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**UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI'S COLLEGE OF EDUCATION HOSTED
VIBRANT TOWN HALL PUBLIC FORUM
ON NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND FEDERAL LEGISLATION**

COLUMBIA, MO – The University of Missouri (MU) and its College of Education today hosted a town hall public forum on the controversial federal legislation called No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Today's event was part of a series of national forums sponsored by the National Academy of Education, Kappa Delta Pim, and the National Society for the Study of Education. Over 150 citizens from across the state of Missouri attended the forum and contributed to the series' comments that will be transcribed for state and federal legislators prior to the reauthorization of the current NCLB legislation.

The current NCLB legislation will be reviewed this fall and reauthorized by Congress in early 2007. Carolyn D. Herrington, Dean of the College of Education, noted the importance of having the voice of Missouri be heard by Congress prior to their hearings on NCLB.

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton opened the Forum by welcoming the public to take part in today's event, which "through our university, brings an important issue to society." He stated: "No Child Left Behind is a major public policy that deserves considerable attention as we all have a vested interest in its creation and impact on our educational systems."

Dr. Larry Hedges, from Northwestern University, and Dr. Mary Davidson Cohen from the U.S. Department of Education, participated in a panel discussion that gave context to the history and importance of NCLB. Dr. Hedges admitted that NCLB "is a courageous attempt at public policy making and that it is the right thing to do," however, "there are ways in which we could improve the law." He continued with: "The devil is in the details - our intentional outcomes have not been met with the existing policies and today's forum serves as a way to analyze and collect feedback on the actual outcome."

Dr. Cohen highlighted that “No Child Left Behind is public policy and each public policy is always a work in progress.” She highlighted that what is today referred to as NCLB first started with *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 and that the public policy developed 50 years ago has evolved greatly. According to Cohen, “The bottom line regarding NCLB is public education and our position in the world economy.”

Dean Herrington closed the panel, which was then followed by lively audience conversation regarding the legislation. Over twenty parents, teachers and education academics took advantage of the open microphone opportunity to describe their resulting experiences from the legislation and voice their thoughts on NCLB’s future.

An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in Jefferson City, Missouri, recognized that NCLB has done good in that it has helped identify students that need to go through the ESL program and that it has “helped our district tremendously.”

A former teacher from Columbia commended the Reading First Program, which is part of NCLB, as it has provided select school districts with extra funding to improve their reading programs. She stated: “NCLB gives a will for public education.”

While there was positive feedback regarding NCLB, several town hall participants opposed the legislation. A professor emeritus from the University of Missouri stated that the legislation is “laced with political motives that leave children behind.” Many concerned citizens voiced their opinion that NCLB does not consider the social and economic individual backgrounds of each student and stated that the promised funding has not been delivered to support the legislation. Parents from Columbia, Missouri, stated that too much has been taken away from the professional educator in the classroom and that our students are only learning to take tests, not actually learning content to grow. One parent said: “NCLB is hurting what my children can accomplish.”

A first grade elementary school teacher from Columbia, Missouri, thanked the Forum and the University for giving a voice back to teachers regarding our nation’s education system. To continue the rich discussion from today’s Forum, MU’s College of Education will host webcast interviews with educators, legislators, and school administrators in the upcoming months. The webcasts will be co-sponsored by the Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis and the School of Information Science & Learning Technologies. The first webcast will be on Thursday, March 9th.

Please visit <http://webcast.missouri.edu/> for further information about the “No Child Left Behind Online Forum Series.” The goal for the online series is to foster conversation that will eventually hold both our school administrators and government alike, accountable for shaping and implementing future legislation regarding the education of our children.

The College of Education is proud to have hosted today’s event, which brought NCLB, an important and timely issue, to the forefront for the people of Missouri.

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