Mizzou Advantage aims at collaboration

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, May 4, 2010

**The University of Missouri has awarded more than $900,000 to faculty members willing to pursue interdisciplinary projects as part of the Mizzou Advantage initiative.**

Launched in the fall, Mizzou Advantage aims to promote collaboration between schools and colleges in the areas of food, medicine, energy, technology and media.

“For this initiative to work, we must provide our faculty and staff with the resources that will allow them to bring their visions to reality,” Provost Brian Foster said in a prepared statement. “By funding these proposals, we hope to strengthen existing faculty networks, create new networks and propel Mizzou’s research to the next level.”

Among the proposals awarded is “The Architecture of Collaboration,” which was submitted by a group of 13 faculty members from sciences and humanities. The team plans to spend the upcoming year studying how MU faculty members network with one another at the Bond Life Sciences Center and the Center for Arts and Humanities.

“The overall goal of what we’re trying to do is to see how different people at MU are currently connected and through what measures,” said Kate Anderson, a specialized services librarian and Mizzou Advantage library liaison.

For instance, some might work together to publish papers, and other faculty members write grants together or serve on the same boards, she said.

The project should provide some basic knowledge that could help future Mizzou Advantage efforts, said Jack Schultz, director of the Bond Life Sciences Center.

“The goal of the Mizzou Advantage program is it seeks to identify networks and to broaden them,” he said. “We realized while” the networks “must be there, it’s not immediately clear where they are or who they are on campus.”

Researchers will look at relationships that exist within the life science center and within the arts and humanities center, and they also will consider how the separate disciplines interact with each other.

“We want to see to what extent folks in life sciences have connections in the humanities,” Schultz said. “It’s a bridge we don’t think about, but it should be crucial.”
Depending on the outcomes, the team could apply for larger national grants to expand the study, he said.

Foster’s office received 78 proposals for Mizzou Advantage dollars, and 26 were awarded funding. The bulk of those, 14, are related to medicine.

Eight projects have ties to new technologies, four have connections with sustainable energy and food, and three are related to media. Two proposals have ties to all five areas of study.

WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

See a full list of funded Mizzou Advantage proposals

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Provost: Mizzou Advantage proposals to receive grants

By Simin Wang
May 4, 2010 | 9:42 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Soon, it might be possible for Columbia to have more biofuel than before. A pair of researchers was one group of many who were awarded funding through the Mizzou Advantage program.

Gary Stacey, a plant sciences professor, works on his project called "Metagenomics Use at a Former Coal Mining Environment to Bio-Prospect for Enzymes with Applications to Sustainable Energy" with fellow researcher Melanie Mormile from Missouri University of Science and Technology.

This project is one of the 26 selected proposals that will boost MU's reputation under the Mizzou Advantage program. These proposals will receive grants totaling more than $900,000 from the school, MU Provost Brian Foster said in a news release Tuesday.

The grants included 15 "fellow proposals," similar to Stacey's research, and 11 "network proposals."

Meg Phillips, program coordinator of Mizzou Advantage, said network proposals bring participants from different departments and faculties together to work toward tangible goals and talk about issues.

Stacey said he likes that the grant allows for collaboration between universities.

Stacey and Mormile aim to isolate enzymes in a former coal site called "Red Lake," just north of Columbia at the Rocky Fork Lakes Conservation Area. These enzymes could be used to decompose bioenergy crops, such as switch grass, which generates a huge amount of biomass that can be converted to biofuel.

You can find all the recipients of the program, as well as more information at provost.missouri.edu/mizzou_advantage.
Cotton case doesn’t hurt enrollment

More blacks pay deposits.

By Janese Heavin

Tuesday, May 4, 2010

The February cotton ball incident that sparked a race relations dialogue on the University of Missouri campus does not appear to have hurt MU’s recruitment of black students.

A total of 447 black students have paid their deposits to attend the university as freshmen this fall. That’s up 15 percent from last year. MU’s total population of black students, which includes graduate students, was 1,924 this past fall.

Some administrators had feared national media attention from the incident in which two students lined the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center with cotton would have a negative effect on minority enrollment. Sean Fitzgerald and Zachery Tucker pleaded guilty to littering last week.

In court, Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton called the incident an embarrassment to MU and said he questioned what effect it might have on college choices among blacks.

Nathan Stephens, director of the black culture center, said this morning that he thinks the campus’ response to the incident helped offset any negative effect. Students considering MU likely looked at a number of factors, Stephens said, praising the campus community for the way it handled the incident.

“Looking at the way administrators addressed the situation, the police arrest, the tips that came from students themselves and how students of all races banded together and said, ‘This is not who we are,’ ” Stephens said.

Incoming freshmen had until Saturday to request a refund on deposits paid with their applications. As of today, MU has received and retained 6,196 deposits, up 453 from this time last year.

Because not all who paid will actually show up in the fall, that could translate to a freshman class of about 6,000, said Ann Korschgen, vice provost for enrollment management.

That would be the largest freshman class MU has ever seen. Over the past two years, enrollment has remained steady at about 5,700.

Korschgen credits the increase to a number of factors, including a freeze on in-state tuition, a “fabulous” recruitment team and a tough economy.

“When times are hard, people look for value and thus are turning to MU,” she said.
Although Korschgen still is crunching the numbers, the increase in students should not equal a decrease in quality, she said.

At first nod, it looks like first-time freshmen are bringing with them a higher cumulative ACT score. About 270 out of the 453-student increase in deposits over last year came from Missouri students and the rest from out of state.

“This is the kind of class we’ve been hoping for: diverse, with a high ability and with a broad geographic representation,” Korschgen said.
Dean job finalists to visit MU campus

Tuesday, May 4, 2010

The Robert J. Trulaske College of Business at the University of Missouri is hosting open forums to introduce three finalists for the dean's position.

The candidates include:

- Joan Gabel is professor, director of international business and department chairwoman at Florida State University's College of Business. She teaches legal and ethical environment of business classes and researches corporate governance and employment law issues. She will be in 204 Cornell Hall at 4 p.m. today.
- Michael Mikhail is professor and director of the School of Accountancy in the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University. His research interests include the use of financial information by capital market participants. An open forum for Mikhail will be at 2:30 p.m. Friday in 105 Cornell Hall.
- Paul Bobrowski is Wachovia Dean of the College of Business at Auburn University. His research interests include supply chain, project and quality management. His open forum is scheduled for 4 p.m. next Tuesday in 105 Cornell Hall.

Bruce Walker, who has served as the business school dean since 1990, announced in October that he would be stepping down as the dean to become a full-time faculty member in the college's Department of Marketing starting in August.
Mizzou Band Camp canceled after director steps down

By Katelyn Amen
May 5, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Mizzou Band Camp is on pause until 2011. The 2010 camp for junior and senior high school students has been canceled because of staffing changes, according to an announcement from University Bands. This would've been the 17th year for the camp.

Michael Knight, who had previously directed the camp, is stepping down at the semester's close from his position as associate director of bands at MU and director of Marching Mizzou.

He's taken a position as director of bands and head of instrumental music at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wis., after six years with MU.

MU School of Music Director Robert Shay said Knight's new position will "allow him to change gears somewhat and focus on his interests in concert bands and music education" in an e-mail to School of Music students, faculty and staff.

"I am very excited about this new opportunity," Knight said in an e-mail to members of Marching Mizzou. "I feel fortunate to have shared the past six years with you and your predecessors."

Junior and senior high students signed up for band camp will be notified of the cancellation Wednesday, Levins said.

Mizzou Band Camp usually attracts between 45 and 60 junior and senior high students from around Missouri each summer, University Bands administrative assistant Matt Levins said. It features concert, jazz and chamber ensembles and workshops.

Levins called the camp an opportunity for kids to interact with college students and get a taste of college life. MU music education majors serve as camp counselors.