Only a matter of time before Big 12 disappears
By Jeff Gordon
STLTODAY.COM SPORTS COLUMNIST
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With the Big Ten Conference poised to stage a major raid, long-time fans of the Big Eight/Big 12 Conference must face a harsh reality.

That league, as we know it today, is headed for big and potentially unfavorable changes. If the dominoes fall the wrong way, the Big 12 could disappear entirely — with its members scattering to mega-conferences and hybrid remnant conferences.

Oklahoma State booster T. Boone Pickens acknowledged this ominous speculation recently.

"We could sit around and take two and move them there and then take four and move them southeast and four to the west. You know what I mean? But we're just wasting time," Pickens said during a visit to Oklahoma City, according to The Associated Press. "Let's see."

Pickens would like to see the Cowboys ride it out where they are. "I'm going to be in the Big 12 until somebody tells me we're going," he said.

Some Mizzou fans feel the same way. And from this corner of cyberspace, we would love to make the argument for status quo.

The Big 12 is a football powerhouse. With Nebraska back to national prominence, Oklahoma State bolstered by capital improvements and Missouri entrenched as an annual bowl candidate, this league is second only to the SEC on the gridiron.

We know Oklahoma and Texas will remain annual national title threats for years to come. The Big 12 could rake in a LOT of Bowl Championship Series dollars.

In basketball, Mike Anderson and Frank Martin are building national powers at Missouri and Kansas State. With Kansas and Texas loaded with talent — and schools like Baylor, Texas A&M and Oklahoma State excelling as well — the Big 12 can rival the ACC and Big East in terms of top-end quality and competitive depth.

The Big 12 is fabulous in other sports, too, like baseball and softball. (And speaking of softball, a quick plug for a great kid. Mizzou softball pitcher Kristin Nottelmann is 18-6 with two saves and a 1.95 earned-run average for the
ninth-ranked Tigers. She starred at Rockwood Summit High. Good to see one of our own doing so well.)

The Mizzou-Kansas rivalry would be diminished if the Big 12 split up. Maybe the schools could keep it going with non-conference football and basketball showdowns... or maybe not.

We understand why some Missouri boosters are antsy. They feel their school has been slighted by this conference, which has its main office in Dallas and its unofficial headquarters in Austin, Texas. In these parts, there is much resentment to how the Longhorns influence the Big 12 decision-making.

But if Mizzou has a problem with that, it can do something about it in competition. Beat the power schools again and again in the major sports and respect will follow. Lose to the power schools again and again and, well, you just have to take your lumps.

It’s not like the University of Missouri would have any pull in the Big Ten. We’re not 100 percent certain of this, but we presume that Michigan State’s Tom Izzo schedules the referees for basketball and Ohio State’s Jim Tressel is, in effect, the director of officiating for football.

In the Big 12, Missouri has built nice recruiting bases in football and basketball. Gary Pinkel mines Texas for football talent and Anderson combs the South and Southwest for blue-chip hoopsters.

Could both programs adjust to a new league and different geographical parameters? We’ll see — because it appears they will have to, like it or not.

With the Big 12 headed for major turbulence, schools with options (like Missouri) need to be proactive. Look at what happened to St. Louis University when the Big East plundered Conference USA, leaving it a shell of its former self.

SLU ended up in the Atlantic 10, an absolutely terrible fit across the board.

Whenever a conference lags badly in revenue, its member schools will start looking around. Conference USA was a wonderful basketball conference, but it was only so-so in football. So member schools wanting more from football looked to the Big East and chaos ensued.

The same could happen to the Big 12. If Missouri and Nebraska leave, the Pac-10 and SEC will no doubt offer the remaining power schools some alternatives.

Cherry-picking would be likely. Mergers would be possible. A free-for-all would ensue, and you have to wonder where lesser athletic programs like Iowa State
and Texas Tech would end up.

Money is a powerful motivator. Money can force massive change. With the Big Ten generating lots of money and looking for ways to make more, it’s just a matter of time before it dramatically alters the collegiate sports landscape.

Mizzou fans who enjoy their regular visits to Ames, Iowa, and Manhattan, Kan., should start saying their good-byes. Sadly, the end of an era is upon us.
MU grad tries for solution to Gulf oil spill

By T.J. Greaney

Thursday, May 13, 2010

A Missouri seed company owner thinks he has the answer to cleaning up the Gulf oil spill, and it can be found in the state’s prairie grass.

Steve Flick, president of the Show Me Energy Cooperative of Centerview, said his company has developed the perfect mixture of cellulosic plant material that, when applied to oil, causes it to congeal into a substance that can be scooped out of the water.

“It’s the real deal,” said Flick, a 1980 graduate of the University of Missouri. “It attaches to the hydrocarbon molecules, and it solidifies and makes it gelatin, right on top of the water.”

Flick worked on the cleanup effort for the Exxon-Valdez oil spill of 1989 as an environmental scientist and said the experience of trying to sop up acres of oil stuck with him. He said the common “sorbents” used to soak up oil, such as commercially available booms, straw or even llama hair, don’t get the job done.

He now owns a seed company and serves as board president for a farmers cooperative that produces fuel pellets out of biomass that can be burned alongside coal. But he has always been fascinated with the ability of grass to sop up oil. His company, Show Me Energy, has spent the past two years searching for the right mixture of “sorbent” plant material to combat oil spills.

And, although he calls it a trade secret, he said it includes bluestem and switch grass. The mixture, named BM-007, is sprinkled on the oil until it coagulates, and its use requires about 10 to 25 tons per surface acre of water affected by a spill.

Last week, Flick traveled to the Louisiana coast to meet with officials and conduct demonstrations of his product. He said he met with Gov. Bobby Jindal and a BP worker but could not secure any promises to use the product. He was disappointed when he heard later in the week that cleanup crews were placing bundles of llama hair in the water. He considers this a vastly inferior product.

“This is not a money issue; this is a being a good neighbor and helping issue,” Flick said of his efforts. “Because what they have happening down there is going to affect their kids and grandkids if they don’t deal with it now.”
At the request of the Tribune, Todd Houts, environmental management program director at MU, agreed to watch a video of Flick’s product and give his thoughts. He said he was intrigued but would need a lot of questions answered before he’d be prepared to try this in the open water.

“They’re chemical engineers, not me, who are going to tell you that things that appear to have promise in the lab don’t necessarily scale up successfully to industrial proportions,” Houts said. “It can amplify side effects that you don’t even see at the laboratory level.”

Houts, who oversees cleanup of small oil discharges on campus, said he’d like to see how well the product works in different temperatures, in crude versus refined oil and wave action. He wondered about the volume of material needed and its effect on aquatic life.

“I don’t mean to imply it’s not feasible. This certainly has potential,” Houts said. “But there are still so many side questions.”

When presented with those questions, Flick said he has tested the material under all the conditions described except different temperatures and found it to work well. He said the sorbent actually works better on crude oil than refined. He believes that any organic matter that filters into the sea after the cleanup would simply be “fish food.”

As for disposing of the coagulated material once it’s removed from the ocean, Flick said he doesn’t anticipate it being burned. Instead, he said, he envisions running the material through a “pot ringer” that, like a towel ringer, would squeeze the oil out of the material so it could be reused.

“This is a no-flippin’-brainer,” Flick said. “BP’s only mind-set right now is to disperse and burn it. Think of how much money they’ve lost doing that.”

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Complaint leads to ousting of director

Behavior during ceremony cited.

By Janese Heavin

Thursday, May 13, 2010

An anonymous letter outlining concerns about jokes, references to God and other remarks at a Law Enforcement Training Institute commencement last month resulted in the firing of the institute’s longtime director.

Gary Maddox had led the institute — under the helm of University of Missouri Extension — for 17 years. He was fired the Wednesday after the April 23 graduation after his boss, Associate Vice Provost for Extension Debbie Robison, went over the letter with him the previous day.

The letter writer had gripes about things Maddox doesn’t deny doing or saying at the commencement ceremony. First, the writer said a story Maddox told about sneaking on a train without paying for tickets made the university look cheap. The story was a slightly altered version of a Reader’s Digest joke, Maddox said, adding that he didn’t imagine anyone would believe it.

Next, the writer complained that the ceremony’s inclusion of a presentation to retiring coordinator Ken Hawkins took attention away from graduates. Hawkins retired after 17 years and was given a plaque and basket of goodies.

A student-led prayer and other mentions of the word “God,” the writer said, were offensive to non-Christians, as was another speaker’s use of the word “shit,” which Maddox said he did not hear.

David Roscher of the Marshall Police Department attended the graduation and said he did not hear the use of a curse word. He said the ceremony was no different than any other LETI graduation.

The anonymous writer expressed concern that Maddox “outed” an undercover sheriff’s deputy, even though Maddox said the deputy previously told him it was OK to tell the audience he was wearing earrings because he was working undercover. The writer also considered Maddox’s reference to the “lovely diamond stud earrings” offensive to those with certain gender or sexual orientations.
Finally, the letter writer complained about the way Maddox handled a student-led prank. During the event, the 44 graduates surprised Maddox by handing him small rubber balls when he shook their hands. When he took the first one, he bounced it off the floor and put it in his pocket, setting a trend for the next 43. By the time all degrees had been awarded, Maddox said his pockets were bulging. “Thanks to this class, I now have pockets full of balls,” he joked to audience members. The writer said it was a reference to male genitals, and Maddox said Robison agreed it was offensive.

Maddox isn’t convinced the letter, which he wasn’t allowed to see, was written by an offended visitor, but he questioned whether it was an internal attempt to justify firing him.

The MU Extension office referred all questions to the university’s news bureau. Spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said administrators do not discuss personnel matters but, in general, policies allow supervisors to not renew contracts of non-regular faculty members if there have been problems. Banken said anytime a supervisor receives a complaint about an employee, they’re charged with investigating that concern “by putting it in context with other disciplinary actions that may have been taken in the past concerning the employee.”

Maddox has had disciplinary actions in the past. About two years ago, he was put on probation and required to go through sensitivity and sexual harassment training after an employee he fired told Robison that Maddox sent an inappropriate joke through university e-mail. Maddox said he did not remember the specific e-mail, “but if you’re asking me do we at LETI routinely get bawdy jokes and graphic cartoons, does that happen in law enforcement? Yes, it does. Does it happen on this campus? Yes. Would I engage in it on occasion? Yes, but only with people who sent them to me or who I knew would find them funny.”

On another occasion, Robison admonished him for expelling a student during the last week of the 15-week LETI program. Maddox said the recruit pulled a loaded gun on an instructor.

His firing has riled former students, friends and those in the law enforcement community. A Facebook page titled “Reinstate Dr. Gary Maddox as Director of LETI” had more than 400 members this morning, many of whom left comments praising his work at LETI.

James Mongar, a spring LETI graduate, wrote that he wants to see “actual justice” done. “I would not be where I am today if it were not for you or LETI,” Mongar wrote to Maddox. “You are by far one of the best instructors that I have had the privilege of having.”

Maddox said he’s touched by the outpouring of support, but he’s not sure he would want to be reinstated to his post. Even though he’s 57 with four kids in college and “scared to death about the future,” Maddox said, “I have my pride, my integrity at stake.”

Von Pittman has been named as LETI’s interim director.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Deaton, Forsee ask for patience regarding staff compensation concerns

By Nicole Lebsack
May 14, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – A recent employee benefits survey shows widespread displeasure in salaries throughout the UM System, but university officials say it’s too early to tell whether any changes can be made.

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton and UM System President Gary Forsee met with MU’s Staff Advisory Council on Thursday to address compensation concerns, but they stressed there is still a lot of work to do before any plans can be made.

Forsee, citing current economic difficulties in the nation and the state, asked staff for patience while information is being processed.

“This will continue to get full attention from me, the chancellors and the government, and we will continue to report back to you,” Forsee said.

Council Vice Chair Amy Lana questioned retaining productive staff in a time of hiring freezes and tight budgets, but Forsee and Deaton were unable to give a definitive solution to the problem.

“There’s really no good answer to that question,” Forsee said, “but you can expect us to be as creative as possible and make tough trade-offs to deal with the salary issue.”

The meeting came amid a flurry of economic issues: a 5.2 percent budget cut will hit MU in fiscal year 2011, and recent data shows faculty salaries at MU are the lowest in the Association of American Universities.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Graduating student mothers reflect on unique college experience, rewards

By Katy Bergen
May 14, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — For Kristy Ensley, graduating from college has been an eight-year dream.

But Ensley, who majored in biology at MU, will not walk across the stage at Saturday's commencement ceremony for the College of Arts and Science. Instead, she will be at her daughter's dance recital.

Ensley, 25, is among the group of student parents who will graduate in the next couple of days having spent much or all of their college careers balancing school and child-rearing. As graduation nears, however, they are able to say the struggle is ultimately worth it.

No one knows exactly how many MU students are also parents. As previously reported in the Missourian, the university does not track that number, MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

Ensley spent a year at East Carolina University but took time off for financial reasons. Then, she moved to New Orleans, where she met her fiance, Lucas Wilkes, and attended community college during the summer and fall before having her daughter, Jasmine, when she was 20. After Hurricane Katrina, they moved closer to Wilkes' family in Missouri, and in the fall of 2005, she enrolled at MU — a one-hour commute from her home in California, Mo.

Then came the birth of son Jayden, and Ensley took another year off, returning to school in the fall of 2008.

"There were times where I was afraid I wouldn't be able to come back, but I knew if I didn't, then it would never happen," Ensley said.

Having children rearranged her priorities, she said. "I thought about doing the Senior Sendoff," she said of the ritual on Francis Quadrangle. "But I had to pick the kids up."

Education decisions are a family affair
Ensley, whose children are now 2 and 5, said she felt like “the girl with the kid” in college.

Justine Guyer, who is graduating from the MU School of Law on Sunday, said she wanted to keep her school and her home lives separate. So when Guyer started law school, she felt she shouldn’t tell anyone she was also a parent.

Guyer, 25, said that instead of joining her classmates at bars after class, she goes home to her 3-year-old daughter, Hazel. They play with chalk and draw pictures, and she sees it as an escape her classmates without children do not have.

She said, in retrospect, she realizes that being open about having a child was important in finding people she could ask for advice, help and support. But she still appreciates the divide between her college and home lives.

“It makes me realize there is just so much more to life than sitting in the classroom,” Guyer said.

When Guyer graduated from Truman State University, she was valedictorian and could have been accepted to her pick of law schools. But she said she chose MU because it best fit her family’s needs.

“Law school meant the family was going,” said Guyer, who lives in Columbia. She said she also chose MU because Columbia is a family-friendly environment, and having a degree from MU will allow her family to stay in Missouri where she would like to practice law.

**Support is key to success**

Myra Hicks will wear a new dress and yellow sweater to the College of Education commencement ceremony Friday, though her mother isn’t sure whether she’ll be awake for the pomp and circumstance. Myra, who is 10 months old, and her father, Matt Hicks, will watch as Sarah Hicks is hooded for her doctorate.

Hicks, 28, attended a five-year program at MU and earned master's and doctoral degrees in mathematics curriculum and instruction.

“I’m proud of myself,” she said. “My education has really broadened my perspective.”

Hicks started in the program at MU in 2005. Myra was born in 2009, but because it was June, Hicks was able to spend two months with her new baby before returning to class in August. Then, Myra went to the MU Student Parent Center from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays
while her mother went to class, worked on her dissertation and served as a graduate research assistant.

“She's not too far away from me during the day,” Hicks said.

The center is one of the few resources on campus to help student parents. The center's staff care for nearly 40 children each semester, director Julie Shea said.

For Hicks, finding time to study was a family affair. Her husband quit coaching high school soccer when he learned she was pregnant. Together, they coordinate weekend days, so she can study while he takes care of Myra.

When Myra was born, Hicks' mother said, "Your baby is only that small once." Hicks remembered her words and said she was glad for those precious two months before she returned to school. But she does not regret her decision to pursue her education.

"It was hard," she acknowledged, "but I was determined to finish my dissertation."

**Obstacles in finishing work**

For some student parents, a determination to reach their educational goals can be heavily challenged by the realities of parenthood. Guyer said that especially during her first year of law school, her daughter was often sick. When Hazel was hospitalized with pneumonia, Guyer missed class to be with her.

Attendance policies were hard on Guyer, and she said there were many times she was just a “body in a chair.”

Guyer said that one year, severe weather closed the Student Parent Center on a day she had a final. She scrambled to find a babysitter for Hazel, in addition to worrying about passing the one test she had all semester.

In these situations, some student parents found it important to have a reliable person or place to go for support. Guyer found support with another mother in the law school. Once at finals, they took care of each others' children while the other mother took her exam.

Hicks found support in the mothers at the Student Parent Center, especially for personal issues unrelated to school or work.

“It’s really nice to meet other moms on campus,” Hicks said.
Hicks said networking with other mothers can happen at events planned by the Student Parent Center, such as moms' luncheons and events for mothers and their children, such as Mommy and Me yoga.

Shea said the Student Parent Center often collaborates with ParentLink and MIZFIT to create events for student parents. They have held date nights during which a restaurant offers specials for couples, and child care is provided elsewhere. Shea said a "Party at the Park" event is being planned during which families can get together to socialize at different parks on Friday afternoons.

Ensley said children at the center become friends and attend one another's birthday parties.

**Bright futures anticipated**

Hicks and her family are planning to move to Kansas City where she plans to work at her alma mater, Rockhurst University, as an assistant professor of math education in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies.

"I'll be teaching teachers," Hicks said.

Guyer plans to work for Missouri Protection Advocacy Services, a nonprofit organization in Jefferson City that helps people with disabilities. At the same time, Hazel is expected to start preschool.

"I have a great feeling of finally being settled," Guyer said.

In October, Ensley expects to find out whether she is accepted to the MU accelerated nursing program. She and Wilkes still plan to marry; she said Jasmine hopes it will be soon because she wants to be a flower girl.

In the meantime, the family is planning a move to Osage Beach where Jasmine will start kindergarten in the fall. Ensley said she is proud of what she has achieved and hopes she can serve as an example for other student parents.

"I just want to tell parents that are contemplating college or that are struggling in college, I am proof that obtaining a college degree can be done," Ensley said. "It may have taken me eight years, but I am graduating, and this is something I will be able to share with my children."
College for all? Experts say not necessarily

By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER  Friday, May 14, 2010

COLUMBIA, Mo. — In a town dominated by the University of Missouri's flagship campus and two smaller colleges, higher education is practically a birthright for high school seniors like Kate Hodges.

She has a 3.5 grade-point-average, a college savings account and a family tree teeming with advanced degrees. But in June, Hodges is headed to the Tulsa Welding School in Oklahoma, where she hopes to earn an associate's degree in welding technology in seven months.

"They fought me so hard," she said, referring to disappointed family members. "They still think I'm going to college."

The notion that a four-year degree is essential for real success is being challenged by a growing number of economists, policy analysts and academics. They say more Americans should consider other options such as technical training or two-year schools, which have been embraced in Europe for decades.

As evidence, experts cite rising student debt, stagnant graduation rates and a struggling job market flooded with overqualified degree-holders. They pose a fundamental question: Do too many students go to college?

"College is what every parent wants for their child," said Martin Scaglione, president and chief operating officer of work force development for ACT, the Iowa-based not-for-profit best known for its college entrance exam. "The reality is, they may not be ready for college."

President Barack Obama wants to restore the country's status as the world leader in the proportion of citizens with college degrees. The U.S. now ranks 10th among industrial nations, behind Canada, Japan, Korea and several European countries.

But federal statistics show that just 36 percent of full-time students starting college in 2001 earned a four-year degree within that allotted time. Even with an extra two years to finish, that group's graduation rate increased only to 57 percent.

Spending more time in school also means greater overall student debt. The average student debt load in 2008 was $23,200 — a nearly $5,000 increase over five years. Two-thirds of students graduating from four-year schools owe money on student loans.
And while the unemployment rate for college graduates still trails the rate for high school graduates (4.9 percent versus 10.8 percent), the figure has more than doubled in less than two years.

"A four-year degree in business — what's that get you?" asked Karl Christopher, a placement counselor at the Columbia Area Career Center vocational program. "A shift supervisor position at a store in the mall."

At Rock Bridge High School, one of Columbia's two high schools, 72 percent of the class of 2008 moved on to four-year colleges, with another 10 percent attending community college. That college attendance rate is consistent with national statistics.

Only 4 percent of Rock Bridge students chose technical training like the Oklahoma welding school where Hodges is headed.

Roughly 1,200 students from central Missouri take classes at the career center, supplementing their core high school courses with specialized training in automotive technology, culinary arts, animal science, robotics, landscape design, electrical wiring and more.

Hodges has been set on a welding career since she was 13. She craves independence and has little patience for fellow students who seem to wind up in college more from a sense of obligation than anything else.

"School is what they've been doing their whole lives," she said. "So they just want to continue. Because that's what they are used to."

Sue Popkes doesn't hide her disappointment over her younger daughter's decision. At the same time, she realizes that Hodges may achieve more financial security than a college degree could ever provide.

"It's sad to know she's going to miss that mind-opening effect of an undergraduate degree," Popkes said. "To discover new ideas, to become more worldly."

Ohio University economics professor Richard Vedder blames the cultural notion of "credential inflation" for the stream of unqualified students into four-year colleges. His research has found that the number of new jobs requiring college degrees is less than number of college graduates.

Vedder's work also yielded something surprising: The more money states spend on higher education, the less the economy grows — the reverse of long-held assumptions.

"If people want to go out and get a master's degree in history and then cut down trees for a living, that's fine," he said, citing an example from a recent encounter with a worker. "But I don't think the public should be subsidizing it."
Margaret Spellings, former federal education secretary under George W. Bush, remains a strong proponent of increased college access. She points to research showing that college graduates will on average earn $1 million more over a lifetime than those with only high school degrees.

"It is crucial to the success of our country and to us as individuals to graduate more students from college," she said at a National Press Club forum earlier this year. "We Americans greatly believe that education is the great equalizer."

For many, the dream of earning a college degree — and the social acceptance that comes with that accomplishment — trumps a more analytical, cost-benefits approach.

John Reynolds, a Florida State sociology professor, found that unrealized educational expectations do not lead to depression or other long-term emotional costs.

"Rich kids, poor kids, 'A' students, 'C' students — we really didn't find any lasting impact on not getting the degree," he said.

Scaglione suggested that nothing short of a new definition for educational success is needed to diminish the public bias toward four-year degrees. He advocates "certification as the new education currency — documentation of skills as opposed to mastering curriculum."

"Our national system is, 'Do you have a degree or not?'" he said. "That doesn't really measure if you have skills."
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Trend shows experience trumps pay for student interns

By Katelyn Amen
May 14, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **MU senior Tommy Mueller has had an internship with Northwestern Mutual since November 2008. He receives course credit from MU for his work and is paid on commission.** Although the company guarantees he’ll make $1,000 a semester, Mueller, a finance major, has made $10,000 since August. His intern experience is preparing him for a career after college.

"I wanted to get a taste of the industry," Mueller said. "This is the best internship in regards to learning the lifestyle and duties of a financial adviser. They train us — they put us on the front lines."

When he graduates this weekend, Mueller will be hired as a regular employee at the company.

These days, Mueller’s situation appears to be more and more uncommon. According to Mimi Collins, the director of communications for the National Association of Colleges and Employers, a 2008 study from NACE found that 50 percent of graduating students have held internship positions and that experts estimate between one-fourth and one-half of those internships are unpaid.

Unpaid internships seem to be standard in some fields, and many students go along with it. Add economic uncertainty and a slew of financially troubled companies to millions of college students desperate to get ahead in a competitive job market, and you get a breeding ground for unpaid internships.

**Experience matters**

MU senior Lauren Ericson spent a summer interning with the Stray Dog Theatre in St. Louis. She worked as a stage manager, running rehearsals and supervising props.

"It was almost like a job, but it was unpaid," Ericson said. She said she appreciated the hands-on experience.
MU junior LaurieAnn Wojnowski has a video production internship with MTV.com in New York City this summer. She won't be paid, but she will receive course credit. She will get housing as part of the Missouri School of Journalism's New York Program.

"The fact that I could be working for a media company is a dream job," Wojnowski said. "I am still in shock of what I'll be doing this summer." She described the opportunity as a good addition to her resume.

Michael Erwin, a senior manager in charge of corporate communications at careerbuilder.com, an online job recruitment agency, said the tendency for companies to hire unpaid interns has risen recently as companies seek to fill positions left vacant by staff laid off during the economic recession.

"There are so many students who are desperate to get experience, and companies see internships as a way of filling vacant posts," Erwin said.

MU junior Timothy Collins said he sees his paid internship with Lockton, an insurance brokerage firm in Kansas City, as a way to boost his resume.

"It is very important to have at least one internship before you enter the job market," Collins said. "It shows not only that you put forth the effort of finding an internship, but that you have experience in the real world."

Dana Eagles, the newsroom internship coordinator at the Orlando Sentinel, said it's common to have unpaid interns looking for educational experiences and coursework credits. Internships often have long-term benefits to companies when used as a recruiting tool, Eagles said.

Collins said he sees a recruitment opportunity in his upcoming internship.

"This internship actually deals with a company that I would be more than happy to work for out of college," he said. "This is the type of career I will pursue."

He said the company usually hires several interns for jobs from the 20 they hire for the summer.

**Economic roots**
Like Erwin, Don Malson, director of career services at Columbia College, blames economic woes for unpaid internships because companies have been forced to make adjustments and financial cuts.

"If they could pay interns, they would like to," Malson said, but most simply can't.

Irvin Harrell, newsroom recruitment director at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, said the company has a policy of paying all interns, but he sees where the unpaid trend is coming from.

At a time when many newsrooms have trimmed staff numbers to a bare minimum, Harrell said, the time spent training an intern is the biggest cost that news organizations incur in hiring one. This adds to other expenses such as mileage, telephone bills, equipment and accommodation costs that interns might rack up.

"But it's a symbiotic relationship; we benefit from the interns' services and the new perspectives that they bring to the newsroom," Harrell said.

Because of this relationship, Malson called any internship a "win-win situation" for both the student and the employer. The employer benefits from the intern's work while the intern gets real-world experience.

A legal issue

Although unpaid internships have gained popularity among companies, some argue that certain unpaid internships are illegal. According to an April 2 article in The New York Times, which set off a nationwide discussion about unpaid internships, officials in Oregon, California and other states have hit companies that don't pay their interns with minimum-wage violations.

Employers must comply with six guidelines to legally provide internships without pay, but many do not comply, the article reported. These criteria outline that unpaid internships must be for the benefit of the intern and that no work can directly benefit the employer, and this seems to have become a rarity.

"I'm pretty sure everything we work on is something they're working on to be published," Wojnowski said of her upcoming internship with MTV. "I don't think there will be mock assignments."
**Internships that cost**

While student resumes typically benefit from internships, some companies seem to take this advantage to the extreme. Not only are they not paying their interns, but interns are paying them to participate.

Heidi Schmidt, an MU graduate student, interned as a writer's assistant with the O'Neill National Playwrights Conference in the summer of 2000. She called it a fantastic opportunity despite not being paid.

Now, the conference is asking interns to pay them in exchange for the opportunity. A fee of $2,700 covers housing and meals, according to the conference's website. Schmidt is concerned these interns are being "taken advantage of."

Vogue Magazine auctioned off an intern position on Charitybuzz.com earlier this year. The weeklong position went for $42,500 and includes a trip to New York Fashion Week. Although the money goes to charity, the opportunity is rather pricey as a resume booster. Vogue offers other internships through an application process, as well.

Some students or families might have the financial means to take or buy such big-ticket positions for no pay, and others can't accept an opportunity that produces no income.

During Schmidt's five-week internship with O'Neill, she was unable to hold a job, creating a situation she described as "a big challenge." If the internship were offered again, "I would not financially be able to do it," she said.

During some unpaid internships, students have to look elsewhere to cover living expenses. Harrell said the scarcity of opportunities for paid internships has forced unpaid interns to look for side jobs to meet their basic expenses, but he argues that such an arrangement wears out interns who have little spare time.

Some private schools are combating this problem with compensation for their students. Connecticut College offers students $3,000 the summer between their junior and senior year for internships. Amy Martin, manager of media relations, said 74 percent of the college's junior class takes advantage of the program.

"We started the program because we think it's all important for all students to do an internship," Martin said. "Students are able to do an internship whether or not they're unpaid. They can also do an internship at any organization that doesn't have the funding to
pay the student. It really does level the playing field because students who couldn't necessarily afford to take an internship can take one with any organization that they want."

Other colleges offer students the same boost. Oberlin College in Ohio gives stipends of $250 to $3,500 to Oberlin students who take unpaid internships and do projects with organizations that can't provide financial support. Smith College in Northampton, Mass., has a program that provides each Smith sophomore or junior a $2,000 stipend to use for an internship that helps further their career goals.

**Promises of pay**

But as Mueller's situation shows, paid internships aren't entirely a thing of the past.

Although Erwin of careerbuilder.com said there is no clear pattern to show which industries are more likely to offer unpaid versus paid internships, some fields seem to pay more consistently.

Sarah Danner, an MU senior and engineering major, interned with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency in St. Louis during the summer of 2009 and was paid for her work.

"I honestly don't know of many engineering internships that are not paid. It doesn't seem to be the trend," Danner said.

Ericson said paid or unpaid trends vary in theater internships but stressed that experience trumps pay.

"Either one is valuable to have," she said. "It depends on the experience you gain from it — you have to do your own research."
Saunders to serve probation for assault

Thursday, May 13, 2010

Former University of Missouri wide receiver Tommy Saunders has received a suspended sentence of 15 days in the Boone County Jail for punching a man in the face in November.

Saunders will serve two years of supervised probation, during which he must report arrests or summonses within 48 hours, cannot enter any bars and cannot contact the man he punched, said Chris Slusher, Saunders' attorney. If Saunders completes the probation, Slusher said, he will not have a conviction on his record.

Saunders also was ordered to pay $967.55 to the man and pay court costs.

Saunders pleaded guilty May 5 to third-degree misdemeanor assault. The plea resulted from a downtown incident in November. Saunders was arrested on suspicion of second-degree assault after punching a man, who went to University Hospital with a concussion, a chipped tooth and broken bones in his face.

From 2004 to 2008, Saunders played football at Missouri. He now plays for the U.S. national rugby team.
MU graduate student team wins NASA award

By Aimee Hall
May 13, 2010 | 7:06 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **MU graduate students Xandra Sifuentes and Brad Snow were just one of 42 teams competing in the Rice University Business Plan Competition last month, but they brought home the $20,000 NASA prize.**

Sifuentes and Snow, were granted the NASA/Space Engineering Innovation award at the April 15-17 competition in Houston for presenting a groundbreaking surgical instrument.

The laparoscopic device, designed by several members of MU's Biodesign Innovation Program in 2008 with Snow's help, was the foundation for Sifuentes and Snow's company, Adroit Motion. It will be used in minimally invasive surgeries once it is produced, he said. It has a hand piece at one end, a grasper at the other and is connected by a thin shaft.

Though several inventions like theirs already exist, their design is innovative and different from the rest.

Their instrument is hydraulically driven whereas, in other cases, wires control the device. Because of this, it has seven degrees of freedom, a term which means the shaft of the device can assume different shapes during surgery, unlike its competitors.

Snow and Sifuentes have only a digital prototype of their invention because of cost. However, thanks to the $24,100 they've won in competitions so far, including the $20,000 NASA award, they can take the invention to another level.

“This competition helps us advance (the device) further and make it a physical prototype,” Sifuentes said.

But money wasn't the most important element of the award.

“It means that the design is valid and that the invention is worthy,” Snow said.
Sifuentes said they plan to use the prototype in their pitches to potential investors by the end of the summer.

The team's instructor, Jake Halliday, who has helped coach Adroit Motion, said he is proud of his students' award.

“It's very gratifying to see graduate students who work hard be rewarded for their efforts,” he said.

Because of their award, Sifuentes and Snow's company has won a year in the MU Life Science incubator, where they will be trained even further. This one-on-one coaching opportunity will help the business further their research and increase their chances for success.

“It's a wonderful bridge from the classroom to the real world,” Halliday said.

Sifuentes said she hasn't thought too far into the future about their product but would like to eventually compete again.

“We want to do more, but we haven't popped in the 'when,'” she said.