MU chancellor promotes school as 'frontier university'

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— By Greg Grisolano
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Chancellor Brady Deaton is looking to the University of Missouri’s past to help chart the school’s future.

When the university was founded in 1839, it was the first public university west of the Mississippi River.

“Our pledge since I have been at the University of Missouri is to ensure that we continue to be a frontier university,” Deaton said. “That is a frontier of knowledge, a frontier of understanding our society. And a frontier of keeping the nation competitive.”

Deaton shared his views with about 25 local alumni Tuesday night at Granny Shaffer’s restaurant on North Range Line Road. The event was organized by the local chapter of the Mizzou Alumni Association.

After some informal remarks about academic programs, budget issues and athletics, the chancellor fielded questions from those in attendance.

Deaton said tuition is expected to stay at last year’s rate after a compromise with the state to match funding at the previous level. He said the school has been leaning more heavily on private donors and research to help the budget.

“We’re making now as a university, this past year, over $10 million just from commercialization of the intellectual property being produced by grants and contracts and state support,” he said. Deaton said the university is expecting to set another enrollment record with roughly 31,000 students during the fall semester. Enrollment among African-American, Native American and Hispanic students is up, he said.

Those numbers caught the ear of Rachel Greene, president of the local alumni chapter. “The numbers are going up, especially the numbers of students from Southwest Missouri who are attending,” she said. “They have a lot of choices they can make, and it’s really exciting to have them choose our state’s flagship university.”

Deaton said roughly 1,000 students from Southwest Missouri are expected to attend this fall, and
that the area boasts nearly 700 alumni.

Deaton said that after the success of the university's $1 billion campaign, the school is planning a new private fundraising campaign that would generate revenue for faculty endowments and for fully endowed scholarships for four students in every Missouri county. He estimated it would take $1.2 million in funds per county to fill the scholarship needs.

"We do not want the financial liabilities of families to stand in the way of the education of any student in Missouri," he said.

That idea struck a chord with Tom Wells, a Carthage native now living in Joplin and an MU graduate from the class of 1990.

"I think it's a good goal to promote Missouri as a statewide institution throughout the state, and not just as a kind of Kansas City-St. Louis focus," he said.

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Globe/T. Rob Brown Brad and Belinda Belk, both of Joplin and alumni of the University of Missouri, talk Tuesday night with Brady Deaton (right), chancellor of the university, during a reception at Granny Shaffer's Restaurant.
"Zero waste" picnics and aluminum water bottles greet incoming freshman at college campuses

By: Kavita Kumar
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

As incoming freshman descend on college campuses this week, some of them will dine at a "zero waste" picnic and others will be handed aluminum water bottles — to encourage them not to use plastic ones.

Those are two of the ways that increasingly green-friendly campuses are greeting students and sweeping them up in sustainability efforts.

On Thursday, the University of Missouri-Columbia's dining services will host its first ever "zero waste" picnic in the student recreation complex. Grilled chicken sandwiches and other offerings at the annual welcome-back event will be served on compostable plates along with compostable napkins, cups, and silverware.

And instead of having thousands of individual plastic ketchup packets on hand, Mizzou will have large plastic bottles of condiments (which can be recycled) from which students can condiment-up their food.

About 3,000 to 3,500 students usually attend the campus picnic and spirit rally, where some members of the marching band and cheerleaders will help entertain the group, said Andrew Lough, the marketing manager for campus dining services.

When students are done eating, they will throw the waste into compostable garbage bags. The school — with the help of student volunteers from the Sustain Mizzou group — will then take the bags to the city landfill, where they will all be composted.

Lough added that the city of Columbia does not have the required permits to do widespread food composting on a regular basis. But this will be part of a special test run the city has agreed to do.

Meanwhile, all new freshman at Washington University, who move in this week, will be given aluminum water bottles by a student government group. As many of you might remember, WashU banned the sale of bottled water on campus in the last school year in an effort to reduce waste and to promote more sustainable practices.
Retrial in 2003 murder investigation results in 30-year sentence

By Brennan David

Tuesday, August 18, 2009

Family members told their story in court yesterday about the loss of their son and brother as a judge was about to sentence his killer.

Crawford

Taron L. Crawford of Kansas City, Kan., was sentenced to 30 years in prison in the 2003 murder of University of Missouri student Charlie Blondis at a north Columbia party.

Boone County Circuit Judge Gene Hamilton heard testimony the families of the victim and defendant before ordering Crawford to serve 25 years on a second-degree murder charge and an additional five years for armed criminal action.

Blondis family members wept as father, mother and sister told the court Crawford should receive the maximum sentence of life behind bars.

Alba Blondis of Flossmoor, Ill., described her son as a good student who was involved in church and a responsible teenage boy. “I’m unable to see my son,” she said. Crawford “is able to see friends and family in jail. He can study, make friends and still has a future. My son did not get an appeal. ... I ask that” Crawford “remain in prison for the rest of his life.”
Clair Blondis described her older brother as not just a sibling but her best friend. “My heart was broken,” she said of learning about her brother’s death. “I couldn’t believe it.”

Representatives of Rosewell Church of Christ in Kansas City, Kan., as well as Crawford’s father and sister, requested Hamilton to have mercy when sentencing Crawford.

“What was described in court is not my son,” Albert Crawford said. “He is not a cold-blooded killer.”

Crawford received a new trial in the case after an appeals court affirmed a lower court ruling that Crawford had ineffective counsel at his previous Boone County trial. That trial resulted in a 25-year sentence.

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MISSOURI ACT scores hold steady, exceed national average

By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER/The Associated Press
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COLUMBIA — Missouri's high school class of 2009 slightly exceeded the national average on the ACT college entrance exam, but three-fourths of those students fell short of the test's threshold for expected college success.

Missouri's recent graduates averaged a composite score of 21.6 on the test's scale of one to 36. The national composite average was 21.1.

Twenty-five percent of Missouri test-takers met the college-readiness benchmark in all four subjects: English, math, reading and science. That's two percentage points higher than the national average.

"Someone can be admitted to an institution, but that doesn't mean they're ready for college courses," said Paul Wagner, deputy commissioner of the state Department of Higher Education.

The college-readiness benchmark sets the minimum scores needed on each ACT subject-area test to give students a 50 percent chance of earning a B or higher and a 75 percent chance of earning a C or higher in a typical first-year college course.

For the first time in five years, the number of Missouri students taking the exam declined to 46,923, a decrease of about 300 from 2008.

State education officials attribute the drop to a lower number of high school graduates after a recent population boom.
Nationally, a record 1.48 million spring graduates took the exam, an increase boosted by mandatory ACT tests in seven states.

In Missouri, 67 percent of 2009 graduates took the ACT test — the lowest percentage in a decade. But that figure continues to far surpass the number of students taking the SAT test, Wagner said.

Missouri’s average scores exceeded the national average in English, reading and math — although by less than a percentage point. On the math test, Missouri’s average score of 20.9 was one-tenth of a percentage point lower than the national average.

Since 1996, Missouri’s average composite score has hovered between 21.4 and 21.6. The overall average has remained unchanged since 2005.

"There's nothing to be discouraged about," said Wagner. "We've held steady again."

Scores for minority students in Missouri continue to lag behind the overall averages.

Black students averaged a composite score of 17.2 statewide, compared to 22.4 for whites. Hispanic students averaged a composite score of 20.2. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders scored an average of 23.8.

Only 4 percent of black students met the college-readiness bench mark on all four subjects, compared to 28 percent for whites, 16 percent for Hispanics and 38 percent for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

New state Education Commissioner Chris Nicastro called the minority performance gap troubling. She is also concerned about the low number of students who met each of the college-readiness bench marks.

"There's no question that's a high bar," she said. "We need to do everything possible we can to equip our students to reach or exceed that bar."

Nicastro suggested that the State Board of Education may need to raise Missouri's high school graduation requirements. But she pointed out that local districts can set tougher standards than the state's minimum.