Housing crunch continues at Missouri-Columbia

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Despite opening three new residence halls this fall, the University of Missouri-Columbia will again lease space from two private apartment complexes to help house a large incoming class.

With some residence halls either closed or closing this year for renovations, the net gain for on-campus living will be 350 beds, said Frankie Minor, residential life director.

Originally, university housing officials thought an additional 400 beds at Campus View apartments -- generally referred to as Tiger Diggs -- would be sufficient. But later, the university decided to lease another 200 beds at Campus Lodge, also called Mizzou Quads.

This year, about 5,700 freshmen are expected to show up on opening day, about 100 fewer than last fall's record-breaking class, according to July 1 estimates from Ann Korschgen, vice provost for enrollment management.

Forty percent more returning students have applied to live on campus this fall, Minor said, but he doesn't expect all of them to move in. He said some students arrange campus housing during the spring but later "convince Mom and Dad to let them move off campus."

The Tiger Diggs and Mizzou Quads offer students a chance to transition from residence halls to off-campus living. Located two miles from campus, they have apartment amenities like kitchens and washers and dryers, but university policies prohibiting smoking and drinking still apply.
"They're a good halfway point between campus and independent living," Minor said. "And in many cases, it's the only way parents will let them live off campus."

Calls to the apartments for University of Missouri police last year were not significantly different from the calls from other residential facilities, Capt. Brian Weimer said.

Minor said he believes on-campus living is more attractive to returning students because of a range of options the university provides. For example, new residence halls offer traditional rooms as well as four-person single suites.

"Students have become very good consumers," he said. "They know they've got options, and they explore what's best for them."
No signs of life, but still ‘cool’

Researcher reflects on moon rock tests.

By Janese Heavit

Monday, July 20, 2009

Robert Zumwalt was skeptical of finding signs of life on the moon’s harsh surface.

But he kept that opinion to himself. After all, he was a 24-year-old University of Missouri graduate student, and his adviser, Charles Gehrke, was hoping to find biological molecules in lunar rocks they would be testing. “Everybody was so excited about finding something,” Zumwalt said last week at his Columbia home. “I thought everyone was overestimating the chance” of finding life, “but I was just a kid.”

It was 1969, and Apollo 11 was about to reach the moon. NASA, knowing the astronauts would be bringing back lunar materials, had tapped Gehrke’s MU research team years earlier to test those rocks for genetic materials and amino acids. Gehrke, in turn, had chosen Zumwalt to work with him.

Zumwalt watched the lunar landing knowing he’d be handling the rocks Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were describing. “I remember going out and just looking at the moon, and I felt so fortunate,” he said.

Months later, surrounded by older scientists at NASA’s lunar lab in California, it dawned on Zumwalt just how fortunate he was. “It never occurred to me ahead of that time that I was going to be unusual,” he said, joking that researchers sometimes confused him for an errand boy.

Gehrke’s team of researchers used gas-liquid chromatography, a sophisticated method of chemical analysis, to search for any sign of life in the moon rocks. The tiniest speck of contamination could skew the results, so the researchers ran endless tests, said Dianna O’Brien, a Columbia writer who is working on a biography of Gehrke.

They would continue that work for six years, testing materials from the seven Apollo landings, only to find no indication of living organisms. By the latter moon landings, the public had lost interest; journalists had long since declared the moon lifeless, Zumwalt said. But the team’s findings were controversial in the scientific community. Other researchers accused the MU team of “missing life molecules,” according to a Tribune story from 1972.
Meanwhile, another research group was finding biological molecules in moon samples. To settle the differences, MU researchers and the other research team met to sample the same rock brought back from Apollo 14. When both groups concluded the rock contained no signs of life, it was deemed that the other researchers had tested contaminated samples.

Although the findings confirmed what Zumwalt already knew, Gehrke was disheartened. "Charles called the subsequent work the biggest search for nothing he'd ever done," O'Brien wrote in an excerpt of Gehrke's biography, "From the Melon Fields to the Moon," which she provided to the Tribune. In the book, Gehrke, who died in February, described seeing the results as the most disappointing night of his life.

Gehrke went on to open ABC Laboratories, and Zumwalt went to work for the Cancer Research Center until he accepted his current teaching position at Westminster College in 1997. Both men remained interested in space travel and edited a book about their moon rock research. They presented their theories on building space stations on the moon and Mars to officials from the Johnson Space Center in 1997. They believed a base on the moon or Mars would allow for deeper space exploration, Zumwalt said. But more than a decade later, he's not optimistic that manned space missions will ever become common.

"It's a let-down in some sense," he said. "Forty years hence, I'm very surprised there has not been either a permanent base on the moon or a journey to Mars. ... I still have a nagging feeling. What else could we learn?"

Still, he's content to have played a part in what he calls a major advancement. And he has a constant reminder of that contribution. "When I look at the moon, I think: 'That was cool,' " he said. "'That was cool.'"

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This article was published on page A1 of the Monday, July 20, 2009 edition of The Columbia Daily Tribune.
MU campus reactor sets emergency drill

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Monday, July 20, 2009

Advertisement

The University of Missouri planned to hold a mock emergency drill today at the nuclear research reactor on the Columbia campus.

The drill was to involve the Columbia fire and police departments, University Hospital and other emergency responders.
New iPhone apps classes let you learn, test and earn
By Jeanette Der Bedrosian, USA TODAY

There’s an app for just about anything, or so Apple says.

And colleges and universities across the country are taking notice, offering courses in programming iPhone applications to computer-related majors. The courses represent a new path of study for many colleges and universities recognizing the longevity of smartphones and social media, college professors say.

iPhone apps, short for applications, are single-purpose programs that allow users to do everything from read the news to play musical instruments. They are largely produced by independent programmers who pay a $99 fee to create, test and distribute — many times for profit — their app.

An iPhone Developer University Program launched last fall, however, allows qualifying colleges and universities to produce iPhone apps at no cost, spurring several institutions to offer a course in the technology.

Apple declined to comment on the number of schools participating, but they include Stanford and NJIT.

A ‘big marketplace’

Stanford University is offering a course to 60 students taught by two Apple employees in app development technology. The university started the program last fall and expanded it for the spring semester.

“Students are really liking it,” says teaching assistant Paul Salzman. “We have twice as many students apply as there are slots, so we distribute a survey and have to slim it down.” The two Apple-employed lecturers declined to comment, as per an Apple company policy.

The information taught in the class is so popular, Salzman says, that the course is filmed and distributed at no charge on iTunes. The video downloads have prompted viewers around the world to create discussion boards and even a website based on the course.

“It’s such a big marketplace,” Salzman says. “It’s a low entry fee — getting your app on the store is not that hard, there’s not a big price — and then you have so many users that can get your application. So it’s the current big thing, applications on the iPhone. And we’re putting it within the reach of students.”

Steppingstones for students

NJIT, a science and technology university in New Jersey, offered the course for the first time this spring. Jim Robertson, director of university Web services, came up with the idea before he even heard of Apple’s university program.
"It was only after we really started going down the line and writing it up as a course and running it by the dean to get it on the schedule that we realized, 'Oh! There's a developer program for universities that we can apply to,'" he says, noting that they have since opted to take advantage of the program.

Robertson says he used money out of his own budget to give each student an iPod Touch to test his or her apps. Among the apps his students are working on are a "rock, paper, scissors" app and a financial engineering calculator for use on the NJIT campus.

"I started the course because there's a low threshold to entry and because Apple has set up this whole iPhone economy," Robertson says. "Student entrepreneurs can get into this and start making money and gaining experience. And I think some of these apps that our students are developing are only going to be steppingstones toward more complex and involved apps."

**A way to make money**

The opportunity to make money off a college course was a major draw for Tyler Auten, a senior information technology student at NJIT. So far, Auten has made hundreds of dollars off of three apps he has in the iPhone store.

The first app Auten created was "Kids Be Gone," designed in Robertson's class, which emits a high-frequency sound only kids can hear. The app, as the name suggests, was designed to keep children away from the iPhone user. Auten says he experimentally provided the app at no charge for 24 hours and was shocked to see it downloaded by 2,000 users.

"It blew my mind," he says. "Most classes at NJIT are theory-based, but this one really gives you a way of making money."

Other schools are incorporating the course in a smaller way, either as a part of its existing curriculum or a seminar. At Massachusetts Institute of Technology, iPhone app development was taught as a zero-credit, week-long seminar.

"It was very focused on the mechanics of how to program for this particular platform," says Ph.D. student Edward Benson, who taught the course. "I think the hurdle to the development platform for the iPod is very high, so it was primarily a launching pad to get them familiar with the technology." Benson says the program was inspired by Stanford's course and has led to one of his students working with a Boston-area hospital on a health care app.

He says the seminar inspired students to solve real-world problems.

"It's incredibly empowering and gives students a sense of urgency that they don't normally have," he says. "You start to see a maturity in these students as they start to solve these problems."