Gary Forsee goes rogue, with predictable results

Comments about effects of cap and trade irritate some powerful constituents.

On Nov. 17, University of Missouri system President Gary Forsee startled the academic community and the Missouri media when he dared to send the state congressional delegation a letter opposing the climate change legislation known as "cap and trade."

"As currently written," Forsee argued forcefully, "we have grave concerns and oppose this legislation for the detrimental impact it will have on the University of Missouri system."

Forsee went on to document the millions in potential energy costs that cap and trade would impose on the four university campuses.

Forsee did not mention, but likely understood, the impact on state revenues that cap and trade could have as well. Ed Robb, a fellow at the libertarian Show-Me Institute and a former Missouri University economics professor, has argued that the legislation would have "disastrous economic effects on the economy" of Missouri.

Robb anticipates a billion loss in personal income, and for Forsee, that means a big-time loss of tax revenue. Forsee has been on the job for a few years, but if he had only been on the job the past 20 minutes, he would understand that when the legislature starts cutting, UM System begins to look like a slab of beef.

Forsee was not supposed to notice all this. As the president of a big state university system, he was expected to share the opinion of local Democratic office holders and the editorial board members of the Kansas City Star on any issue more controversial than a called third strike at a Royals game.

All were dutifully shocked when he did not.

Historically, university presidents throughout the country have felt about as free to offer an unorthodox opinion as a teenager at a Taliban wedding. Ask ex-Harvard President Larry Summers. In 2005, fresh from a stint at Secretary of the Treasury, Summers responded to a question as to why science and engineering faculties had so few women. Said he ingenuously, "There are issues of intrinsic aptitude, and particularly of the variability of aptitude."

Oops! Summers had dared to speak the unspeakable. Yes, Virginia, boys and girls are different. Who knew? Despite apologies more abundant and abject than Tiger's to Elin, Summers was forced to resign. The rest of America's university presidents took note. Forsee apparently did not.

Forsee had been spending his time learning things more useful than the Byzantine protocol expected of a university presidency. Before signing up to manage the University of Missouri System, Forsee was Chairman and CEO of Sprint Nextel, an institution where "PC" means something more pressing than "politically correct."

Forsee will survive, however, where Summers did not. Forsee is a true believer and in a state quite unlike Massachusetts, one where very few name the Show-Me Institute or even the word "Show-Me."

To be fair, editors at The Star did half-heartedly concede Forsee's right to his opinion, but they condemned that Forsee "wildly overestimated the problem."

They came to this conclusion based on an instant analysis done by the staff of war-monger-chief Henry Waxman, the Chicken Little who chairs the U.S. House Foreign and Commerce Committees.

What did they expect Waxman to say? "Oh, you know, maybe Forsee has a point?" Not likely. Waxman's minions did not even bother to calculate the economic effects of cap and trade on a coal-happy state like Missouri.

When I appeared recently on KCFI's inbred Rand-mindied Kansas City Week In Review, fellow panelist Barbara Shelby of The Star used the telling word "bungle" to describe Forsee's attempt to protect the university's interests. Her word choice, however, says less about Forsee than it does the Star's industrial-strength myopia on the controversy roiling the world of climatology.

One major part of the controversy has to do with the paradigm-shaking scandal known as "Climategate." If you depend on The Star for your news, you may not have heard of it.

"I've been getting a lot of e-mails of my own on this topic; urging me to follow the money trail, and thereby expose fraudulent science," sniffs Matthew Schofield, a Star editorial board member who appears to have been born in the past week. "But where is the money in this issue?"
Where is the money? Well, Matt, let us start with this email from University of East Anglia Professor Phil Jones, the head of the influential Climate Research Unit at the center of the data-rigging thin-flame.

Wrote Jones to erstwhile U.N. IPCC lead author John Christy, "I would like to see the climate change happen, so the science could be proved right, regardless of the consequences. This isn't being political, it is being selfish."

Selfish? Indeed. Jones has already received some $22.6 million in grants, and as long he can keep the temperatures rising, the grants will rise with them. Climate change skeptics, on the other hand, are lucky if they get tenure and use of the copy machine.

To be sure, Jones' bonanza is chump change compared to the real money involved. Consider this Reuters' headline, "U.S. backs $100 billion climate fund." No matter how funny the money, that is one hell of an incentive for all concerned to jack with the thermostat.

The other part of the controversy has to do with the vaudevillian climate shake-down known as Copenhagen. Every tin-pot dictator in the Third World showed up with his hand out and his finger wagging. Among the most flamboyantly miffed was the clown prince of Venezuela.

Indeed, the absence of curiosity in America's newsrooms on climate change—and a dozen other issues in the age of Obama—has become a story in and of itself.

Hugo Chavez, who likened President Obama to Lucifer for not doing enough to halt the imagined rise of the seas.

According to Schofield, however, there is no controversy. Indeed, the absence of curiosity in America's newsrooms on climate change—and a dozen other issues in the age of Obama—has become a story in and of itself.

Schofield goes so far as to compare the thousands of dissenting scientists on this issue to those who took money from the tobacco companies. "We've seen this trick before," Schofield writes dismissively.

Schofield might want to explain that trick to America's preeminent physicist, Freeman Dyson, who has joined forces with the growing swell of "denialists." Concedes the New York Times, Dyson's "dissention from the orthodoxy of global warming is significant because of his stature and his devotion to the integrity of science."

Although Schofield does not accuse Forsee of shilling for Big Power, others have, and the news travels. One of the questions we fielded on the aforementioned Kansas City Week in Review asked whether Forsee's "role on a number of corporate boards, including that of Great Plains Energy ..., may be shaping his agenda as university president."

Which, in rhetorical terms, is the equivalent of that old gotcha question: "Do you still beat your wife?" In Forsee's case, the best answer to a suggestion like that is probably just a cold, hard stare.
Oldenia Crow has more than 10 sensors that monitor her activity in and around her apartment

When Oldenia Crow walks to the kitchen of her apartment for a snack, sensors monitor every step the 91-year-old woman takes. When she shifts in bed while sleeping, a sensor under the mattress graphs it. And when she leaves the apartment and heads down a hallway of the retirement home, another sensor sends that information to the program that's been tracking her for years.

"There are sensors all over the house," Crow said. "I don't even know they're there."

It sounds invasive, but Crow doesn't mind. She sees it as "help for the future." And it is, both for her and the millions of baby boomers expected to require assisted living services during the next few decades.

Crow is one of many volunteers whose movements are recorded by small sensors throughout their rooms at TigerPlace, a 56-apartment facility on Falling Leaf Lane. The data is sent to University of Missouri researchers with the Aging in Place Program. They look for patterns and changes in behavior, which are often indicators of a health problem, and use the information to alert nurses that something has changed so they can investigate.

Marilyn Rantz, a professor at MU's Sinclair School of Nursing, and Marjorie Skubic, a professor of electrical and computer engineering, lead the university's interdisciplinary research team. They use inexpensive sensors to monitor residents' movement and develop programs to analyze the data so it can alert caregivers of potential problems. They see their research contributing to products that allow people to live in their own homes longer or systems that help nursing facilities keep their patients healthier.
For instance, sensors in a 96-year-old patient's room picked up changing behavior for two weeks before her death: She wasn't moving around in her sleep as much, and her pulse rate at night was lower than usual. That's the kind of data the researchers hope to isolate and use to alert nursing staff.

The research conducted at TigerPlace is already attracting long-term care providers anticipating the business opportunities a graying population will create. (TigerPlace itself is in a growth mode; workers finished an expansion early last year that added 24 apartments and are now building another wing, which will add 100 more beds to the facility.)

And with national health care reform expected to create incentives for in-home nursing care and a new insurance program for long-term care, the MU research is more relevant than ever.

"We have old problems in nursing and caring for older people who need new solutions," Rantz said.

Although using sensor technology for long-term care is becoming more popular, Rantz said TigerPlace and the research conducted there are unique. It's privately owned by Sikeston-based Americare Systems, and MU uses it for research. Rather than developing a technology and applying it to senior care like many programs do, the MU research seeks out technological solutions for long-term care problems, Skubic said.

"We have been careful from the very beginning that everything is driven by the needs of this population," she said.
The sensor research conducted there is going further than the safety-oriented applications most companies focus on. Rather than sensing problems after the fact (e.g., someone doesn't get out of bed in the morning), the MU team is coming up with ways to identify behavioral shifts that can alert caregivers to a potential problem or illness earlier.

If a resident's movement decreases over a period of time, that generally indicates a condition such as depression or a heart problem, Skubic said. Alerted by that data, nursing staff can make sure to provide the extra care required or bring a doctor to investigate.

"If we can identify early signs of changes, that oftentimes coincides with some kind of impending health event," Skubic said. "If we can identify those earlier, small problems can be fixed before they become big problems."

After starting the program in 2004, researchers have secured more than $8 million in external grant money for a number of studies using sensors to analyze residents' physical and cognitive functions. Skubic and Rantz are working on a project now to monitor patients' risks of falling by looking at how they move.

"If we can identify when someone's at a high risk of falling and prevent it, that's huge," Skubic said. "And we all know someone who's fallen."

To address privacy concerns, the researchers use software that only records a patient's silhouette. Analyzing that, they can identify certain movements that correspond with a higher fall risk. If that risk increases, it usually means there's a problem no one has noticed, Rantz said.

Rantz thinks this application will have huge market potential, especially for hospitals, where falls are a persistent problem. And the surprising thing is it won't take years until the technology is affordable enough to be integrated into nursing facilities, hospitals or homes.

"Deliberately, we've made the decision to use inexpensive, off-the-shelf equipment when possible," Rantz said.

The fall risk study, for instance, uses consumer Web cameras that cost less than $100. Skubic said they've compared their Web camera data with data from a $150,000 motion detection system and found it to be within 2 percent of the more expensive equipment's accuracy.
With the success they've enjoyed, Rantz and Skubic have considered going into business together, but they ultimately decided to leave marketing the technology to someone else.

"I'm a researcher; I'm not going to kid myself that I'm suddenly going to be the CEO of a company," Rantz said. "It's not going to happen. I'm more comfortable writing grants in my office."

The two have already found a company interested in commercializing their research. John Knox Village, a Lee's Summit-based nursing care business, has created a spin-off to focus on utilizing the sensor technology, they said. The pair is negotiating a licensing agreement with MU so they can sell their findings, mostly in the form of software. And Rantz and Skubic hope more companies will soon follow.

"Hopefully we can hand off what we learn, and new companies can evolve and get it out to consumers in their homes." Rantz said. "That's what we've had in mind from the beginning."
As the Big Ten Conference considers expansion, Missouri mulls its options

By BLAIR KERKHOFF
The Kansas City Star

COLUMBIA | Allen Fieldhouse in Lawrence will rattle tonight when Missouri takes on Kansas in basketball. But are the days numbered for this 100-year-old rivalry, at least as a Big 12 Conference game?

Five weeks ago the Big Ten Conference announced an exploratory mission to expand its membership from 11 universities, and Missouri is one of the schools frequently mentioned as possible recruit.

Emotions ran high in the days after the Big Ten news. MU chancellor Brady Deaton said an invitation would be evaluated. Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon said he would rather the state's flagship school hang out with Northwestern and Wisconsin than Texas Tech and Oklahoma State, and that didn't sit well with Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe.

"I would only say that all of this has to be handled respectfully between member institutions and the conference," Beebe said.

Missouri said it would consider its options.

For any school, joining the Big Ten — the nation's original conference — would mean more athletic revenue and greater exposure as part of a conference with its own television network and academic prestige.

It would be a life-changing move for many.

"The impact could be huge," said Burke Magnus, ESPN's senior vice president for college sports programming. "Not just from a Big Ten perspective but that team is going to have to come from somewhere else. You lay out the dominoes and a lot of them could fall."

Why stay?

The popular speculation has files from Missouri, Pittsburgh, Syracuse and Rutgers in the office of Big Ten Commissioner Jim Delany, assuming Notre Dame remains uninterested.

Of that group, the deepest roots in one league belong to Missouri, and a shift would be remarkable in one sense: No school affiliated with a conference as long as the Tigers with the Big 12 — and, before that, the Big Eight — has packed up and moved to another neighborhood.

Missouri joined Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Washington University of St. Louis in the Missouri Valley Conference, founded on Jan. 12, 1907, as the nation's second-oldest athletic conference. Competition with the Jayhawks, Cornhuskers, Iowa State and Kansas State predates World War I.

Ending most of those relationships, or at least turning over scheduling responsibility from the conference to the school, is the most uncomfortable consequence for some long-established Tiger supporters.

"You look at where Missouri has been, what we've established with Nebraska, with Oklahoma, Iowa State all through the years, and you have to ask, 'Do you want to leave that all behind?' " said Don Walsworth, a former member of the University of Missouri Board of Curators. "I think Missouri and Kansas would find a way to continue, but you'd lose everything else."

Another risk is losing a recruiting foothold in Texas, the nation's most fertile territory for football prospects. The Tigers' roster in 2009 included 33 Texans. The 11 rosters of the Big Ten schools combined for 43 Texans.
"You're definitely going to take a hit in Texas because you'd lose the Big 12 selling point of playing multiple games in front of Mom and Dad," said recruiting analyst Jeremy Crabtree of Rivals.com.

If any program outside Texas could withstand a conference switch in the short term, Crabtree said, it's Missouri.

"Because of the longevity of the staff and the relationships it has developed in the state," he said. "When a high school coach in Texas sees an assistant with a Missouri logo on his shirt, he knows who he is, and that's important."

But eventually, Missouri could find itself in the middle, losing its influence in Texas while being the new kid on the block in the Big Ten recruiting bases.

**Why go?**

The timing of the Big Ten announcement caught Missouri at a vulnerable moment. The Tigers have long been unhappy with the Big 12's policy that doesn't distribute revenue equally. The perception of unequal conference partners was heightened in November and December.

Missouri's women's soccer team finished first in the regular season, capturing its second straight conference crown and fashioning the second-best record in the program's history. But the Tigers lost in the Big 12 tournament, failing to gain the conference's automatic NCAA Tournament bid. They then became what was thought to be the Big 12's first regular-season champion to not receive an at-large NCAA bid.

"Do I feel like the conference let us down?" said coach Bryan Blitz, and after a long pause, "I don't know if it's the conference or the NCAA committee. The conference has always backed us before. But this time, we were taken aback by it. It was very hard to explain to our six seniors."

A few weeks later, football coach Gary Pinkel needed explanations, too. Although Missouri finished with a better regular-season record than Iowa State (8-4 to 6-6) and the Tigers won the season meeting, the Cyclones were selected for the Insight Bowl, which is higher in the pecking order than the Texas Bowl, where Mizzou landed.

From a prestige standpoint there's little difference in the games, and from a recruiting standpoint Missouri stood to benefit more from playing in Texas than Arizona, home of the Insight. But it marked the third straight year MU was passed over in bowl selection by a team with a worse or similar record.

The soccer snub could have happened had the Tigers been members of another conference, and although the Big Ten's bowl selection criteria aren't as loose as the Big 12's, it allows flexibility after the first four teams are slotted.

But what can't be debated is the Big Ten's superior wealth and exposure. The Big Ten Network is available in more than 70 million homes and shows about 350 live events annually, with more women's and Olympic sports than any other network, according to its Web site.

The conference has agreements with the Big Ten Network at $2.8 billion for 25 years, and ESPN for $1 billion over 10 years. The deal is expected to pay the 11 conference members some $17 million to $20 million annually over the life of the contract, and the conference shares its revenue equally.

The Big 12 deals: $480 million with ABC/ESPN for eight years through 2016, and $78 million with Fox Sports through 2012. Last year the conference gave out between $7 million and $10 million per school, primarily through its media and bowl contracts.

Missouri's athletic director, Mike Alden, sees MU and other Big 12 schools falling behind those in the Big Ten and Southeastern Conference, which also has lucrative media contracts.

"Illinois and Indiana will make $9 million more from its television contracts this year," Alden said. "Arkansas and Mississippi will make even more. That's our comparison. In five years, they'll have generated almost $50 million more than us without selling a ticket."

**A domino effect**

The Big Ten has been down this road before, as recently as 1999, and took no action after Notre Dame declined to join. Observers said this time was different.

"From what I'm hearing, I think this will happen," said ESPN analyst and former Ohio State quarterback Kirk Herbstreit.
The drumbeat is louder than ever for the Big Ten to expand, split into divisions and add a conference championship game. The value of championship games vary by conference — the Big 12’s is worth between $12 million and $15 million — but the Big Ten’s pie would be sliced 12 ways instead of 11. Would the conference do this for an extra million per school annually?

The expansion of the Big Ten would force other leagues to consider their futures. If Missouri moved, the Big 12 could look to the Mountain West Conference for a replacement. The Mountain West would look at the Western Athletic Conference, and so on.

If Rutgers, Pittsburgh or Syracuse joined, the Big East Conference could replenish from Conference USA. Memphis would be a leading Big East candidate.

From a television and media market standpoint, the Big Ten would become financially stronger with the addition of a conference football championship game while making another conference weaker. It would gain audience in the East with Big Ten teams, in the Midwest with Missouri and nationally with Notre Dame.

Then there’s this: It has been suggested that expansion might not stop with 12 teams. The Big Ten could super-size and become college sports’ largest football conference by adding three rather than one.

That could start a shuffling college sports hasn’t seen since the Supreme Court ruled in 1984 that the NCAA no longer controlled televised college football and schools scrambled to cut their own deals with new conferences.

It’s the reason why, by the 1990s, the Big 12 was formed, Penn State ended its independent status and joined the Big Ten, the Big East started football and the SEC expanded. The movement didn’t stop until 2005 with expansion and reshuffling in the Atlantic Coast Conference and Big East. The Big 12 wasn’t part of that shifting but could have some difficult decisions to make this time.

“We would have to look at whether we’d want to remain at 12,” Beebe said.

The Big Ten has thrived with 11 members for nearly two decades. Could the Big 12 do the same?

"The only thing it really would affect is the conference championship game, and there hasn’t been unanimity in having that game," Beebe said.

Whatever happens, Big Ten doors won’t swing open immediately. The exploration will last at least a year. When the Big Ten voted in Penn State in 1989, the Nittany Lions didn’t start competing in football until 1993.

Until it’s resolved, Beebe said it will be business as usual in his conference.

“You don’t go into your conference meetings asking which of you guys might leave,” he said. "Unless departure is imminent, it’s not a topic you have on the agenda."

@ Go to KansasCity.com for photos, live updates and analysis of tonight’s Kansas-Missouri game.

The Star’s Mike DeArmond contributed to this report. To reach Blair Kerkhof, call 816-234-4730 or send e-mail to bkerkhof@kcstar.com.

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Stephens, MU agree to recreation pact

Monday, January 25, 2010

Stephens College will now have access to the University of Missouri’s Student Recreation Complex under an agreement announced this morning.

The arrangement allows Stephens students, faculty and staff to use MU’s recreation complex at the same price and access level offered to MU students, faculty and staff. They also can opt to enroll in MU recreational programs and classes.

Stephens administrators are hashing out plans to make a shuttle available between Stephens and the rec center.
Rec Center available to Stephens students, faculty

Some MU students have voiced concerns about overcrowding.

By Zach Toombs
Published Jan. 26, 2010

Stephens College students and faculty will have access to MU's Student Recreation Complex as part of an agreement announced Monday morning, Stephens College spokeswoman Sara Fernandez said.

Staff and students from Stephens will be able to enroll in programs and classes offered at the recreation center. Fernandez said the deal offers several benefits for Stephens College.

"It's wonderful to have access to such a wonderful recreation center, and it also provides a great co-ed environment for our students," Fernandez said.

Recreation Services and Facilities Director Diane Dahlmann said Stephens President Dianne Lynch approached her about a possible agreement late last fall.

"This is an informal agreement; there is no contract," Dahlmann said. "Students, faculty and staff from Stephens will pay the same rate as MU students and MU faculty and staff on an individual basis."

Stephens freshman Ariana Franks said the agreement sparked a lot of excitement about the possibility of using the recreation complex.

"When one of my professors announced it in class this morning, we were all talking about it," Franks said. "I think just about everyone in there said they were planning on using the Rec Center."

But many MU students are concerned about overcrowding problems in the recreation complex with the addition of Stephens students and faculty.

"I'm really not in favor of the agreement," MU senior Mallory Schillinger said. "It's already packed enough and it's already very hard to get a treadmill in our Rec Center."

MU junior Amber Pyse said a trip to the recreation complex is no longer worth dealing with the crowds for her.

"You go there for two hours and get about 20 minutes of a work out in, at least during the main hours," Pyse said. "I just avoid the Rec now because of the crowds."

MU junior Gabby Lowe said any overcrowding problems that might already exist at the recreation complex will be resolved as the semester progresses.
"The Rec may be really crowded right now, but it usually slows down as the semester goes on," Lowe said. "It's always like this at the beginning of the semester."

Dahlmann said she doesn't anticipate the agreement with Stephens, which has a total enrollment of 1,100, to aggravate overcrowding issues.

"The fact of the matter is that Stephens doesn't have a very large student body," Dahlmann said. "I'm not expecting it to overwhelm us, and it's certainly not going to have a negative impact on us or hinder us."

Fernandez said a shuttle service from Stephens to the recreation complex would be offered in the near future.

"We're in the process of getting a vehicle and marking it so that it's clearly a Stephens College vehicle," Fernandez said. "We don't know yet how many times a day the shuttle will run, but it will be enough to be convenient. We realize that parking can be an issue there."