A faster bone fix

MU doc helping create leg plate.

Photo by Don Shrubshell | Buy this photo

Kim Martin’s son Tyler, 3, shows his scar where he had surgery to repair a broken leg after a bicycle accident. The surgery was performed by Daniel Hoernschemeyer at University Hospital with a new technique that uses a stainless steel plate instead of a traditional cast.

By T.J. Greaney

Thursday, March 11, 2010

After 3-year-old Tyler Martin went tumbling off his Spider-Man bicycle down a hill in August, he was facing a pretty unpleasant recovery.
Hoernschemeyer holds a stainless steel plate similar to the one he placed in Tyler’s leg.

Tyler had fractured his femur at midshaft when he hit the pavement and, based on traditional methods of healing, he would likely be laid up in a cast for six to eight weeks. For an active youngster still learning about the world and not far beyond pony training, that seemed like an eternity.

“We sat around for a night, I guess, thinking about what we were going to do,” said his father, Chad Martin. “because he was going to have his leg at what, a 90-degree angle?”

“We were just really worried about him being comfortable,” Tyler’s mother, Kim Martin, said. “He’s very active, and the thought of him being in that cast for six to eight weeks, immobile, horrified both of us.”

But University of Missouri orthopedic surgeon Daniel Hoernschemeyer, who specializes in pediatrics, gave the family another option. Over the past couple of years, Hoernschemeyer has been part of a group of surgeons from across the country submitting input on the design of a new “plate” or stainless-steel rod specifically designed to fit the femurs of young patients.

The tiny plate, which looks something like an automotive tool, has a series of holes where it can be attached to the bone by screws. And, most important, the plate is designed to match the unique curve and size of the pediatric femur.

This is particularly important for patients such as Tyler because the femur has growth plates at each end. Any interference with those plates at this crucial time of his life could lead to deformities. The plate, called a PediLoc, is manufactured by OrthoPediatrics of Warsaw, Ind.

Hoernschemeyer said that during the design process, he and other doctors extensively examined a collection of skeletons at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland. Through this, doctors and engineers figured out a way to aim the screws through the metal plate at precise angles to avoid hitting the growth plate.

The device received FDA approval in May, and its first use occurred in Jacksonville, Fla. Hoernschemeyer has used it about seven times since then.
Hoernschemeyer said the fairly noninvasive surgery to insert the plate offers patients the ability to be up and walking again within one or two weeks. That's far different than what many parents describe as a nightmare of a cast.

"I've had families tell me they literally hadn't slept and were taking shift changes," Hoernschemeyer said of patients who are given casts. "I've just been down that path with many families. Some docs even call it the tool of the devil because you're sending the family home with a real big challenge."

The cost of choosing surgery and the PediLoc device over a cast can be significant, but Hoernschemeyer said families have to weigh that against other factors.

"You kind of weigh that versus a parent losing a job or taking six weeks off because their child can't go to day care," he said.

For Tyler, his parents said, it's been a clear benefit. Tyler will have the plate removed next month. He was up and walking two weeks after the surgery and bouncing on the family's trampoline within three weeks.

"He was just so much happier," Kim Martin said. "We were glad he could get back to being ornery as fast as he could."

Reach T.J. Greaney at 573-815-1719 or e-mail tigreaney@columbiatribune.com.
Students, administration focus on moving on from BCC crime

*KU students presented MU organizations a banner in support of efforts.*

By Zachary Murdock
Published March 12, 2010

As the spotlight on Feb. 26's incident at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center fades, students, administration and members of the community gathered Thursday night to discuss how the incident affected both the communities on campus and throughout Columbia.

Thursday night's dialogue, "Courageous Conversations about the Black Culture Center: Moving Forward," was a continuation of the March 1 town hall meeting.

"At the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative, we felt it was important just to hold another dialogue session," Chief Diversity Officer Roger Worthington said. "We felt it was very important to have another opportunity for people to have their voices heard."

The event opened with a special presentation from University of Kansas students, who presented a banner in support of MU students' continued struggle against adversity and discrimination. The banner was covered with signatures of KU students who promised ongoing support for diversity across both campuses, despite the schools' heated rivalry.

Five KU students presented the banner to students from MU involved in several organizations on campus, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Mizzou Black Men's Initiative and the Legion of Black Collegians.

The dialogue began with a panel discussion about reactions to the incident, how those have changed and what dilemmas now face MU.

"My initial reactions were quite simple," associate law professor David Mitchell said. "I was angry, I was frustrated and I was disappointed that on this campus that I call home two students could do this."

Becky Martinez, Women's and Gender Studies visiting scholar, compared the incident to a similar event earlier this February at University of California-San Diego called the "Compton Cookout," a fraternity-organized, ghetto-themed party that was condemned by UCSD Chancellor Marye Anne Fox as offensive.

"Stupid is the word that comes to my mind," associate communications professor Mike Porter said of the incident at the BCC. "I just can't believe how wholly stupid it was."

The five KU students in attendance expressed their dismay the event had not been well reported by KU's campus newspaper, The Daily Kansan.
"I was really shocked that I hadn't heard anything about it," KU student Samantha Pugh said. "It hadn't hit our school's newspaper. It wasn't a big news story."

As discussion continued, focus shifted away from Feb. 26's incident and toward the underlying issues that might have caused the event and how students and people in the community can work to ensure incidents like this will not happen again.

"We're working very hard on a regular basis," Worthington said. "You have my commitment that as long as I am the chief diversity officer of this institution, that I won't stop working to make institutional change happen."

Worthington discussed efforts to make an undergraduate requirement for qualified diversity classes and said the policy would be similar to the requirement for students to take writing intensive classes.

In addition to much discussion about diversity coursework and activities, Worthington emphasized the need to create a "culture of involvement and engagement" on campus and a push for more student participation in events like You In Mizzou and Difficult Dialogues.

"Over the last decade, the attitudes across this state that support this community have significantly changed," Chancellor Brady Deaton said. "We are absolutely and deeply committed to ensuring that this does continue, and we won't let one incident derail us from the path we're on."

As the discussion came to a close, several speakers expressed their gratitude that there has been such a response from both students and administration.

"Listening to these young folks talk has given me hope because I know just from the things they've shared that Columbia and the University of Missouri are in good hands," lifelong Columbia resident Marie Glaze said. "This is just a small stumbling block, and we are going to use this to make things better."

BCC Director Nathan Stephens said planning for a "ComMUnity Celebration" to commemorate the Unity Celebration on March 5 has already begun. The event will be held March 5, 2011, and will be open to the public, feature food, music and a forum for discussion.
MU faculty, students say race discussions must continue

By Katy Bergen  
March 11, 2010 | 11:07 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — A week after an incident in which cotton balls were found in front of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center, Becky Martinez spoke about it to a close friend.

The friend told Martinez, a visiting scholar in Women’s and Gender Studies, that it had been a week since the incident and asked if the two could stop talking about it.

Martinez said she was saddened by the viewpoints of some who told her that the MU black community and its supporters were exhibiting victim mentality and oversensitivity about the issue. The issue, she said, consumed her.

Martinez told her story as part of Courageous Conversations About the Black Culture Center Incident: Moving Forward, a discussion sponsored by the Chancellor’s Diversity Initiative and Difficult Dialogues held Thursday night at the MU Life Science Center’s Monsanto Auditorium. The faculty panel also included Mike Porter of the communication department, Kathleen Boggs of the education department, Associate Professor of Law David Mitchell and Paul Ladehoff, Campus Mediation Service director.

Mitchell also found himself balancing his professional life with his personal feelings as he brought the incident into his Law and Society classes.

The son of a woman who picked tobacco for a North Carolina sharecropper, Mitchell was angry when he heard about the racist act. But as a teacher of the justice system, he understood the full impact that a felony could have on the suspects. He could not decide whether he favored suspension, expulsion or criminal charges in a justice system he said can tread too carefully when there is a crime against a minority.

Mitchell also said he suffered from “ethnic fatigue,” or the need to engage in conversations about race on a daily basis or to always have to be an educator about one’s own race.
"Clearly this was a racist act, and it gets tiring," he said. "You get to the point where it's like really? Enough."

Mitchell immediately understood the racist significance of the cotton ball incident, though some of his colleagues didn't. African-American slaves were forced to work on cotton plantations in pre-Civil War times.

Roger Worthington, chief diversity officer, invited the audience to engage in the respectful and open exchange of ideas about the incident. He introduced five KU students who traveled to Columbia to present a diversity banner symbolizing unity and support to six MU leaders from the Mizzou Black Men's Initiative, MU NAACP and Legion of Black Collegians.

After the KU presentation and the faculty panel, the audience split into discussion groups to talk about their initial thoughts and reactions to the incident, how they have changed and the most difficult dilemma currently facing the MU community. An open forum followed.

Corinne Valdivia, an MU associate professor of agricultural economics, who's lived in Columbia for 20 years, said she felt disbelief when she heard of the incident because she previously saw Columbia push back against racism when hate groups came to protest in town.

Marcus Ferguson, a member of Mizzou Black Men's Initiative, said he appreciated the supportive action MU administrators have given to the issue, but that the black community felt they had to push for that to happen.

Ferguson said he hopes that in the future the MU black community will not have to do that on a campus that he feels has a long way to go in becoming diverse.

"We're here, but we're not together," Ferguson said.

After many different perspectives were shared in the audience forum, the meeting ended on a note of hope. Many in the audience agreed that while specific and direct support of diversity is needed from the MU community, the administration is dedicated to making progress.

"Slow change feels like no change," Worthington said to Ferguson. "You have my commitment."
TRIB TALK

Thursday, March 11, 2010

"The response to the cotton ball incident on campus was really pretty ridiculous. Over 300 people come out to express concern over an infantile prank. Whoever did this was guilty of littering and a little stupidity. Let’s not make a mountain out of mole hill. A diversity class is not needed on campus. You can’t teach these things to people when they’re 20 years old, for God’s sake. Use your brains. Good lord."

“What’s the big deal about this cotton ball thing? Arresting two young men for spreading cotton balls around — how ridiculous. Turn the two loose. Good grief, can’t college students have any fun anymore? Goodness gracious, goodness gracious. You people are idiots over there.”

“So, let me get this straight. Two students out of 27,000 here at the University of Missouri campus were caught for throwing cotton balls on the ground in front of the black building, and this has brought people up in arms and racism and on and on and on. And I indeed believe it is a bad thing to do. Two out of 27,000. On the next page of the newspaper was a home invasion by two black males and an attempted robbery and an assault of a pedestrian by two black males — all armed, with obviously harmful intent to their victims. I personally believe the issue of the armed black males in Columbia with all the mayhem they’re causing is more of an issue than the cotton balls. I’d rather be hit by a bag full of cotton balls and somebody call me a bad name than meet a couple guys with guns in my face.”

“I just want to make a comment about the cotton ball issue: At least it wasn’t anything worse than a cotton ball. What is a cotton ball going to do to hurt someone? It’s not like these people were doing a drive-by shooting or painting obscenities on the place, which is real vandalism.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

LETTER: Students behind cotton ball incident shouldn't serve in Navy

By Barbara J. Hasselriis
March 11, 2010 | 4:31 p.m. CST

Even if the ROTC students involved in the cotton ball incident get a break from MU and are allowed to remain on campus, they will have the Navy to deal with. These students are on scholarships to educate them prior to being admitted to Officer Candidate School. Having a sister who is a commander in the Navy — specializing in personnel administration — I have been told these students will more than likely lose all their scholarship support from the Navy and will never become officers. This incident was detected immediately by the Naval command in Washington, D.C. and at the Great Lakes Naval Base in Waukegan, Ill.

Personally, I hope these kids are allowed to remain at MU and have to suffer and find a way to come up with the tuition money they have squandered with their unconscionable behavior. Personally, I hope they won't be in our armed forces in the future.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

GUEST COMMENTARY: Cotton ballers tried to degrade African-Americans

By Gabriel C. Tyler
March 11, 2010 | 6:48 p.m. CST

An MU student felt the need to create a Facebook group, titled "FREE THE COTTON BALLERS!" to express his disgust with the arrest of the two MU students who defaced the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center and mockingly dehumanized African-Americans.

I am not amazed by anything anymore. It is clear to me, now more than ever, that racism grips many with its rigid hands, while blinding some with its often obscure nature.

Racism is never afraid to show its grotesque, evil behind. Two sides exist to every story, but I cannot sit by and condone the extreme and premeditated manner of this heinous act. What they did was more than a simple joke; it was a conscious jeer constructed to debase the history of African-Americans and their contribution to this campus.

What they did was an act of vandalism, but if their actions were deliberately committed with the thought of degrading African-Americans, then it is a hate crime. A hate crime is classified as a crime that the victim, witness, third-party or anyone else thinks was caused by hostility, prejudice or hate of someone's disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation. By targeting the Black Culture Center and no other building on campus, people are left with the conclusion that they defaced the building because of its association with the black student population, making it a hate crime.

Furthermore, why spread cotton balls, which symbolizes the ties that blacks have to chattel slavery in America? If it was not a target on blacks, then sprinkles, tacks, etc. should have and would have been spread, not cotton balls.

Dismissing their actions as small is part of the problem, and those who do so contribute to fostering an environment where we tolerate discrimination. In my opinion, when "small" things like this happen, they stand as signals that larger things are brewing beneath the surface.
In addition, to those who ask "Why do blacks get Black History Month, the Black Cultural Center, the NAACP, the United Negro College Fund, etc.?" I have a simple response: we fought to obtain these few things because you basically get this entire campus and the entire world to move around freely in.

Many argue that blacks get special privileges, while whites get nothing. They say blacks do not uphold the concept of equality. To them I say that it was never a question of equality but more a question of equity. We fought to level the playing field in a society where we had been oppressed and limited by elitists who were too afraid to lose the advantages founded on a social construct derived from slavery, with whites on top and blacks on the bottom.

If this society had given blacks access to this system of advantage in the first place, no need to create these organizations, institutions, events and resources would exist.

I do not want to be equal to you because there is nothing that makes me inherently inferior to you. I just want to transcend the systematic disadvantage standing against me as a black man living in America.

But once again, racism and ignorance never fail to show just how real and ugly they truly are.
COLUMBIA, Mo. — Doctors, nurses and other health care workers are tapping into their inner Tolstoys to better connect with patients.

With increasing regularity, they're meeting in monthly book clubs to discuss medical-themed literature. Humanities courses are now required in many medical schools.

"The humanities can remind them that they're dealing with very complicated, whole individuals with their own needs and opinions," said Elizabeth Sinclair, coordinator of the Maine Humanities Council's literature and medicine program.

A hospital in Bangor, Maine, hosted the first program in 1997. The idea has spread over the years to 25 states, including California, Florida, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Ohio and Virginia.

"If you want to understand what someone who is dying is going through, the highs and lows, the emotions, read Tolstoy's 'The Death of Ivan Ilych,'" said Dr. Robin Blake. "One hundred years before Kubler-Ross identified the stages of dying, Tolstoy had it."

**Blake's lifelong love of literature led him to retire early from the University of Missouri medical school to write short stories and teach an undergraduate honors class on medicine and literature.**

He read recently from his work at the first meeting of the new medical book club at the university's teaching hospital. The audience of doctors, nurses, medical librarians and administrators listened raptly to a story of a young boy's suspicious death and another about an old man begging to die.

Blake, 64, peppers his conversation with knowing nods to the great writers whose work informs his own: Tolstoy, Albert Camus, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor and William Carlos Williams, among others.

The North Carolina native moved to Missouri nearly 40 years ago to attend medical school at Washington University in St. Louis. His own training meant medical charts and academic journals, not character development and plot exposition.

"In medical school, there was nothing of this," Blake said. "And I think that was a big omission."
A 2005 study by the Maine council showed that participants reported greater empathy for patients and colleagues, higher cultural awareness, increased job satisfaction and improved interpersonal skills.

"The program reminds them why they got into the profession in the first place," Sinclair said.

Trained to deal in certainties, some doctors can struggle with the murkier rules of literature, she added.

Dr. Abraham Verghese, a novelist and Stanford University professor, has devoted much of his career to exploring the connections between literature and medicine. A decade ago, he founded the Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.

Verghese agreed that patient empathy is at the heart of the humanities in medicine movement. He also advocated for a more physician-centric outlook.

"There's a great hunger in clinical practice for discussions and explaining and reconciling the things you're seeing," he said. "It's as much about the physician as it is about the patient."

One month after Blake's inaugural reading, the 25 or so members of the University of Missouri Health Care book club discussed "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly," the memoir of the late French Elle Editor-in-Chief Jean-Dominique Bauby. His sudden stroke left him paralyzed save for movements with his head and eyes.

Over cold cuts and lemonade, the group spread out across a medical school classroom with an informality rarely seen in the hospital corridors. Nurses called doctors by their first names, not titles — a hierarchical breakdown program supporters point to as another step toward humanizing medicine.

Literature, Sinclair said, has a lot to teach the health care world about medicine.

"Literature is messy. There's not a black and white answer," she said. "So much of the expectations on them are black and white, to have an answer. This helps them fit into that hard space, of not necessarily knowing the answer."
Missouri governor cuts another $126 million from budget

By Jeremy Essig
March 11, 2010 | 8:21 p.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY — Facing the largest revenue decline in Missouri history, Gov. Jay Nixon cut an additional $126 million from the current budget Thursday.

Revenue collections for fiscal year 2010 have declined 12.7 percent as of March 1, according to the Office of Administration. More than $850 million in cuts have been made to the fiscal year 2010 budget since it was passed in May.

According to Budget Director Linda Luebbering, almost 60 percent of the $126 million will come from savings in Medicaid payments to the federal government because of an increase in match rates.

The money from Medicaid payments is a "savings, not a cut in spending," Luebbering said.

School transportation programs and a Public Safety Department program coordinating emergency responders took two of the largest cuts of the remaining $51.1 million.

The state reimburses school districts for expenses such as buses and fuel. Luebbering said it’s up to the districts to decide how to compensate for the lost reimbursement funds.

This year, school transportation programs have been cut almost $20 million, roughly 11 percent of the original appropriation.

The Public Safety program to help facilitate emergency response was initially appropriated $87 million from general revenue, but it has now taken cuts that amount to more than $80 million.

While some federal and highway money is still available, Luebbering said the governor's office has not decided if the program should continue in the current fiscal climate.
"We don't know if it makes sense to go forward," she said.

The state's operating budget also was cut by $1 million cut, which could result in lost jobs, Luebbering said. Although the cut could be offset by lowering expenses, she speculated that it could affect state jobs.

Nixon's new cuts are based on an estimated decline of 9.6 percent in state revenue compared to 2009. The governor's office hopes this round of cuts will be the last, Luebbering said, but economic news keeps coming in worse than expected.

House Budget Chairman Allen Icet, R-St. Louis County, said the new estimate fits within economic projections of a decline between 8 percent and 11 percent. Icet, however, said he would not be surprised if another $100 million in cuts would still be required to balance the budget.

Earlier Thursday, Nixon spoke to business leaders in Springfield about the projected budget deficit in fiscal year 2011. Nixon has said $500 million will have to be cut from the budget he proposed in January.

**One cost-saving plan is to consolidate the departments of Higher and Elementary and Secondary Education.**

"We need to have one Department of Education that prepares students from the day they walk into pre-school to the day they walk across the stage with their college diplomas," Nixon said in a press release.

Higher Education Commissioner Robert Stein said interest is growing across the state and the nation for programs that align elementary and higher education.

Luebbering said her office had not yet estimated exactly how much money could be saved by consolidating the programs, but that it could come in the form of lower levels of administrative staff.

Jack Cardetti, a spokesman for Nixon, said the $500 million is a combination of $200 million in expected revenue decline and another $300 million the original estimate had expected in federal money.
Peters views law as good background

Prof wants kids’ performance as basis for policy.

By Jonathon Braden

When Phil Peters left his brief tenure as a civil rights trial attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice in the 1970s, he was encouraged by what had transpired in Washington, D.C.

Legislators had enacted laws that protected civil rights and penalized segregation.

“I thought that Congress had done the kinds of things that we would need to eliminate achievement disparities over two decades,” Peters said.

Thirty years later, in the early 2000s, Peters was sifting through applications as a member of the admissions committee at the University of Missouri School of Law, where he specializes in health law. He saw just a few applications from students from low-income families and even fewer letters of recommendation and LSAT scores from black students.

“I wondered why things hadn’t changed more,” he said.

His research led him to the much-discussed achievement gap — the difference in learning levels between groups of students, a problem that pestsers schools all over the nation. Peters traced such learning disparities to kindergarten, where some kids start school better prepared than others because of preschool and other early-childhood programs.

He joined the board of directors at First Chance for Children, a not-for-profit that works with low-income and minority families to ensure their kids start kindergarten prepared. In 2008, he took a two-year leave of absence from MU to become the organization’s executive director.

Since returning to the law school in January, Peters has begun campaigning against Jonathan Sessions for a one-year seat on the Columbia Board of Education. The seat was vacated by Rosie Tippin, who resigned in May.

“Every decision about how we spend money has to be measured by how much it impacts student learning,” Peters said.

Tammy Carter served on the board of directors of First Chance for Children during Peters’ last year as executive director. “He was so adamant about making sure that the various programs and concepts he introduced to young children — that they were actually going to be of some benefit, and the only way that was going to happen was to research it,” she said.
Carter said Peters always would pilot a program on a small group of kids before implementing it for all children.

Peters said the district could improve its use of evidence-based research. "I would like to see better data mining on the outcomes of our early-childhood programs," he said.

The district receives scores for its third-grade students, but without more data from the district's preschool programs and before kids reach third grade, Peters said, "We don't know in great detail how to account for our third- and fourth-grade scores."

At a school board work session in October, Peters presented data he had compiled about the district's achievement gap, showing how the district's gap between subgroups was worse than the statewide average. Columbia's wider gap also was dwindling at a quicker rate.

His intentions were to "fire up the board to take a stronger interest in disparities and hold the superintendent to the district's targets," he said.

In the past, Peters said, shrinking the achievement gap "hasn't been made a priority in assessing the superintendent."

Before December, he said, little public board discussion occurred regarding achievement data presented annually to the board, including data showing the district's disparities between groups.

Michelle Cecil teaches taxes and bankruptcy at the MU law school. She has known Peters for 21 years.

"I think having the training of a lawyer is really beneficial because he can look at all the sides of an issue," Cecil said of Peters. "Every time we have a discussion of any issue that comes up at the law school, he sits back and listens a little bit, and then he comes up with a question or comment that kind of synthesizes the discussion. It's remarkable that he can do that."

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Big 12 tournament mixes fast breaks, tax breaks

MU MENTION PAGE 2

By Barb Shelly, Kansas City Star Editorial Page columnist

A warm welcome to all those visitors attending this week’s charitable showcase at Kansas City’s Sprint Center.

You may call the extravaganza that continues through Saturday a men’s college basketball tournament. But in the eyes of the Internal Revenue Service, it’s technically a gigantic fundraiser to support the educational mission of the participating universities.

I know. I choked on that one, too.

This will make me the top seed for the wet blanket trophy, what with all the excitement going on in town and the expected $14 million economic windfall area businesses expect to reap from the Big 12 tournament.

But I’m hearing about sky-high ticket packages and coaches with multi-million-dollar salaries and I just have to ask: How long will Congress and the IRS put up with the charade of calling college athletics a tax-exempt, nonprofit enterprise?

Allow me to answer my own question: A long time.

What senator or congressman would willingly incur the wrath of the Jayhawk nation or the Mizzou faithful?

But still, state budgets are tanking, endowments are down, universities are eliminating courses and students are taking on staggering loans. Against that backdrop, the eye-popping amounts of money spent on athletic salaries, recruiting and facilities seem hard to justify.

Tax law has always recognized the social benefits of higher education. Universities don’t pay taxes on their corporate income, and charitable donations to the schools are tax-deductible. That holds for their athletic programs as well.
"It's part of the Greek ideal that a classical education involves not only the mind, but the body as well," said John Colombo, a tax law expert who teaches at the University of Illinois College of Law.

But Division I college athletics long ago ceased to be an extension of classroom learning.

"We're talking about big-time entertainment," Colombo said.

How big? Well, according to a database kept by ESPN, the University of Kansas athletic department took in nearly $83 million in operating revenue in 2008.

That same year, the athletic department's total operating expenses amounted to nearly $66 million. Salary packages for coaches added up to nearly $11 million, and are higher today since basketball coach Bill Self inked a 10-year package worth $30 million.

**According to the ESPN numbers, the University of Missouri's athletic department took in $55.5 million in 2008 and had operating expenses of $51.7 million.**

A Big 12 rival, the University of Texas, took in $120 million for its athletic program and spent $111 million, including nearly $18 million in compensation for coaches.

Last year, the Congressional Budget Office released a report which concluded that, at Division I universities with football programs, "...sports programs may have crossed the line from educational to commercial endeavors."

You think?

Tax laws allow a nonprofit's business enterprises to remain tax-exempt only if they are related to the charitable mission. The CBO noted that major university athletic programs are appropriating a greater proportion of their earnings, rather than sharing them with their universities as a whole.

But the researchers also concluded that removing tax privileges from college athletics wouldn't stop the arms race or produce much tax revenue. Schools would simply shift money into their nontaxable accounts.

Congress could take action, of course, if members were offended enough by the idea of money flowing into sports programs instead of the U.S. Treasury. In a paper published last year, Colombo proposed caps on coaching salaries and requirements that universities must spend a percentage of their sports revenues on educational purposes.

But, he said, "I have no illusion that they will do any of those things."

So, if you're headed for the Sprint Center, you can feel doubly good about anteing up for your ticket.

It's for charity, after all.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Midwest could see more severe weather this spring

By Erin Hendry
March 12, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Based on trends from past years, Columbia could be in for more thunderstorms, tornadoes and flooding this spring.

“When we compare this year to similar years, it is matching up to the more active years,” said Tony Lupo, professor and chair of the atmospheric sciences department at MU, though he said there is no way to predict how severe it will be.

Weather patterns correlate with El Nino-type years, he said. That means warm, wet air is pushed across the Midwest on a strong southern jet stream.

That “provides a path for pressure systems and the more of those you get, the more thunderstorms you get,” Lupo said.

In its long-range forecasts, the Farmers' Almanac has also predicted a possible increase in thunderstorms and tornadoes this spring.

“It looks like it is going to be a cool, stormy and wet spring for the Midwest,” said Sandi Duncan, managing editor for the publication.

According to the Farmers' Almanac Web site, forecasts are calculated several years in advance.

“Our forecasts are based on an astronomical and mathematical formula,” Duncan said. “We see them go wrong, we see them go right, but more often than not we are pretty accurate. We have been accurate about 80 to 85 percent of the time.”

Julie Phillipson, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in St. Louis, said the Midwest has had a tendency to see severe weather at this time of year.
“Spring is a time in the United States where we do tend to get a lot of our severe weather,” Phillipson said. “Especially across the plains of the Midwest, we see a lot stronger thunderstorms and tornadoes start to occur.”

A brutal winter north of Missouri with higher snowfall than average may present another problem for the state — flooding.

When the soil is saturated, water from the melting snow runs into river basins, Phillipson said. Any thunderstorms or severe weather with excess rainfall will contribute to that.

“This is the main hazard we are looking at, especially for our area in central Missouri,” she said. “We’re definitely looking at flooding as one of our major concerns.”

As for the accuracy of Farmers' Almanac predictions, Phillipson said, they may be ballpark estimates, but actual weather forecasts are based on individual weather systems.

“It really just depends.”
Study Shows Taxpayers Subsidizing Ethanol At $4.18 Per Gallon

A new study by University of Missouri Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (PDF) reveals that the current corn ethanol tax credit is effectively costing taxpayers $4.18 per gallon and is driving up grain prices. The study estimates that the tax credit, which would cost about $5.85 billion next year if extended, will lead to 1.4 billion gallons above the 12.6 billion gallons required by law through the Renewable Fuel Standard (see page 64).

In other words, next year the oil companies will be required to buy 12.6 billion gallons of conventional corn ethanol, but because taxpayers are giving them $5.85 billion they'll consume 1.4 billion more than required. That works out to $4.18 per extra gallon.

As I've written before, having the tax credit on top of the RFS is like paying drivers to obey the speed limit. (Tip of the hat to Rapier for the analogy.) Some in the industry may be inclined to point to the additional 1.5 billion gallons as a justification for the tax credit, but the price tag should make that argument just silly. Taxpayers have been subsidizing the corn ethanol industry far too long at the expense of developing cleaner, more renewable biofuels.

Plus the FAPRI study also points out that the tax credit is leading to higher prices for corn and other grains—$0.18 per bushel of corn, $0.28 for soy, and $0.15 for wheat. And lest anyone argue that the tax credit is a good way of supporting farmer income, think about this: if we gave farmers an extra $0.15, $0.28, and $0.15 per bushel for every single one of the corn, soy, and wheat bushels they'll grow next year, it would cost just $3.56 billion. And we'd still have enough of the tax credit money left over to subsidies the extra 1.4 billion gallons to the tune of $1.64.

The FAPRI study's analysis of how the tax credit effects commodity crop prices also confirms the underlying economic truth of indirect land-use change. Higher prices for commodities mean that farmers here in the US and around the world will want to grow more. In those parts of the world where it's cheaper to increase production by bringing new land into cultivation than increasing yields on existing lands, that's going to lead to land-use change. Not surprisingly, EPA's analysis, which uses the FAPRI model, finds that the emissions from this land-use change is one of the largest sources of emissions associated with corn ethanol.

Yesterday, Growth Energy had the audacity to argue that the tax credit lowers the price of gasoline. It's a cynical, shell-game claim, meant to earn support from drivers who are actually subsidizing this well established industry every April 15.

The simple fact of the matter is the current corn ethanol tax credit is a huge waste of money. We don't need an additional 1.4 billion gallons of corn ethanol, or the higher prices for grains and
more deforestation that come with it. And we sure as heck don't need to be spending $4.18 per gallon to get it. The corn ethanol tax credit (and the biodiesel tax credit too) needs to end!

We have to be smarter about how we use our tax dollars. NRDC has proposed a greener biofuel tax credit that encourage competition among the technologies and only pay for real performance. It's time to transition from corn ethanol's pollution and pork to a new generation of more sustainable biofuels that brings us closer to real energy independence.

This post originally appeared on NRDC's Switchboard blog.
Curators to see same-sex partner benefits resolution

The policy change would mostly involve medical and insurance coverage.

By Jared Grafman
Published March 12, 2010

A resolution for same-sex domestic partner benefits for MU employees will be presented to Chancellor Brady Deaton, Provost Brian Foster and UM system President Gary Forsee before going to the UM system Board of Curators in April.

Faculty Council unanimously passed the resolution during its last regular meeting March 4.

Leah Cohn, professor of Veterinary Medicine and Surgery and Diversity Enhancement Committee chairwoman, was involved in drafting the legislation.

"The resolution speaks for itself," Cohn said. "It says that we believe same-sex domestic partner benefits should be offered for a variety of reasons."

Board of Curators Chairwoman Judith Haggard said the financial consequences of offering employee benefits to same-sex domestic partners would be considered.

"The resolution will be brought to us at the appropriate time, and then we will look at it objectively," Haggard said. "We will have to be able to afford this to be able to do it. That would be a big concern at this time of economic crisis for the university."

The resolution only addresses benefits for same-sex domestic partnerships, leaving out domestic partners of opposite sexes. Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin led the discussion on the resolution.

"We discussed this extensively in council, and the feeling of the diversity committee was that opposite-sex domestic partners can receive benefits if they choose to marry, but same-sex domestic partners do not have that option," Rubin said.

Cohn said state laws prompted the decision to only include same-sex domestic partners.

"This is because the law prohibits same-sex marriage," Cohn said. "If the law allowed same-sex marriage, this would have simply been a moot point, and we would not have had needed to develop this resolution."

UM-St. Louis has already passed a similar resolution regarding the issue, and UM-Kansas City is looking at passing such a resolution, Cohn said.
According to the resolution, more than 300 institutions of higher education in the U.S., including 51 of 60 institutions in the Association of American Universities, have same-sex domestic partner benefits included as part of their employee benefits package.

Associate Vice President of Benefits Mike Paden explained the estimated cost of the policy and what it would affect. He said the university pays approximately 73 percent of premiums for employee benefits.

"The new policy would increase the number of lives covered by the UM system by about 2 percent," Paden said. "The benefits from the university cost about $3 million."

The policy change would primarily affect medical benefits, in addition to dental, vision and dependent life insurance coverage, Paden said.

Rubin said the resolution could meet resistance from conservative legislators.

"As always, there will always be people who do not think that lesbians and gays deserve any sort of consideration because of their own beliefs," Rubin said. "That will always exist."

Rubin said passing the resolution is a step in the right direction for the entire university.

"I think this is the right thing to do," Rubin said. "As part of the Mizzou family, lesbians and gays with domestic partners deserve the same benefits as their co-workers."
MU designates place for faculty lounge

The lounge will be located in the Reynolds Alumni Center.

By Isabelle Shaw
Published March 12, 2010

In response to faculty requests for space to collaborate and mingle in an informal environment, MU is designating the Tiger Bistro at University Club in the Reynolds Alumni Center for faculty members once a month.

Faculty will have access to the lounge every third Thursday of the month from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. The first meeting will take place March 25.

Faculty Council expressed support for reserving space for a faculty lounge at its last regular meeting March 4.

"At present, faculty have no place on campus designated for informal gatherings," Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin said.

The space will be used for faculty members to share ideas.

"Within departments and colleges, faculty might gather in cafeterias or at seminars," Rubin said. "However, to encourage interdisciplinary interactions across multiple departments and colleges, faculty need opportunities to meet and talk. Informal gatherings have more potential to facilitate cross-disciplinary collaborations by serendipity rather than logical design."

Provost Brian Foster and Rubin first met to discuss designating a space for faculty members in December, according to a previous Maneater article.

"We have been working with the Faculty Council for some time to get this off the ground," University Club General Manager John LaRocca said. "It is our hope that some faculty will attend the receptions that may not have ever been here before. We also wanted to work with the provost and Faculty Council in having a centrally located place that faculty can relax, network and exchange ideas."

MU spokesman Christian Basi said the administration was very supportive of the new idea and Mizzou Advantage. MU's new set of initiatives to make the university more competitive, was a major factor in getting it started.

According to the MU Web site, the five areas Mizzou Advantage focuses on include pioneering food sciences, new media, the convergence of human and animal health, sustainable energy and managing change from transformational technologies.
$6 million will go toward hiring new faculty and staff, building bridges with other outside partners, promoting new curriculum opportunities, increasing research funding and bringing new academic conferences and international scholars to MU.

Basi said it is hard for faculty members to collaborate with other faculty when they are on different ends of campus.

"The new Tiger Lounge would help to facilitate those collaborations," Basi said. "Provost Brian Foster is very much in favor of this new lounge. He considers it a component of the Mizzou Advantage."
When the Missouri Returning Heroes' Education Act was signed into law, it was intended to offer veterans low tuition at state universities. Now, Missouri Students Association and Mizzou Student Veterans Association are teaming up in opposition to what they view as a loophole in the bill that saddles veterans with an undue financial burden.

The bill, in effect since August 2008, offers combat veterans who held Missouri residency when entering the military a reduced rate of tuition at all public universities.

"All public institutions of higher education that receive any state funds appropriated by the general assembly shall limit the amount of tuition such institutions charge to combat veterans to $50 per credit hour," the bill states.

MSA Senate Speaker Evan Wood said the bill, as it stands, does not allow veterans to take classes for $50 per credit hour unless there are no financial aid funds available to cover tuition.

"They take your financial aid package, and they use that money and they charge you the regular rate for classes paid for with financial aid money," Wood said. "Only when there are any classes left unpaid do they start switching to a rate of $50 per credit hour."

A clause in the bill states the tuition limitation is to be provided only after all other federal state aid the veteran receives has been applied, and no veteran is to receive more than the cost of attendance between both the tuition limitation and financial aid.

As a result of this clause, the financial aid veterans receive ends up going toward paying for classes at full tuition, MSVA Internal Vice President Nick Kundert said. With their financial aid dedicated primarily to tuition, student veterans often end up paying for other fees out of their own pockets.

"The veteran is still forced to pay for all of the fees," Kundert said. "This is not a small chunk of change to a veteran that is living completely on his or her own."

This has directly affected a large majority of student veterans on campus, MSA Academic Affairs Chairman Ian Krause said.

"Right now, there are 60 student veterans currently enrolled at MU," Krause said. "Of those 60 students, only eight of them are able to use the Senate Bill 830 as it's intended to be used."
MSA and MSVA are working together to draft legislation and to lobby legislators in Jefferson City in order to get a modified version of the bill passed.

Krause said MSVA reached out to MSA for assistance due to the organization's lobbying experience.

"On our end, (former MSA Senate Speaker) Amanda Shelton has already met with seven or eight Democratic senators this previous weekend who expressed concern with how the bill has been used at the college level," Krause said.

MSA plans to utilize the Associated Students of the University of Missouri to organize lobbying on a statewide level, Wood said.

Kundert said though the issue has not been widely publicized, resolving it as soon as possible is crucial for maintaining a good relationship between veterans and the university.

"I would like to get this bill revised or fixed so, instead of just looking good, it will actually benefit veterans," Kundert said.