COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia Missourian's finances improve after reorganization

By Hayley Tsukayama
September 11, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Dan Potter is finally sleeping again at night.

Six months after a major reorganization, Potter, the Columbia Missourian's general manager, is cautiously optimistic about the financial future of the newspaper. After discontinuing its Saturday and Monday editions, drastically reducing its staff and receiving more lab support from MU, the newspaper is operating much better than budgeted.

"I'm not waking up at three in the morning anymore," Potter said.

The Missourian's financial woes made national headlines a year ago, as the Missouri School of Journalism celebrated its centennial. Many worried the paper would not survive.

Dean Mills, dean of the journalism school and the Missourian's publisher, said he is delighted that the newspaper is doing better than financially projected. "I'm surprised, actually, as we hadn't predicted the (national) financial crisis when we made the budget," he said.

The community newspaper is staffed by professional editors and student reporters and is one of the journalism school's three laboratory newsrooms, along with NBC-affiliate KOMU-TV and radio station KBIA/91.3 FM. These news outlets teach young reporters by merging practice and theory, a teaching style that has come to be known as the "Missouri Method."

The Missourian was founded in 1908, on the same day as the Missouri School of Journalism, which is the oldest in the world.

Although the Missourian Publishing Association, a non-profit organization, owns the Columbia Missourian, the newspaper is an affiliate of MU. As an MU laboratory, the Missourian receives lab support from the university. It also receives a subsidy to pay off any year-end debt. In 2008, the university covered a deficit of slightly more than $1 million. After several years of covering high deficits, MU demanded the newspaper cut its costs.
In response, Potter cut staff positions for 18 months prior to the March deadline and reduced the non-newsroom staff by 40 percent. Since July 1, 2008, he said, the Missourian has cut $1.02 million from its annual operating expenses.

In the first three months of the new plan, the Missourian lost $26,889. In the same period last year, the paper lost $237,651.

For the 2009 fiscal year, after four months with the new plan, Potter said the year-end subsidy from MU was $479,228 — a 52.5 percent drop.

Increased lab support from the university helped soften the blow. Potter said the Missourian's lab support had not been raised since its implementation in 1997. In March, the university increased this amount to $650,000 from $250,000.

Potter said the most significant reason for the paper's financial improvement has been expense reductions, followed by the increased lab support money and higher than expected advertising revenues.

"We're not going to break even by the end of this fiscal year but, believe me, we're trying," he said. He estimated the paper would end the 2010 fiscal year with an annual loss of $200,000 versus a budgeted annual loss of $401,000.

Executive editor Tom Warhover said, "It's as if a huge boulder has been lifted from our shoulders."

Potter will report the latest numbers to the newspaper's board of directors at its annual meeting on Oct. 23, but some board members are happy with what they've heard so far.

"I think it's just been a terrific financial and fiscal story for the Missourian to turn on a dime like this," said Mark Russell, president of the Missourian Publishing Association's board of directors and print news manager for the Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel. "Without a robust Missourian, we become just another (journalism) school."

Potter emphasized that the Missourian would continue to keep expenses low, particularly as the paper develops more online media.

"We're not sitting back with our feet up and are very comfortable that it's going to happen automatically," he said. "You've got to continue to work at it, innovate and be entrepreneurial or you end up right back where we started."
After years of exceeding its budget and operating at a large deficit, the Columbia Missourian has reorganized in an attempt to improve its financial performance.

Since changes to the Missourian, which serves as a laboratory for MU School of Journalism students, were put in place in July 2008, the paper has cut more than $1 million in expenses and approximately 40 percent of its staff. The biggest changes have been a reduction in publication, cutting the Monday and Saturday issues and a new budget, negotiated with the university, which went into effect March 1.

General Manager Dan Potter said there has been concern regarding the high deficit for years now.

"As the economy got worse and worse, we got worse and worse in our performance," Potter said. "The university told us, 'You're an important lab for us, but you have to cut your expenses.'"

Potter, the rest of the Missourian's management and the Missourian Publishing Association — the board of directors made up of MU graduates — worked together to come up with the changes.

Board of Directors President Mark Russell said there was debate over several changes, from reducing publication days to moving to a more digital form.

"We went through a variety of scenarios, and I think we've found one that works for the university," said Russell, Print News manager of the Orlando Sentinel and 1984 MU graduate.

Potter said the Missourian's management couldn't anticipate how the changes would work out, but it ended up in better financial shape than expected.

"We've been coming in below that tight expense budget," he said.

The paper is budgeted to lose about $31,500 a month, but since March, it has been operating at about -$10,000 a month since March, a difference of about $120,500 overall.
"The single biggest reason is that the advertising director and staff have worked their tails off to keep ad revenue up," Potter said.

They expected to lose advertising income after cutting issues, but they have been doing far better than they thought they would.

Another factor that greatly aided the Missourian's financial situation was an increase in the lab fee the university pays the newspaper.

"The school pays a lab fee to subsidize the educational function of the paper," Provost Brian Foster said.

Although students continued to come to the Missourian and costs of production continued to rise, the fee hadn't been raised since 2007. Potter and Dean Mills, the dean of the School of Journalism, brought up the issue with Foster, and the fee was raised.

Potter said although the paper has worked well with its budget so far, he has cautioned against getting too comfortable. The publication needs to continue to save and earn money, he said.

Potter and others were worried about how readers would react to the changes, especially the issue cuts. Potter sent letters to subscribers well before the change was made, inviting them to contact him with any concerns.

Potter said 15 "mildly to very upset" people called him, but not a single subscriber was lost due to the lower number of publications.

"They have been very understanding and very supportive," he said.

Having managed staffs through restructuring before, Potter said he knew the atmosphere in the Missourian newsroom would go one of two ways.

"Either there would be division and strife, or, as happened at the Missourian, you'd get better teamwork than ever before," Potter said. "I'm heartened this has gone so well."

Potter said he's cautiously optimistic about the Missourian.

"If things keep going the way they are, I think we should beat the budget by 50 percent," he said. "It vastly improves how much we've had to rely on the university to pull us out of the hole."

Foster said the Missourian is headed in the right direction financially.
"I think the school and the Missourian management have been very responsive in taking some very significant steps to change the deficit situation, and I appreciate their help," Foster said.

Russell is also pleased with the effects of the changes put in place at the newspaper.

"They've done a really good job of dropping some things that we didn't have to do but retaining high quality journalism, which is what we're in the business of doing," Russell said.
Recycler ends MU services

Move leaves city trying to fill gap.

By T.J. Greeney

Thursday, September 10, 2009

Civic Recycling, the private recycler that has collected cans, bottles and paper from the University of Missouri for 25 years, is pulling all of its containers from campus and has stopped picking up recyclables in retaliation after it learned its services would be dropped.

The move has left MU and the city of Columbia’s Commercial Recycling Program scrambling to fill the gap and to begin pickup before items pile up.

“People are being patient, and that’s what we’re asking them to be until we can get fully up and running,” said Karlan Seville, communications manager for MU’s Campus Facilities. “We’re moving as fast as we can.”

This month, city Public Works Director John Glascock declared an emergency, asking that the city purchasing department move rapidly to unlock funds needed to replace the hundreds of containers and compactors owned by Civic Recycling and used by MU employees throughout campus.

Public Works spokeswoman Jill Stedem said the new equipment will cost an estimated $133,000, but she said the new recycling pickup will not add any labor costs or employee hours. The city already picks up other solid waste from campus, and the same employees will add recycling pickup to their routes.

Civic Recycling had picked up more than 150,000 pounds of recyclables each month, owner Brett Allen said, and sold the goods on the open market. The contract between MU and the city was scheduled to begin Jan. 1, and the city had agreed to evenly split all profits earned from recyclables with MU.

Allen, who has never had a formal contract with MU, said he was informed of the switch late last month although, according to an e-mail from Glascock, the discussions between the city and MU had been ongoing “for the past year.”
When told about the change, Allen was given six months to clean out his equipment and move on. Instead he chose to pull all of his equipment and stop collections in a move of protest over what he perceived as poor treatment.

"I feel like I'm getting screwed," he said in an interview Aug. 21. Allen estimated he had $100,000 worth of receptacles and other equipment on campus.

MU officials say recycling service has mostly not been interrupted because of Allen's decision:

- This week, the city started replacing the nearly 500 green rolling containers that had been scattered around campus for paper products and were owned by Allen. At the same time, MU is distributing thousands of small desk-side recycling containers to provide employees with temporary storage of recyclable paper products.

- Also this week, Civic is removing its more than three dozen large outdoor cardboard recycling containers. The city already is replacing these containers, but until the transition is complete, said Seville, employees are encouraged to use two city drop-off locations on campus — at Tara Apartments and behind Hatch Hall — for paper and cardboard.

- The city also has begun emptying indoor glass and can receptacles. These are owned by MU. Seville said the city already had been picking up sidewalk beverage containers under a previous agreement. That system will not change.

Reach T.J. Greaney at 573-815-1719 or e-mail tjgreaney@columbiatribune.com.
MU goes for big picture at Faurot

Scoreboard gives fans a better look.

A new scoreboard and video screen display test images Thursday at MU's Memorial Stadium. Three times the size of its predecessor at Faurot Field, the scoreboard and similar boards for the MU baseball, softball, track and soccer fields cost about $5.5 million.

By Janese Heavin

Thursday, September 10, 2009

Advertisement
Tigers fans heading to Memorial Stadium for Saturday's home game can expect more than live action. The University of Missouri athletics department is also debuting its new large-screen, high-definition video board.

The 30-foot-tall, 80-foot-wide board is triple the size of the previous video board and is one of the largest in the Big 12 Conference. It has the capability of depicting a single large image or multiple screens that will allow MU to post player statistics, scores from other games and slow-motion highlights, said Mark Steinkamp, spokesman for Daktronics Inc., which installed the board.

LED technology on the video screen will make the pictures crystal clear.

"Cameras weren't built to display on LED technology, so we have a system in place to scale it and put it on the board," Steinkamp said. "We can provide up to 4.4 trillion shades of color."

As Mizzou administrators get used to using the program, the video system will only get better, he said. Other colleges have started using similar boards to conduct stadium-wide polls, letting fans text-message their votes.

"Folks are trying to make the game day experience more interactive," Steinkamp said. "In general, the trend is for major colleges and professional" athletics "to provide at least a comparable experience to the home living room as far as having stats and information."

Installing the video system, along with similar boards at Mizzou's baseball, softball, track and soccer fields, comes with a $5.5 million price tag, said Chad Moller, spokesman for the athletics department. Advertisers and sponsors are expected to help offset those costs.

"Just as important for us, from the financial side of things, is the new board gives us much more opportunity for advertising and sponsorship dollars to help pay for it in the end," he said.

Fans at Memorial Stadium can also expect an improved sound quality. In the past, Moller said, some fans have complained that they could not hear the game at certain spots in the stadium.

"Our old system was pretty antiquated," Moller said. "If you added up the number of complaints and concerns you received from fans over the years, far and away that's what people wanted improved the most," he said. "As impressed as people are going to be with the new video board, they're going to be even more satisfied with the new sound system."

General admission tickets for Saturday's 6 p.m. game against Bowling Green went on sale yesterday. Moller said the department is expecting a crowd of about 70,000. The game isn't being televised by networks but will be available through Pay-Per-View.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.

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The opinions expressed below are those of the readers who submitted them and not those of the Tribune's reporters or editors. Readers are solely responsible for the content of their comments.

7 reader comments

Wow only 5.5 million? That is a great deal for a university talking about not having money. And yes I know athletics and academics are separate, but jesus 5.5 million. Seems ridiculous to me, especially for a TV.

September 10, 2009 at 3:20 p.m. (link | suggest removal)

It looks like almost 40% of the TV space is used for advertising. Also, 5.5 million does seem like a lot of money - too bad academic departments can't talk about spending that much money. Funny how a leather ball gets more value than decent academic funding.

September 10, 2009 at 3:24 p.m. (link | suggest removal)

I'm as opposed to excessive spending as anybody, but if you saw the cost of a scoreboard ad, you'll quickly realize these big boob-tubes are revenue generators.
robertincomo says...

Pretty much my opinion. The sports program does haul in the dough, however. As misplaced of a priority as sports has become in this country, MU would be foolish to not do what it can to keep up.

Sure is pretty, though I'll never see it up close.

September 10, 2009 at 3:51 p.m. ( link | suggest removal )

Paul Love says...

5.5 Million for 4.4 trillion colors I've said it before and I'll say it again with 10% Unemployment, a skyrocketing national debt, the city cutting wages to keep employee's jobs. The University is a poor steward of American tax dollars. University implies education, if this is the lesson we are teaching our future leaders the University of Missouri will assure the United States will see dark days ahead.

September 10, 2009 at 4:01 p.m. ( link | suggest removal )

MoZou says...

I wish they would have spent more! 5.5 million doesn't seem like enough!

September 10, 2009 at 4:01 p.m. ( link | suggest removal )

Puck says...

I want one for my living room.
I'll start saving my pennies in a jar.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New scoreboard to provide new experience for Tiger fans

By Eric Berger
September 11, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The MU department of athletics is giving fans 1.7 million crystal clear reasons to attend Saturday’s football game.

Memorial Stadium’s new $3.5 million scoreboard, set to be unveiled when the Tigers face Bowling Green, uses 1.7 million LEDs, or light emitting diodes, to produce up to 4.4 trillion different shades of color.

The human eye can’t see anywhere near that many shades, but the new scoreboard allows for it, said Mark Steinkamp, MU marketing manager for Daktronics Inc.

The new scoreboard, purchased from Daktronics, is nearly triple the size of the old scoreboard, measuring 30 feet by 80 feet.

“We’ve heard from fans for years that the sound and video weren’t very good, especially on sunny days,” said Andrew Grinch, MU assistant athletics director for marketing.

The glare of the sun will not be an issue with the new scoreboard, which features the same HDX, or High Definition User Experience, technology used at the Kansas City Royals’ Kauffman Stadium.

The scoreboard is among the best in college football, said Mark Alnutt, MU senior associate athletics director.

The old scoreboard, installed in 1997, became outdated and required increased maintenance costs with each season, said Chad Moeller, MU assistant athletics director for media relations.

The department spent $5 million upgrading the video and audio equipment at its sports facilities, including a new sound system at Memorial Stadium.

Aside from the clarity of the picture, the scoreboard allows the operators much more freedom in the ways it can be used.
"It's really a blank pallet that can be painted any way the operators want it. They can split screens with out-of-town scores from around the country, whatever," Steinkamp said.

MU also paid $100,000 to sports technology consultant Wrightson, Johnson, Haddon &Williams Inc. to help evaluate existing technology and see where changes could be made.

Operators will use the center of the scoreboard primarily for live video and use the edges for advertising. The department will use the opposite side of the board for advertising targeted at those traveling outside the stadium.

Alnutt said the new equipment gives the department greater inventory to provide to potential sponsors.

"Eventually these boards will pay for themselves and then some," Alnutt said.

The new audio system allows fans to hear music and the sounds of the game clearly, regardless of where they are in the stadium.

"Fans are going to hear and see things they think are new, that they've just never noticed before because of the increased clarity," Grinch said.

Grinch, who will be one of the people operating the scoreboard, said the biggest challenge is ensuring that operators and KOMU/Channel 8, which provides live video, are on the same page.

Rain slowed the installation of the system, and Alnutt said it might only be 90 percent complete by the home opener. "It may be missing some brick at the foundation or a portion of the roof, but it won't be an issue that's going to take away from the fan experience," Alnutt said.

Grinch said operators have conducted video and audio testing during the past week and it will be ready for game day.

In addition to the new scoreboard and sound system, there will also be two new LED boards at the southeast and southwest corners of the stadium.
Wellness Resource Center targets pre-game drinking

Most students drink in moderation before football games.

By David Conway
Published Sept. 11, 2009

The Wellness Resource Center, the NCAA and the MU Athletics Department have teamed up to start a campaign aimed at curtailing excessive drinking before football games.

The center, which received a $15,000 grant from the NCAA and another $15,000 from the Athletics Department to begin the campaign, set out to inform tailgaters their peers aren't drinking as much as they'd expect. This year, $10,000 from each organization will go toward the implementation of the program, while $5,000 from each will be used to continue the efforts next year.

Wellness Resource Center Director Kim Dude said the campaign started out of a desire to make tailgating safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

Although the campaign also focuses on decreasing littering and improving sportsmanship to create a better overall tailgating experience, a fan base more educated about its alcohol intake plays a major role in bettering that experience.

"People do not want to be around people who are drunk, disruptive and aggressive," Dude said.

By posting signs informing students of the drinking habits of others throughout tailgating areas, Dude said she hopes those who drink before games will be inspired to cut down on their own drinking. One such sign informs students that most MU tailgaters have zero to four alcoholic drinks while tailgating.

The main goal, Dude said, is to ensure students "know that most tailgaters drink in moderation and enjoy hanging out with friends and family more than they enjoy drinking."

At this point in the campaign, some students remain either skeptical or uninformed. Tailgaters who were aware of the signs did not always take them seriously, skeptical of the statistics they displayed.

Sophomore Scott Valentine wasn't so skeptical of the numbers, but echoed the sentiment that the campaign would not be as effective as the Wellness Resource Center intends.

"People choose to drink because its kind of tradition and it makes the games more fun," Valentine said. "It's a personal choice."

The primary concern for Dude is the misinterpretation of the campaign's intentions.
"We are not trying to get rid of alcohol from tailgating," Dude said. "We are simply trying to help better ensure safe tailgating where fans are having a good time."

As for the questions of the program's effectiveness, Dude said she is well aware this campaign will not bring excessive drinking before games to an end. Still, she said she remains confident it will be a success.

"Some people will drink too much no matter what we do," Dude said. "But I am hopeful our effort will empower those who are responsible to know that they are in the majority."
New facility planned for MU gymnastics and spirit group Golden Girls

By Alex Ruppenthal
September 10, 2009 | 7:57 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — For years, Missouri's gymnastics team has practiced in a screened-off section of Hearnes Center Fieldhouse, hardly an ideal setting.

Because it's on top of the impact-absorbing track surface, the floor mat has less spring beneath it than the mat the team competes on in Hearnes Center arena. While other elite programs have foam landing pits to lessen the wear and tear on their gymnasts, Missouri has made do with mats that aren't as cushioning. Coach Rob Drass said both of these things make the practice space less desirable.

Drass has wanted a new practice facility since he arrived at MU 10 years ago. But money has always stood in the way.

"Unless a booster steps forward and has some money available and needs to get rid of it, which I'm not sure is going to happen at this time, it's probably on hold for a few years," Drass said in January.

In July, the timetable changed. A donation spurred the planning of a new facility that Drass and Associate Athletics Director Mark Alnutt hope will be completed by fall 2010.

The gymnastics team and the spirit group Golden Girls will share the facility, which is expected to cost a little more than $3 million, Alnutt said. Alnutt would not disclose the amount of the donation, but he said it was "enough to help us move forward with this project without having to borrow money to cover the cost."

Plans for the facility are in the early stages of design, but Alnutt said Missouri hopes to send out bid documents for the project in mid-December.

The athletics department is working with MU Campus Facilities and Kansas City architectural
firm Ellerbe Becket — the architect of Kansas City's Sprint Center — to plan the facility. No contract has been signed yet with Ellerbe Becket.

The site has not been determined, but options being discussed include the Amphitheater at Mizzou, located just south of Memorial Stadium; an area farther south of Memorial Stadium, where athletics parking Lot G and a maintenance shed are located; and athletics parking Lot K south of Hearnes Center.

The amphitheater site was discussed first, but Alnutt said the athletics department must consider a possible future expansion of Memorial Stadium if that site is chosen.

Alnutt said the facility will include a practice floor, dance studio, locker rooms, multimedia lounge, satellite training room and possibly a small workout area. The gymnastics team will use the facility solely for practice and will continue holding competitions in Hearnes Center. Alnutt said the athletics department hopes to open the facility before Missouri's first football game next year so the Golden Girls can use it for the season.

Drass said he has been talking with Athletics Director Mike Alden about building a new facility since June 1999.

"I think he's heard from me more times than he wants to tell you that we need a new facility," Drass said.

Missouri gymnastics has enjoyed success since Drass' arrival, advancing to the NCAA regionals in nine of his 10 seasons. But the lack of a top-notch, or even adequate, facility has prevented Missouri from landing some top recruits.

"It (the current facility) hurt our ability to recruit that high-ability athlete," Drass said. "It's (the new facility) going to make recruiting so much easier."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Change in Reactor Field game-day parking opens space for donors

By BETHANY JONES
September 11, 2009 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Replacing public parking at the Reactor Field lot with media and staff for home football games this fall will open parking places closer to Memorial Stadium for donors to the Tiger Scholarship Fund.

Whit Babcock, senior associate athletics director, said all parking spaces for media have been reassigned from Lot Y. This 200-space lot on Carrie Francke Drive north of Reactor Field is now being used for donors to the Tiger Scholarship Fund, as well as 325 spaces once used for game-day employees in various locations around Memorial Stadium. Staff and media do not pay for parking.

"Some donors got bumped up into better lots as a result of some of the staff pass departures from various lots to Reactor Field — a domino effect, so to speak," Babcock said in an e-mail.

The 200 spaces in Lot Y have sold out. They were purchased for a $100-minimum donation to the Tiger Scholarship Fund and $100 for a season parking pass that goes to the athletics department.

Chad Moller, spokesman for the MU athletics department, said some of the donors who will be moving into Lot Y previously parked in Lot X on Hospital Drive. The 250 newly empty spaces out of the 1,300 in Lot X will be sold to the public on game days for $15.

Scott McSwain, a 39-year-old parole officer who used to pay the game-day fee of $15 to tailgate at the Reactor Field lot, is among those who have decided to become a member of the Tiger Scholarship Fund for the privilege of parking in donor spots in Lot X.

"I felt like I had to buy a parking pass," McSwain said. "It is about the money. College football is a big business. I understand, but I don't like it."
McSwain, a season ticket holder for 11 years, said he made the minimum contribution of $50 to the Tiger Scholarship Fund and paid $100 for a season parking pass. This guaranteed him a spot in one of the 1,050 donor spots in Lot X.

Parking for donors to the Tiger Scholarship fund in the reassigned spaces is based on each donor's priority points and by membership levels that range from $50 to above $26,802 according to MizzouGameday.com. A person receives 2 priority points for every consecutive year season tickets have been purchased for football or men's basketball.

Geoff Ingram, a 39-year-old accountant who tailgates with McSwain, said he couldn't buy a parking pass because the season tickets were under McSwain's name.

"Even though all 10 of us have been season ticket holders for 11 years, I am the only one that has the Tiger Scholarship Fund points, so my buddies don't get the benefits even though they have been paying for the tickets," McSwain said.

McSwain said he was told that a letter must be written and reviewed by a committee to request that his friends be given points for the 11 years they have been season ticket holders.

"There is no reason why we should have to be slaves to the University of Missouri to get together," McSwain said. "We don't mind paying for parking, just give us a place where we all can park.

"The Royals treat us far better than the Tigers," McSwain said. "The 10 of us are going to have a group meeting at the first game to decide if we should keep going to games in the 2010 season."

In 2005, $1.2 million was spent by MU Parking and Transportation Services to create the Reactor Field lot. Babcock said MU continues to review whether to offer the 225 spots in Reactor Field that are not assigned to staff and media to Tiger Scholarship Fund donors in 2010.

To offset the closure of the Reactor Field lot, 2,000 parking spaces will be made available in Parking Structure #7, the new garage located at the corner of Monk Drive and Virginia Avenue. This garage will have a general admission $15 parking fee on game days.

Babcock estimated the cost of eliminating the $15 parking at Reactor Field at $12,000 per game, or a loss of about $72,000 total for six home games. Those figures don't include
expenses such as paying parking staff and a cleanup crew. The revenues will be divided between MU and the athletics department.

Police and campus officials have cited problems with fans' behavior for closing the Reactor Field lot to the public.

MU Police Capt. Brian Weimer said police tried to break up a fight on Oct. 11, and one tailgater pushed an officer into a tent pole. He was arrested on suspicion of third-degree assault on a law enforcement officer.

Ingram and McSwain said they think asking fans to show a ticket at each entrance in Reactor would help prevent underage alcohol consumption. There are different theories, but most agree moving the students will not solve anything.

"We have no idea what students are going to do, but we have a proactive approach," Weimer said.

Jordan Paul, president of the Missouri Students Association, said he remains opposed to the decision. Paul has been involved in conversations with MU Chancellor Brady Deaton and members of the athletics department about closing the Reactor Field lot.

The Missouri Students Association on Aug. 31 posted a petition against the Reactor Field lot change. The petition argues that there is not an alternative for students that is cost effective and safe and that this change will not help with fan behavior issues. The general concern, the petition says, is that there won't be enough open spaces for students to park on game days.

"We couldn't come to an agreement, and the problems were not fixed," Paul said. "We set a minimum goal to get 5,000 signatures. This would show that the student body does not stand by this decision."
Letter to the Editor:

Reactor closing justified

By Domingo Pacheco, Rutgers University graduate student
Published Sept. 11, 2009

What happened with the closure of Reactor was only a matter of time; it can be seen as analogous to what happened with "Frat Pit" two years back.

When I would drive by after games, and even the next day, it looked like a war zone; it was littered with trash, front-to-back and side-to-side. You could barely see grass to the sides or the rocks that composed the lot. No matter how many trashcans were present, no matter how many bags were handed out by Sustain Mizzou, we treated the lot like crap. Simply put. No wonder the university saw it as an eye sore.

This isn't to mention the numerous problems it created for law enforcement; I know of these problems from sitting at the table and hearing the discussion first hand. There were consistently fights, most notably at the night games. And there were numerous problems related to the consumption of copious amounts of alcohol. They attempted to curb these problems and limit the time the lot was open for the night games, yet problems persisted.

Let me remind everyone that one of the four core values of our beloved university is that of Respect. Another is Responsibility, which happens double over as a Pride Point of the Athletic Department. As adults, who are responsible for our actions, we must accept the fact that we acted in accordance with neither. We treated the lot with zero respect and the behavior that occurred (by and large) often demonstrated all but responsibility.

Should the discussions between Athletics, law enforcement and wellness advocates about lot closure have been a lot more open? Absolutely. Do I believe that students were largely left out of the discussions? You bet. Because these discussions were being had last season. But do I think we deserve the lot back? Not any time soon.

The bottom line is that our actions created problems for law enforcement and created a massive eyesore for the University. I hate to break it to you, but a petition is almost misleading in that it won't solve a thing. What we need to do is grow up, stop complaining and live with the consequences of our actions. Then we can avoid this happening again.

— Domingo Pacheco, Rutgers University graduate student