will also continue to have the opportunity to enroll in online classes as they currently do.

Three Rivers remains committed to serving the area through its Dual-Credit program and plans to continue to offer the Patrons of the Arts shows in the Malden elementary and middle schools.

Southeast's Budget Challenges

Vargas reviewed the University's budget needs, saying that since spring 2017, the University has worked to analyze services and reorganize departments in every division in response to one-time FY17 withholdings totaling \$3.43 million, a 9 percent reduction in its FY18 appropriation, and in anticipation of future reductions to its state appropriation. The University's FY18 budget need is \$6.6 million.

Budget saving measures already accepted by Vargas include the elimination of 53.5 to 58.5 vacant and currently filled staff positions; reorganization of units across multiple University divisions and reduced operating budgets; the implementation of a Voluntary Retirement Incentive Program, which resulted in 74 faculty and staff retirements beginning Dec. 31, 2017, through Dec. 31, 2018; and changes to the University's employee and retirement benefits program. A four-month hiring delay will remain in effect at Southeast to provide one-time funds as base budget reductions are implemented in FY19 and FY20.

Even with budget challenges, Southeast is continuing to provide access to an affordable, high quality education for students in the Bootheel. Total headcount last fall at Southeast's Sikeston campus was 612 and at Southeast's Kennett campus was 225.

Despite its budget reductions, Southeast has been successful at improving its performance as an institution, holding the line on tuition and improving student services to enhance retention and completion rates. Vargas said Southeast's undergraduate in-state tuition and fees are the fourth lowest in the state and are at levels approximately 26 percent below national averages; the student loan debt for students graduating from the University is nearly \$10,000 below the national average; and that with over 30 specialized accreditations, the programs offered at Southeast are of the highest quality. In the face of declining budgets, Southeast maintains its commitment to serving the region and providing groundbreaking and innovative academic programs to prepare students for jobs of the future.

Three Rivers' Budget Challenges

Three Rivers has experienced similar budgetary challenges as a result of the 9 percent reduction in its FY18 state appropriation. Payne stated "the continual decline in state appropriations has forced every college in the state to make budget adjustments. With the reduction in state support, Three Rivers has had to look at every area of its operation to determine how best to allocate resources in support of its students." While Three Rivers has not had to eliminate any filled positions, numerous vacant positions have been either eliminated or remain unfilled in an effort to maintain a balanced budget.

In spite of the reduction in state support and the ensuing budget challenges, Three Rivers remains committed to continuing to serve the region with accessible affordable education. Even as enrollment has declined at its other external locations, they have remained fiscally healthy and continue to provide a robust selection of coursework where it is needed.

"While this decision has been very difficult and is the type of decision that no college wants to make, we will continue to serve students through our online offerings and continue to provide face-to-face and ITV classes in Dexter, Kennett and Sikeston," said Payne.

Despite the reductions in state support last year and the proposed further reduction for the coming year, Three Rivers has been able to continue to provide high quality instruction while minimizing the impact on tuition. Payne stated that "while it is regrettable that we

will no longer be able to offer face-to-face classes in Malden, Three Rivers remains committed to its mission and will continue to provide high-quality opportunities that are both affordable and accessible. Anyone who is seeking a better future will find Three Rivers College ready to help them reach their goals.”

History

Southeast Missouri State University-Malden is housed in the Harry L. Crisp Bootheel Education Center (CBEC) at 700 N. Douglass St. in Malden. In 1987, Harry L. Crisp II and his wife, the late Rosemary Berkel Crisp, donated a former Pepsi-Cola bottling plant in Malden to the University. The plant became home to the CBEC. The Harry L. Crisp Bootheel Education Center was named in honor of Harry L.’s father. Harry L. is retired as chairman and chief executive officer of Pepsi MidAmerica, a bottling company based in Marion, Ill., founded by Mr. Crisp’s father, Harry L. Crisp, Sr.

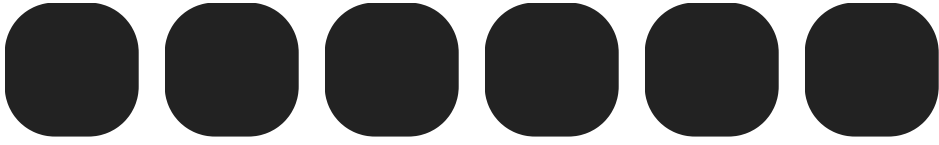
Planning for the campus was spearheaded by a CBEC Advisory Council, representing counties in the Bootheel. The CBEC opened in modular classroom units, and in fall 1989, eight classrooms, a library and an office opened in the Crisp building. Over the years, a number of enhancements were made. In February 2005, the CBEC became known as Southeast Missouri State University-Malden, and it began offering a Bachelor of General Studies. Full undergraduate degree offerings grew to include agribusiness, criminal justice, interdisciplinary studies, psychology, early childhood education, middle school education, elementary education and exceptional childhood education. These offerings continue to be available at Southeast’s regional campuses in Kennett and Sikeston.

In fall 2005, Three Rivers began leasing its Malden facility at 2203 Narvel Felts Blvd., where students are enrolled in general education coursework. Three Rivers’ Malden facility offers two interactive television classrooms, a computer lab, a fully equipped science lab and a public access computer center.

Questions concerning changes at Southeast’s Malden campus should be directed to the Office of the President at Southeast Missouri State University at (573) 651-2222.

Questions concerning changes at Three Rivers’ Malden facility should be directed to the Office of the President at Three Rivers College at (573) 840-9698.

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