

STEM INITIATIVE

Executive Director's Note: *This platform held incredible promise until 2017, when changes in the political and budgetary climate rendered the proposal less politically feasible. Whereas it nearly was signed into law during the 2016 session, by 2017 it had lost significant components of its support. Much of this was because of revenue shortfalls that meant there wasn't enough money to go around. Any legislation requiring state appropriations—which the STEM Initiative bill indirectly does through reallocation of liability taxes—became highly unpopular. As such, amendments have been made to the bill in an effort to make it more broadly supported. However, combatting the underlying criticisms relating to tax policy will continue to be a difficulty.*

Legislation

Modified STEM Fund

- This legislation begins by making edits to what the STEM Fund—established by ASUM in statute 2012—is used for. Previously, funds put into the STEM Fund (\$0 to date, hence the need for a funding mechanism) were to go toward one of the following:
 - Endowed professorships to improve STEM education at the post-secondary level
 - Scholarships for post-secondary students enrolled in a STEM program
 - Youth experiential programs to increase interest in STEM at an early age
 - Career enhancement programs for teachers in the STEM field
- In an effort to simplify the legislation, the endowed professorships and career enhancement programs component of the legislation has been struck. While we believe these provisions were useful and remain important, simplification of legislation can aid in its ability to pass. A bill centered squarely on existing and future STEM students and their job prospects will have a clearer message than its predecessor. These provisions could be re-included in future legislation, should this bill pass.

Funding Mechanism

- Any employer in Missouri hiring a Missouri student currently enrolled in one of the state's 2- or 4-year public institutions of higher education—for an internship or full-time position—may participate in this program.
- By hiring these students for an internship or full-time position—which is beneficial for both parties—the company becomes eligible to have up to \$10,000 of its tax liabilities, which would otherwise go to General Revenue, go into the STEM Fund. The company can apply to do so through the Dept. Higher Education, and will do so after approval by the legislature during the annual appropriations process.
- Each dollar that goes into the STEM Fund will go toward the scholarship and experiential programs discussed above. Third parties can also donate directly to the fund. Importantly—because it would be bad policy to allow unlimited state dollars to flow into the STEM Fund—individual companies are limited to a \$10,000 reallocation per year and the program itself is capped at \$200,000 per year.