Adults fret that 'Eclipse' lacks good role models for teens

By Maria Puente, USA TODAY

The Twilight Saga: Eclipse is at the top of the box office, but as teenage heroine Bella Swan moves inevitably toward marriage with a vampire, some wonder if she's such an exemplary role model for the girls who follow her adventures in the hugely popular books and movies.

It's a rerun of an old debate: Can pop culture — books, movies, music — influence the behavior of impressionable teenagers, and in the case of Bella, is that a good thing or a bad thing?

REVIEW: 'Eclipse' is fairly anemic.

And, for that matter, are teens really all that impressionable? After all, they've been reading Romeo and Juliet for 400 years.

Bella, for the few who have avoided the Twilight tidal wave, is a teenager who's so in love with an undead guy that she's ready to give up everything to be turned into a vampire so they can spend eternity together. Adding some urgency to the situation is the fact that Edward Cullen, her vampire love, is reluctant to have sex outside the bonds of matrimony.

Christine Seifert, a communications professor at Westminster College in Salt Lake City who has studied Twilight online message boards and fan fiction sites, says that the saga is strongly Mormon in tone and that a subset of Mormon culture prefers that girls marry young and start families. She says the abstinence message is so strong it could be labeled "abstinence porn," designed to convince teens that sexual self-denial is actually sexy. Will it work?

The author of the Twilight books, Stephenie Meyer, is a devout Mormon who says about Bella on her website: "I never meant for her fictional choices to be a model for anyone else's real-life choices."

Nevertheless, the three movies so far and the four books in print make some parents nervous about whether the saga is appropriate for younger teens, even aside from the vampires. Twilight, it should be noted, was No. 5 on the 2009 list of books challenged or banned from schools and libraries, according to the American Library Association.
'Virtuous' messages

Kristy Campbell of Marin County, Calif., a non-Mormon mother of five and a columnist for Mommytracked.com, says she won't let her 9-year-old read the books but she's OK with her 17-year-old doing so, as long as Mom and Dad help explain "the fiction in the fiction." She worries that Twilight over-romanticizes teen sex and marriage, creating unrealistic expectations.

"I'd like to see Edward and Bella one year into their teen marriage living in their parents' basement with a screaming toddler, no college plans, working at a 7-Eleven and wondering where the fun went," she says.

Kathryn Darden, a Christian freelance writer on arts and entertainment for several online publications who has written about Twilight, says there are some "virtuous" messages in the saga, but "I've never recommended it for (unsupervised) teens — it needs to be read by parents and discussed first."

Amy Best, an associate professor of sociology at Virginia's George Mason University who studies teens and popular culture, says adults do tend to get "a bit panicky" when teenagers invest too much in a particular character, and there's a long list of characters who have been "troublesome" on some level. But she says the "emulation model" is not followed by all teens, even the obsessed ones.

"We should recognize that teens develop complicated relationships to media and for some it may inspire a particular trajectory for action, but for others it's also an opportunity to work through ideas," she says. "Listen to them and don't assume what messages teens are drawing from" Twilight or any other book or movie.

Indeed, ask teens if they take Twilight seriously enough to imitate Bella and eyes roll. Hello, there are vampires involved; of course it's make-believe!

"It's kind of a special situation — it's a fantasy novel," says Michelle Pan, patiently, calling from summer camp. She's 17, founder of a popular website, BellaAndEdward.com (about 300,000 hits a month) and the author of a new book of fan talk, Bella Should Have Dumped Edward: Controversial Views & Debates on the Twilight Series. "I don't think (fans) will be influenced; for most readers, there's a clear distinction that this is fantasy and separate from their real life."

The fans who gab about Twilight on Pan's website and in her book are more interested in discussing such questions as, "Would the series be as intriguing if Bella picked Jacob (the werewolf) over Edward?" and "Which vampire special talent is most useful?" They also discuss the creepiness of "imprinting," which is what Meyer says happens when shape-shifters such as werewolves encounter the person they're destined to be with.

The adult spokeswoman for Pan's publisher, Karma Bennett of Ulysses Press, isn't so sure she likes the idea of a man choosing his life partner with just a glance, and some of the fans in Pan's book agree. But others have no problem with it. One girl, identified as Dayi, 19, of Georgia, even
says she wishes everyone could be imprinted because it would make finding a soul mate easier and might curb the wayward behavior of men.

Melissa Click, a communications professor at the University of Missouri and co-author of a new book about the fans, *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, & the Vampire Franchise*, says the media have treated Twihard teens shabbily, making fun of them and wringing hands over the intensity of their love for *Twilight*. But she says the teens she has interviewed are savvy and not so easily manipulated.

"They're smart, and to assume they can't decode messages is itself an anti-feminist message," Click says. Critics who complain that Twihard teens are "out of control, aren't they stupid, gosh, we need to protect them — well, they don't say that about *Iron Man* fans."

**The faithful are divided**

But even some of Meyer's fellow Mormons aren't thrilled about *Twilight*: Deseret Books, a Salt Lake-based Mormon church-affiliated chain of 38 bookstores throughout the West, removed the books from store shelves last year at the request of customers, although the books are still available by special order, says spokeswoman Gail Halladay.

"Many of our customers were upset and felt it was not appropriate content for the targeted audience," she says. "We needed to accommodate our customers. It was a business decision."

Meanwhile, conservative Christian organizations that sought to ban the *Harry Potter* books because they're about wizards and witches are divided about criticizing *Twilight*.

Roberta Combs, president of the Christian Coalition of America, which called for a ban on the *Potter* series, says she's considering a similar campaign against *Twilight* because even though it's pro-abstinence, it's also pro-vampires.

She says vampires are definitely not good role models, and she blames Hollywood.

"We can let our voices be heard, and anytime you do that you have an effect one way or another," Combs says. "These *Twilight* books are very disturbing books for family values. Teen marriage is not the standard, but the part that is more troubling is the vampire. It's just not normal for young people to idolize a vampire."

Says Gordon Robertson, CEO of the Christian Broadcasting Network, which condemned *Harry Potter* for fear that the books would inspire young people to try casting spells: "Rather than prohibit access, use it as a talking point" with your teens.

*Twilight* has questionable stuff (such as Edward's stalkerish behavior toward Bella), Robertson says, but it's mostly harmless "romantic escapism" that teens are smart enough to put in context with the help of parents.
Darden says one reason for the division is that witches are specifically condemned in the Bible, while vampires are not even mentioned. Still, "many Christian readers shy away from things that are demonic, and (they think) vampires are demon," she says.

But Darden defends the suitability of at least the first *Twilight* book for older teens (with parental guidance) because its themes are "faith-based," and the characters talk a lot about their souls.

"Edward refuses to turn Bella (into a vampire) because he's concerned about her salvation, he thinks being a vampire is equivalent to being damned," she says. "He puts her well-being above all else, and that's a strong positive message. Teen culture is too often getting the opposite message from Hollywood."

**Not everyone relates**

Not every young woman yearns for a vampire of her own.

Jenn Petti, 26, who works at a hotel in Colorado Springs, has read all the books and saw the first movie. She thinks Bella is pretty lame.

"How is her being a role model even up for debate?" Petti scoffs.

Bella is "co-dependent," willing to abandon her friends to be with "an immortal sparkly male," Petty says. (Meyer's vampires have skin that sparkles like diamonds in the sunlight). "She has no sense of self and only sees her worth as Edward's girlfriend, which is why when he breaks up with her, she spends almost the entire second book moping."

Petti says teen girls may aspire to the kind of relationship Bella has with Edward, but she's not convinced they'll run off and get married and start making babies too young.

"Girls relate to the fantasy," she says. "It speaks to that part in most girls of wanting to be a princess, wanting something crazy and magical to happen."
Analysis: Stability of new Big 12 remains in doubt

MU's commitment to the conference is sealed with a handshake, not a contract.

By Brian Haenchen
Published July 7, 2010

Once at the center of the Big Ten expansion speculation, MU ultimately found itself on the outside looking in. Because MU was perceived to be inserting itself into the Big Ten discussion, the University of Nebraska — Lincoln blamed MU for causing the trouble for the Big 12.

"Nebraska did not start this discussion," Nebraska Chancellor Harvey Pearlman said during a UNL Board of Regents meeting June 11. "Early on, after the Big Ten announced that it intended to consider expansion, we saw reports that officials of Missouri had made clear that they would want to go to the Big Ten, including statements by their governor, I believe by members of their Board of Curators and by their chancellor, at least comments that were clearly not in support of the Big 12."

Chancellor Brady Deaton said he does not understand Nebraska's accusations and contends that MU was not the only school exploring its options.

"I don't fully understand that comment and don't think it's an accurate comment at all," Deaton said. "I think that was only because of the original speculation that included Missouri in the speculation about the Big Ten. Some schools, who had their own plans, may have looked at that as justification for what they were doing."

Despite the harsh comments from his conference's newest member, Big Ten Commissioner Jim Delany refused to blame anyone and suggested a smaller Big 12 has potential to succeed.

"I think you can have a conference with 10 members," Delany said. "You can have a conference with 11 members. I don't buy that any one institution is responsible for anything of that dimension. I know it's a good storyline and it's a good narrative, but there are a lot of other ways to describe what's happening (in the Big 12)."

Deaton echoed Delany's comments and said he is optimistic about the new Big 12.

"I feel very excited about it, actually," Deaton said. "(The new setup) makes it a more collegiate feeling, and I think that we're going to be able to work well together."

Not everyone shares Deaton's optimism, though. Not much was done to ease the unhappiness of schools such as MU, who voiced displeasure with how the conference was run, leading experts and some officials within the Big 12 to question the conference's stability.

"I just don't think this conference will last long because there's just too much disparity between all the teams here," Texas Tech football coach Tommy Tuberville said. "You've got some teams that get a little bit more money. And when that happens, you're going to have teams looking for better avenues to leave.
and reasons to leave. And so we have a 10-team league now, but I just don't know how long that's going to last, to be honest with you."

Tuberville's doubts are not unfounded. Although all 10 teams get more money with fewer teams, the disparity in profits between Texas and the rest of the conference increases substantially due to the unequal revenue system. Under the new conference setup, the University of Texas is projected to earn as much as $25 million. Add in the possibility of Texas creating its own television network, and UT could be drawing $30 million in total revenue.

Another important component of the new Big 12 is that none of the 10 schools are contractually obligated to stay with the Big 12. All 10 recommitments, including MU's, were sealed with a handshake, not a signed document. Although Deaton has said Missouri is "totally committed and devoted to making the new Big 12 a major success, there are no documents preventing Missouri from leaving if an offer should come.

"There's still some definite instability (in the 'new' Big 12)," ESPN staff writer David Ubben said. "I have my doubts about if the Big Ten comes and wants Missouri, that Missouri wouldn't just leave."
Four students injured in Schweitzer Hall explosion

One student was admitted into University Hospital but is in good condition.

By Nicole Garner and Travis Cornejo
Published June 28, 2010

Hydrogen gas in a 2,000-pound cylinder exploded at Schweitzer Hall at around 2:20 p.m. Monday, injuring four students, one critically. The Columbia Police Department blocked off traffic southbound on College Avenue and on University Avenue.

One of the four students injured was admitted into University Hospital. Although Columbia Fire Department Capt. Eric Hartman said this student suffered life-threatening injuries, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said the student is in good condition.

"One of the injuries was life-threatening, one is asthma-related and the other two injuries were related to burn and shrapnel," Columbia Fire Department Capt. Eric Hartman said. "17 windows were blown out on the northwest side of the building, but there's no sign of structural damage.

Although the four researchers injured were originally believed to have been faculty, Hartman confirmed around 4:30 p.m. that all four were students.

"One had critical injuries, two had moderate injuries and one sustained minor injuries," he said. "Two are post-doctorate, one is a graduate student and the other's status is unknown."

Hartman said he does not know which injuries correspond with which students.

"I do know that one of the students has been transported to University Hospital's intensive care unit with what's being described as impact injuries and burns to their chest," he said. "I don't have anything other than that."

He also said researchers in the building were working on a project to grow bacteria in a hydrogen-rich environment.

A news release from the MU News Bureau stated the blast appeared to be the result of an accident in Schweitzer Hall, which houses MU's biochemistry department.

"The explosion, which is still being investigated, is believed to have been caused by a spontaneous combustion of gases including hydrogen and nitrogen that were being used in a research experiment," the news release stated.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said MU will not have a cost estimate for the damage to the building until tomorrow.

"I know right now that the very first steps of the clean-up is to catalog what was damaged, find out if there's any specific precautions they have to take in the clean-up and then begin the clean-up," Basi said. "We want to have these areas open as soon as possible."
Basi said no classes are held in Schweitzer Hall during the summer session.

"There are only two labs being affected — the lab where the accident happened and the lab beneath it," Basi said. "They were able to shut off power to the lab where it occurred and shut off natural gas to the entire building."

Hartman said glass from the laboratory windows was blown as far as 40 feet away from the building.

"There's significant damage inside the lab, but there is not structural damage, so there's no danger of collapse," Hartman said. "Most of the exterior clean-up will be done tonight, but you're looking at days for the interior clean-up."
MU power plant receives prestigious award from EPA

In 2012, the power plant will add a new biomass boiler.

By Jon Parker

Published July 7, 2010

The MU power plant has been recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a 2010 EPA Energy Star Combined Heat and Power award recipient, one of three universities in the nation to receive the award.

Power plants at the University of California in San Diego and Fairfield University were also recognized.

"MU is very proud of Energy Management's track record of improving campus energy efficiency while reducing energy costs and lowering emissions," Campus Facilities Assistant Vice Chancellor Gary Ward said in a news release.

The plant operates at more than 70 percent efficiency. Conventional fossil-fueled plants only operate at approximately 30 percent efficiency.

"We applaud the University of Missouri's effort because the improvement in efficiency translates to a reduction in total fossil fuel use, reduced emissions of air pollutants and carbon dioxide, the leading greenhouse gas contributor to global climate change," Susan Wickwire, EPA chief of the energy supply and industry branch said.

According to the news release, MU has been producing electricity by combined heat and power since 1892. This system helps MU reduce carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 107,000 tons per year.

"Combined heat and power is an efficient, clean and reliable approach to generating power and thermal energy from a single fuel source," Wickwire said. "CHP plays an important role in reducing the environmental impact of power generation."

Workers at the MU power plant work alongside researchers in an effort to discover alternative fuels and more efficient methods to heat, cool and power the university.
Other awards the power plant has won include the 2008 Energy Efficiency award from the National Wildlife Federation, the 2004 International District Energy Association's System of the Year award and the 2001 Energy Star Partner of the Year award.

"We are looking forward to adding a new biomass boiler to our CHP system in 2012 to build on the success we have already achieved," Ward said.

With one of MU's coal-powered burners approaching the end of its service life, it opened a window of opportunity for MU to reach another milestone in reducing its carbon footprint in 2012.

The new burner, which will be designed by Babcock and Wilcox Power Generation Group, comes with a $62 million price tag. The selling of bonds will fund the project.

"Other colleges and universities are likely to take notice of the University of Missouri's decision to convert its physical plant to utilize a renewable, environmentally friendly fuel, and we are confident B&W PGG has the technology to meet their needs," Babcock and Wilcox Power Generation Group President Richard Killion said in a news release.

Unlike older burners, the new burner will only use natural waste material such as corncobs, switch grass and waste woods brought in from mid-Missouri.

"An ice storm downed trees in Ashland, Mo.," Campus Facilities spokeswoman Karlan Seville said. "The lost trees were chipped up and brought to campus. The plant also received wood from a supplier near Lake of the Ozarks."
Cuts to scholarships, MU programs take effect

More than 4,600 MU students will be affected by the scholarship cuts.

By Gregory Zajac

Published July 7, 2010

The $63 million in higher education program cuts ordered last month by Gov. Jay Nixon went into effect Thursday, and those reductions will affect how thousands of MU students pay for college.

Nixon ordered $300 million in cuts to the state’s total budget to balance it in the face of falling tax revenues due to the economic downturn. More than one-fifth of those came from higher education funding, including scholarship programs.

According to the Missouri Office of Administration, the Access Missouri scholarship, a need-based scholarship program, will lose $50 million of its $82.2 million in state funds. According to a document on the OA website, the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority will offset some of that, about $30 million, with a loan.

Despite the offset, Access Missouri award amounts will likely be reduced from $4,600 to $1,000 for students at private institutions, from $2,150 to $500 for students at public colleges and universities and from $300 to $150 for students at community colleges, UM system spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said.

Anna Osterlind, assistant legislative director of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, said Access Missouri was the state’s only need-based scholarship. More than 43,300 students statewide received Access Missouri scholarships in 2009, a number that includes more than 4,600 students at MU, according to the Missouri Department of Higher Education’s website.

“We understand that it’s a tough budget year, but we’re disappointed to see some of the cuts are going to come at the cost of education, especially because it will affect some of Missouri’s neediest students,” Osterlind said.

Although core funding for universities and colleges did not see additional cuts, budgets for some MU programs were also slashed. Others were spared or found alternate sources of funding.

The Missouri Institute for Mental Health saw $250,000 of its budget, half of its state funding, cut, which will force it to end its affiliation with MU. Missouri has been cutting funding for the
institute since 2003, Director Danny Wedding said, when 10 percent of its $2.55 million from the state was cut.

Funding for MIMH’s activities include work on grant writing, policy and research for the Missouri Department of Mental Health. The institute had to make up for them in federal and state grants, Wedding said. In response to the loss of state funding since 2003, Wedding has laid off approximately 12 employees, closed the MIMH library and decided to end the institute’s 45-year connection with MU to move to another campus.

“Negotiations between the Missouri Department of Mental Health and the University of Missouri—Columbia broke down, and a new academic home had to be found for the Missouri Institute of Mental Health,” Wedding said.

The work of the Primary Care Resource Initiative for Missouri will be largely unaffected by the $1.3 million cut to its budget. PRIMO, working within the state’s Department of Health and Senior Services, awards forgivable student loans to encourage doctors and other health professionals to work in poor areas. Kit Wagar, spokesman for the Department of Health and Senior Services, said this service will largely be funded by $1.5 million in similar programs for Missouri under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

“If you look at the programs that Governor Nixon trimmed, he tried to pick a lot of the programs that had alternate sources of funding,” Wagar said.

PRIMO and the Department of Health and Senior Services will instead focus on living up to existing student loan commitments, identifying underserved areas and certifying clinics for placement.

“Many of the programs that lost state funding will continue in some other fashion,” Wagar said. “PRIMO is an example of that.”
Greek Life's deadline to meet fire safety codes extended

The houses are on track to meet the new 2016 deadline.

By Kelly Olejnik

Published July 7, 2010

Greek Life houses are on track to meet the updated fire safety regulations before the 2016 deadline.

The Columbia Fire Department has inspected and confirmed that 15 of the 42 houses on campus have met the regulations and three houses are currently in the process of doing so. All houses must install automatic fire sprinklers before the Dec. 31, 2016, deadline. The fire sprinkler system is designed as a minimal safety device, and it is the only requirement the fire safety regulations are asking the houses to meet.

CFD Battalion Chief Steven Sapp said houses may choose to hide any of the sprinklers' exposed pipes for appearance purposes, but once sprinklers are installed and fully functional no other renovations are necessary. Houses were originally required to meet the fire safety regulations by 2012, but the Greek Fire Safety Task Force petitioned and was granted a four-year deadline extension due to lack of funding for each house's sprinkler system.

Sapp said he did not want to enforce the deadline when a number of houses could not meet the safety requirements on time.

"We were certainly comfortable that the original date was an adequate one, but after a number of meetings with all the interested parties we agreed that the extension was suitable," Sapp said.

Greek Life Director Janna Basler said in an e-mail this extension was very necessary in order to include the alumni advisors.

"Most chapters cannot afford to install sprinklers with the regular flow of income from rent alone," Greek Life advisor Danny Jonas said in an e-mail. "Donations for infrastructure improvements may come from the housing corporation, alumni or both."

Alpha Epsilon Pi President Marshall Rader said his fraternity has yet to renovate the house due to the cost.
"Our housing corporation is well aware of the required sprinkler system, and has developed a plan to install the sprinklers by the 2016 deadline," Rader said. "When the sprinkler system is installed, it will most likely be paid for by our housing corporation."

Sapp said if an organization fails to meet the deadline but has made a good faith effort to complete the project, they may appeal to the Building Construction Codes Commission Board of Appeals for an extension. The organization must be able to present that they have in good faith made a valid attempt to comply with the code requirement.

Although the fire regulations only require Greek Life houses to install the updated sprinkler system, all houses must maintain a fire evacuation plan and hold fire drills under the supervision of CFD Lieutenant Shawn McCollom.

McCollom said the houses are inspected for safety standards on an annual basis to ensure a safe living environment for students.

"I have worked closely with Greek Life on safety education and fire drills for these students and found we have the same goals in which we are going to do everything in our powers to see these students are kept as safe as possible," McCollom said.
Lack of pay increases raises faculty retention concerns

2010-11 will be the third consecutive year without pay increases for faculty.

By Jared Grafman

Published July 7, 2010

Members of the administration and the UM system Board of Curators believe the lack of faculty salary increases for the third consecutive year could cause significant problems for MU's academic programs.

The curators met in June and passed the UM system budget for fiscal year 2011 in a move that has raised concerns at both MU and the university system level.

Thomas Payne, College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources vice chancellor and dean, said continuing without salary adjustments for faculty and staff will move MU further into an uncompetitive position with its peers around the country.

"MU must provide salary adjustments for 2011-2012," Payne said. "Such increases will likely come from continued sound fiscal management practices that have been put in place, state budget adjustments or increases in costs of services."

At the system level, Board of Curators Chairwoman Judith Haggard said she's worried about faculty salaries because low salaries make it difficult to hold onto good professors.

"High quality faculty are the cornerstone of the university," Haggard said. "Given our low salaries, it makes it hard to retain those faculty members, and the University of Missouri system is in danger of losing those faculty members to other universities with higher salaries or benefits."

To combat stagnant salary levels, the UM system is establishing a 1 percent salary pool on each campus which administrators will be able to use for special circumstances concerning faculty, Haggard said. They also have asked for appropriations for $10.8 million for 2012 that will go toward competitive faculty rank compensation.

Betsy Rodriguez, UM system vice president of Human Resources, said the lack of salary increase is very difficult on employees.
"While we know that most other higher education institutions are in the same boat, this is still extremely hard on employees, especially our large number of employees at the lower end of the pay scale," Rodriguez said. "This situation is further exacerbated by the fact that some of our faculty and staff salaries are low compared to our peers."

Rodriguez said job turnover is fairly low now, but the concern is that, as the economy picks up, university employees will seek opportunities elsewhere.

"When hourly employees cannot get increases in their current positions, they tend to look around for other ways to get increases," Rodriguez said. "One of those ways is to seek out other university positions. So we have huge numbers of employees applying for transfers and promotions. That causes a great deal of work for the HR office and frustration for the employees, given the low amount of hiring that is occurring on the campuses."

She said the HR offices are working with campus leadership to find ways to create positive work environments for the employees and reward faculty and staff in ways other than pay increases.

"They value their contribution to the university's mission, and they take pride in their accomplishments," Rodriguez said. "We need to find ways to recognize and reward this loyalty."

The poor status of the economy makes an increase in budget allotment virtually impossible.

"We can only campaign in a realistic way, and that means understanding our severe budget constraints," Rodriguez said. "Everyone, including the leadership, understands that we need to do something about salaries."

Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin said MU is in the same boat as everyone else and that if prices go up, salaries need to go up, but if they stay the same, salaries can remain the same. Payne said the effects of the world's fiscal situation can be seen on campus and in Missouri.

"The best investment that can be made is education," Payne said. "Comparatively, the return for the investment is substantial. Even in the worst of times, investments should be made in education."

Faculty Council is limited in its ability to push for salary increases, Rubin said.

"Faculty Council can make recommendations or requests from the administration, but I think everyone recognizes you can't get blood from a stone," Rubin said. "The budget is so slim right now that in order for the administration to allow for salary raises, other departments will need to make cuts because the money needs to come from somewhere, and the state isn't giving more money."
MU picks up award for fundraising efforts

Alumni, corporations and foundations contributed the majority of donations.

By Steven Dickherber

Due to its fundraising success throughout the 2007 to 2009 fiscal years, MU was awarded the 2010 Overall Performance award for fundraising from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

MU completed its $1 billion "For All We Call Mizzou" campaign in November 2008. At that time, MU also became the most productive fundraising school out of all public higher education institutions in the state of Missouri.

"I am very proud of our success in every aspect of our fundraising," David Housh, vice chancellor of development and alumni relations, said in a news release. "Our major gift program growth made the difference between a successful billion dollar campaign and an unsuccessful one."

This year, 20 schools won the Overall Performance award, though more than 1,000 institutions were eligible to receive it.

"Mizzou has unusually loyal alumni," Linda L'Hote, senior associate vice chancellor of development, said. "We may have to work a little harder to get the money, but we also know that when alumni know MU has great needs, then they're even more willing to be generous."

One key aspect to the success of the fundraising campaign was the increase of the alumni donor participation rate from 10 percent to 17 percent.

L'Hote said the most successful fundraising programs were the major gift programs, which look at donations of $100,000 or more. Alumni are not the only ones responsible for donations over the past few years.

"In addition to alumni, the university has a lot of great relationships with corporations and foundations," L'Hote said. "Even though corporations feel the economic impact as much as individuals, because of the work we do in research and other areas, they want to step up to the plate."

Judgment for the selection for the CASE award was made by peers on the basis of data reports turned into the Council for Aid to Education through the years of 2007 to 2009. In order to be eligible, schools need not apply but are automatically chosen after their data is reviewed.
Part of MU's fundraising success is credited to the Tiger Calling Club. The Tiger Calling Club employs more than 100 students who speak directly with alumni, friends and family about the importance of giving back to MU. The students also share information with alumni about the events at MU.

"In order to have students out there working successfully, we need to have access to (educational resources), and we've got to have money to do that," Tiger Calling Club Supervisor Beverly Smith said.

L'Hote said it is the $10 donations which eventually become the $100,000 donations in the future.

Housh credited much of MU's fundraising success to the outstanding leadership, extraordinary volunteers and highly motivated staff at MU.

"It's all about giving back so that the students coming through here now can have the same advantages as (the alumni) had when they were here, which is what made them into the incredibly successful people they are today," Smith said.
Push for Walken as commencement speaker gains support

By Jessica Silverman

Published July 7, 2010

Senior Nick Calcaterra has a fever, and the only cure is Christopher Walken.

A Facebook event created by Calcaterra is pushing for the veteran actor to come to an MU graduation ceremony in 2011. Calcaterra said he wants to make the point that students should be able to choose their commencement speakers.

"It was a test to see how popular this would be," Calcaterra said.

Calcaterra said Today show host Ann Curry botching the name of a college at a commencement ceremony inspired the event.

"Students should have a choice," Calcaterra said. "It doesn't have to be Christopher Walken. They've spent four years working, and it is their celebration. They should have a choice. I wanted to see if we could make that to happen."

MU spokesman Christian Basi said students would need to talk to the appropriate dean for the particular college or school ceremony they were looking at.

"If the students were interested in getting a speaker for a commencement ceremony, they would talk to the administration for an individual school or college," Basi said.

Basi said each selection process for every school and college is different.

"The school of nursing has students who give a small speech," Basi said.

Other colleges and schools select keynote speakers or have a group of students who choose the guest, Basi said.

"The overall ceremony for the entire campus is the honors convocation in spring," Basi said. "The speakers at that ceremony are honorary degree recipients who are nominated to a faculty committee and recommended to the chancellor."
Basi said the candidate is then approved by the UM system Board of Curators.

Kathleen Miller, secretary to the Board of Curators, said other college and school guest speakers do not require board approval.

Calcaterra said he is focusing on the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources' graduation ceremony because it is the school he attends.

"I thought (Walken) was a fairly neutral candidate," Calcaterra said. "He's the first person that came to mind, and he's popular with our generation."

Calcaterra said he wants to see how big the group gets. The group has 270 members as of July 6.

"I haven't heard a whole lot of feedback," Calcaterra said. "On Facebook it has been mostly positive. My friends thought it was farfetched."

If the group size becomes significant, Calcaterra said he would take action by starting an online petition and getting people to sign it. Afterward, he would then present it to the administration. He said he would not be surprised if the petition fell through.

"I wouldn't cause a huge uproar," Calcaterra said. "The administration has brushed off ideas before. I wouldn't be too angry."

Calcaterra said he wants to get more people to join the event.

"If we can get (Walken) to come, that would be pretty cool," Calcaterra said.
Study: Athletics see big money in spending ‘arms race’

*Big 12 schools’ athletics departments spend an average of $124,000 per athlete each year.*

By Allison Prang

Colleges spend far more on each athlete than on their students, according to a report released last month, in a trend one expert calls an “arms race” between schools and athletic conferences.

The report, released in June by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, aims to “bring back educational values and priorities” to college athletic conferences across the country. The report said expenditures on sports by the 10 biggest-spending schools were $98 million in 2009. By 2020, that amount is expected to exceed $250 million per year.

Knight Commission executive director Amy Perko said schools that are not as successful with creating outside revenue through their athletic departments rely more heavily on direct institutional funding for their student athletes.

On average, a university in the Big 12 spends $124,054 on a student athlete per year. $6,701 of that is part of funds allocated by the university from student fees, general funds, state appropriations and other sources within the school, according to the Knight Commission’s report.

The rest of the money for student athletes comes from revenue generated by the athletic department through areas such as ticket sales and television contracts.

Big 12 universities spent an average of $13,741 a year on academics per student. That includes paying for instruction, student services and operations. According to the report, universities in the Big 12 on average spent nine times more per student athlete than a student academically in 2008.

The amount of money allocated on average for a student athlete in the Big Ten increased from $13,964 in 2005 to $17,025 in 2008. Unlike the Big 12, the amount of money allocated on average per each student academically in the Big Ten dipped from $4,750 in 2005 to $3,236 in 2008.

The Knight Commission’s report spells out three main goals for college athletic programs, which are coming up with better ways to compare academic spending to athletic spending, doling out awards for where academics is put first and treating college athletes as students first.
University of Chicago sports economics professor Allen Sanderson called the spending “an arms race.” For example, if one university cut a portion of their program that other schools did not, that school would be put at a disadvantage. Therefore, Sanderson said, universities would be more inclined to cut spending in certain areas if they all agreed on it.

Although Sanderson acknowledges that universities are competing against each other with their athletic programs, he said information like the Knight Commission’s report should be put into context.

“The fact that you spend more in one area opposed to another in itself is not a guilty plea,” Sanderson said. “If you look at any kind of changes or expenditures I wouldn’t expect them to be the same anyway.”

But Sanderson said he feels more money should go to academic areas of colleges.

“A lot of the money that’s being stemmed for the athletic program is coming out of places that it could be used in the university,” he said. “College athletes are the most exploited workers in the country.”

The MU Athletics Department did not return requests for comment on the report.
Editorial:

Should academics or athletics be the true face of MU?

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Game days at MU are hard to ignore, from everybody and their mother tailgating on campus to the sea of black and gold across Columbia. Students who can't make it to their morning classes rise early to ensure full game day experiences. Last year, the tradition of tailgating brought on neon shirts and a huge student movement.

The largest admissions jump for MU happened in the year we had a nationally top-ranking football team. And that’s great. Excellent athletic programs are a critical part of attending an excellent university.

However, there is little doubt that, when it comes to financial backing, MU is a school that puts its athletics first, ahead of academics. MU is a part of the Big 12, a conference that is coincidentally known for sports more than academics, and is decidedly staying there despite recent controversy over moving to the Big Ten.

As a seemingly prime example for the "front porch" theory that suggests athletics are what draw people, and thus money, into the university, we have to wonder: is that what we really want?

If MU is to consider itself the best public university in the state, we're going to need more substance to back up our athletic prowess. According to a 2008 report by the Knight Commission on Intercollegiate Athletics, Big 12 schools spent an average of $13,741 per student in academic spending and $124,054 per student athlete—a nearly nine-fold difference. Is that fair for the vast majority of students who aren't doubling as star athletes?

The Knight Commission's report spells out three main goals for college athletic programs including: coming up with better ways to compare academic spending to athletic spending; doling out awards for where academics is put first; and treating college athletes as students first.

There are places where the university could use the funding, and should use the funding, because that's the core purpose of its existence. As of last year, the MU Athletics Department began to give back its annual $1.5 million subsidy to help with construction projects because the department was making higher profits.
Although this is a good start, it's time for athletics as well as the university to start focusing more on the main cause of the university: education.

This means putting more funding toward things like faculty salary increases, which MU has not seen in two years.

After the summer hype over conference-switching, we would discourage any pressure to push MU into spending more money on things like television contracts for the Big 12 conference, but encourage more self-sufficiency of the Athletics Department in general.

Rather than pouring more money into athletics and letting those athletes pass by with little in the way of academics, as the report suggests, we need to start demanding a better-funded education. The true value of a university comes from what it is teaching, and athletics holding more importance than the foundation of the school isn’t a very valuable lesson.