COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Two MU researchers win USDA award

By Sara Cox
July 31, 2010 | 6:45 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — With the recent invention of an inexpensive genetic device that evaluates merit in cattle, two MU researchers from the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources have been awarded a 2010 U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary’s Honor Award.

Jerry Taylor, professor and Wurdack Chair in Animal Genomics, and Robert Schnabel, research assistant professor, were members of a cattle genomics consortium that developed the BovineSNP50 BeadChip to identify DNA markers for important traits in livestock, such as reproduction, growth, disease resistance and amount of milk production.

“I am very excited to receive this award; it is an enormous honor,” Taylor said. “This award is considered the most prestigious given by the USDA and is vindication of the team’s hard work, by taking their idea and adopting it for an entire universal industry.”

After extracting the cattle’s DNA and processing it with the SNP chip, it is placed into a scanner that reads more than 54,000 genome positions.

"By using this technology, we can pin down certain variables of a specific trait for breeding purposes," Taylor said.

Developing the SNP chip, pronounced "snip chip," took two years, and was put on the market in spring 2009. Since then, much of the dairy industry has been using the chip to determine its cattle’s genetic merit.

“Nine countries, including the U.S., have implemented the chip into their dairy cattle industry, and it has proven to be very beneficial for their economy,” Taylor said.
Taylor said that before the SNP chip, determining a cattle’s genetic merit was based on a five-year progeny test. The chip has shortened the process of finding the genetic variable of a specific trait by four years.

“Dairy produced has doubled, and unlike before, we can find out about the cow’s value when it is a calf and not have to wait until it is older.”

The bovine chip was the first chip that determined genetic merit in livestock, Taylor said. Taylor is currently investigating genomic positions of important genes in cattle cross-breeds.

Funding for the SNP chip project came from USDA’s Cooperative State Research, MU Education and Extension Service, Agricultural Research Service and industry partners.

On Tuesday, Taylor and Schnabel are scheduled to be in Washington to accept the award from the USDA’s Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Campus police searching for suspect in assault

By Jen Apoian
July 31, 2010 | 5:10 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Police are looking for a suspect after a woman was assaulted early Saturday morning near University Avenue and Hitt Street, according to a news release from the MU Police Department.

The assault occurred at approximately 2:20 a.m Saturday. The victim was treated at the scene and released.

The victim described the suspect as a male in his early twenties with a heavy build who was wearing a yellow shirt and khaki shorts. Police were able to match the description with images from security cameras in the area.

Police are asking that anyone with information about the crime call Crime Stoppers at 875-8477.

UPDATE: The suspect, Jeremy Gerber, turned himself into police on Sunday.
Coordination?

What coordination?

By Henry J. Waters III

Saturday, July 31, 2010

In the most unremarkable finding of the season, state Auditor Susan Montee reports the Coordinating Board for Higher Education does precious little coordinating, leaving decisions about funding campuses mostly to the tried-and-true system in which lobbyists for four-year campuses roam the halls of the Capitol, hustling legislators for earmarked money.

Moreover, University of Missouri System officials prefer it this way, and Rep. Chris Kelly, who spends his share of time trying for UM money, says nothing is about to change.

Kelly’s prediction is bound to come true. Though Montee issues a familiar call for more coordinating by the coordinating board, her order is rather vague. From a long lifetime observing similar entreaties, I can concur with Kelly: This beer will not be rebrewed.

The reason is simple enough. The legislature does not want to cede the power to appropriate money to the coordinating board. The board is handy for diverting a good deal of routine lobbying attention, for instance providing a process schools must go through to change course catalogs, but when time comes for heavy lifting, elected officials keep control and institutional lobbyists will roam the premises.

When the University of Missouri system was created by then-President Elmer Ellis, the idea was to coordinate. UM would get a lump sum from the legislature and then be free to allocate those funds and otherwise prioritize internally among its four campuses. This is a fine conception, but the ink hardly was dry on the new contract before some long-forgotten lawmaker saw fit to meddle, and the grand goal was strained.

The system still serves a purpose. Some people persistently call for a breakup, with each campus doing its own separate lobbying in Jefferson City, but such efforts have been quelled at University Hall. A good thing it is, but that hardly ends the competition. UM vies against regional campuses, and Missouri State University in Springfield aspires to be a campus of statewide presence. Lobbyists and lawmakers can't help pushing for hometown campuses, as our own Missouri 100 lobbying group attests.
A friend of mine who recently joined the coordinating board wondered whether he could have a positive impact. Another friend who formerly served as commissioner would have an answer. The coordinating board does some good and deserves intelligent management. It affects the configuration of higher education programming, but on big matters, such as how many campuses we should have and where they shall be located and how money will be handed around, they are obliged to keep their place inside a tight corral designed and kept strong by the people with the real power we elect to carve up the state budget, who inevitably will flick aside pesky interference from the Coordinating Board for Higher Education.

Legislators representing districts all over Missouri where campuses reside will maintain the status quo above all else, giving the coordinators limited territory for maneuvering, the auditor’s wise observations notwithstanding.

_I went to school so long ago. “Ethics” was a required course._
Saturday Business Magazine

EQUITY STAKE

The University of Missouri has joined with Columbia company Rising Tide LLC to form the Asian Equity Research Institute, a research and education institute equally owned by MU, the Trulaske College of Business and Rising Tide.

The intent of the institute is to produce market, economic and policy research on Chinese and other Asian equity markets, according to a news release from the university. The institute is in Cornell Hall on the MU campus.

Rising Tide has more than 200 analysts in China who will provide information that the institute will aggregate and disseminate through weekly newsletters. The institute also will provide research on companies for research projects and offer translation for Chinese and U.S. firms.

The institute’s leaders include Bruce Walker, former dean of the Trulaske College of Business; MU finance Professor Stephen Ferris; Alex LaBrunerie, founder of Rising Tide; Zheng Yi, founder of Hangzhou Hexin, China’s largest financial markets information provider; and Philip Abbenhaus, a specialist with 20 years of experience in corporate finance, operations, marketing and sell-side securities analysis.
Missouri State under new leadership

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. -- The new president of Missouri State University takes over the state's second largest public university at a time of financing challenges.

James Cofer is the 10th president of Missouri State University, and begins in the new job Sunday.

The Springfield News Leader reports that the MSU Board of Governors picked the 61-year-old Cofer out of four finalists in May to succeed outgoing president Mike Nietzel.

Cofer will be in charge of MSU's $250 million annual budget at a time when public higher education is faced with challenges. State funding for the institution could drop by 15 percent or more for 2011-2012, and Cofer said he will engage the campus in preparing for the 2011-2012 budget.
On Jan. 9, 1892, the Athenaean Literary Society was just ready to hold its meeting in the east wing of Academic Hall. Suddenly, at 7:15 p.m., the lights in the chapel flared and an enormous, ornate electric chandelier that had been hanging in the center of the room crashed to the floor.

A fire, believed to be the result of inadequate electrical wiring, had apparently started below the library floor and above the ceiling of the chapel.

University of Missouri President Richard Jesse had been reading in his study and was one of the first at the scene. In his utter distress, he exclaimed, “The university is on fire!”

At that time, Columbia’s meager water supply and poor firefighting ability were a poor match for a fire of such magnitude. In the ensuing minutes, students and others were able to save only a few books and some furniture. By 8 p.m., the flames whipped around the columns, and by 8:30 the fire reached the 14,000 rounds of ammunition used by the Cadet Corps, creating an explosion that caused everyone to run for cover.

The dome crashed with a deafening roar, and by 11 p.m. only charred remnants of Academic Hall smoldered.

Only the columns were left standing when the ruins were cleared away, leaving behind a controversy. Were they beautiful or an eyesore? In August, 1893, The university Board of Curators voted to dismantle them, but under the persuasive tactics and leadership of such men as G.B. Rothwell, Gardiner Lathrop, C.M. Woodward and alumni, the board was persuaded to rescind the vote in December and the columns were saved.

Over the years, the Columns have been a symbol of hallowed celebrations at the university, including May Day, Tap Day, mass meetings and student gatherings. Ag students even advertised The Farmer’s Fair with banners stretched between the Columns. And, as was the custom when I graduated in 1939, our procession marched around them.

Kay Dinwiddie, our dear departed friend and wonderful writer, wrote in the Tribune’s book “Images of Our Lives Since 1901” about Mary Polk Jesse, who became her first-grade teacher. “Miss Jesse said her dolls and doll buggy and playhouse furniture were in the attic” of Academic Hall “at the time of the fire. Her father being the president, she spent many hours playing there. I often look at the columns that remain standing on the Francis Quadrangle and see Miss Jesse’s childhood collection of toys at the top.”

At the other end of Eighth Street at Walnut Street, we find the columns from the second courthouse. It was built in 1847 at a cost of $17,093.33 and designed by William Jewell, who served as the architect. In
1909, this structure was torn down to build the present courthouse. Once again, it took more than a little persuasion from historians and others to save the columns.

Over the years, Eighth Street has had many names, including Court Street and Avenue of the Columns. One group even wanted to name it University Street. If you have the opportunity, on a beautiful sunny day, take a moment to stand on Eighth Street between the columns and look to the south where you can see all the beauty of the Columns with their incredible history.

Legend has it the first six presidents of the university were supposedly buried beneath the Columns. Curiously, ivy grew on all but one of the Columns. The explanation? One of the presidents was an atheist!

Recently, workmen, while making repairs on the entrance to the School of Journalism near Elm Street, discovered the original cornerstone from Academic Hall, laid on July 4, 1840. There are plans under way to clean the cornerstone and encase it in a glass container for display in Jesse Hall.

Correction in my column of April 25, 2010: O.R. Rogers coined the name Moon Valley and was the operator of the mushroom business.

If you have stories of Columbia from this era or comments, please send them to daltonjrent2@gmail.com with "Columbia Stories" as the subject or to 1112 Torrey Pines, Columbia, Mo., 65203.
Analysis: Mo. limits life span of state programs

MU MENTION ON p.2

By CHRIS BLANK | Posted: Sunday, August 1, 2010 12:42 pm | No Comments Posted

Just like the state lawmakers who write them, Missouri programs have term limits. And the clock is running low for several of them.

A 2003 state law gives new government programs and tax credits a maximum six-year life span with an option for up to another 12 years if legislation is approved to extend the program.

The automatic program expiration already is wiping out one program, and reviews have started for at least five more that are set to expire next year.

A trust fund for videotaping military veterans' stories ends this year, because lawmakers failed to extend its life. But lawmakers opted to keep the Missouri Higher Education Deposit Program, which also would have expired this year. That program allows banks to set up savings accounts or certificates of deposit to help parents save for their children's college education. Nonetheless, that program will essentially remain on hold because of a decision by federal securities regulators.

Still, the list of program casualties could grow next year.

The Committee on Legislative Research, a joint House and Senate panel, is mulling whether to recommend continuing several programs. They include ones soliciting donations to help military families, offering a tax break for donations to food pantries, creating school pilot programs to encourage kids to be healthy and helping seniors pay for prescription drugs.

Some hope to keep those soon-to-be-departed initiatives around for a while longer.

For example, Missouri food pantries would like to continue the program that awards state tax credits to the donors that help them feed the hungry. Since the program was created by a 2007 law, more than 3,000 taxpayers have received tax credits worth nearly $1.5 million, according to the Missouri Department of Revenue. Because the tax credit is worth half the donation, that means the state's food pantries have received about $3 million in donations.

Scott Baker, the state director for the Missouri Food Bank Association, said need for assistance is high because of the poor economy, and the tax credit has helped to spur donations. He estimated that five people can be fed for every dollar donated.
"There is no doubt we have seen an increase (in donations), and there's no doubt it would hamper donations if it were to sunset," he said.

However, tax credits have become a politically sensitive issue in the state Capitol, and Baker said the group has not yet reached out to specific lawmakers to ask them to extend the life span of the food pantry credit. The Food Bank Association represents food banks, pantries, shelters and kitchens.

A survey released by Feeding America estimated that about 728,000 Missourians received help from emergency food banks last year.

Another program facing potential demise next year is a checkoff box on state income tax returns that allows refunds to be donated to help the families of military guard and reservists called to active duty. The money is awarded through grants and designed to help cover bills and unexpected costs.

If programs do expire, their ideas may live on.

Emerging from the ashes of the veteran videos project is an attempt to turn the initiative over to college students. Lawmakers and other officials hope to enlist journalism students at the University of Missouri-Columbia to replace a Chesterfield-based company that the state paid more than $1 million to produce more than 1,000 videos.

A committee that is working to continue the project despite the loss of state funds has started meeting to figure out how to incorporate the veteran interviews into course work, who should pay for the recording equipment and whether to expand the program to cover veterans from ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

EDITOR'S NOTE _ Chris Blank has covered state government and politics for The Associated Press since 2005