Professor protests class end

Popular online course canceled.

By Janese Silvey

Thursday, August 5, 2010

Greg Engel supports the University of Missouri System’s new focus on developing innovative e-learning options. The thing is, he said, he already had developed a popular online class at MU that has since been canceled because of internal politics.

Greg Engel

"On the one hand, they state a desire for this technology, and on the other hand do everything they can to squelch it," he said.

Engel is the associate engineering professor who secured a $2 million federal earmark for his electromagnetic launcher research and was replaced as lead of the project this spring. The university has maintained that the project was reassigned because Engel was not satisfying administrative requirements, something Engel denies.

Engel has hired an attorney to reclaim the research project. But he also is trying to get administrators to separate the research squabble from his teaching duties at the university.

Engel has taught two online circuit theory classes for five semesters and was anticipating teaching the class this summer. In May, just before the summer semester started, his department chair canceled the classes. Chairman Noah Manring said in an e-mail he was doing so because
Engel would not promise to stop sending abrasive e-mails to “customers” and because of his behavior, including his fight against being replaced as research lead.

Manring did not specify any “customers,” but Engel said he was referring to an exchange between Engel and an instructor from a different engineering department. Engel was upset that the instructor engaged in conversations with some of his students about his class instead of telling the students they should talk directly with Engel.

College of Engineering Dean Jim Thompson in June agreed to talk about the teaching assignments if Engel sought help for work-related stressors and agreed to assist on the research project.

Engel turned down the offer, saying he would not assist in the research without being principal investigator.

Regardless of the research project, Engel said he wants the ability to teach the online circuit theory class, a class he said most students loved. He said he was in the process of “developing a whole series of online courses until Manring decided to take punitive actions against me. He’s trying to hurt me by hurting students.”

Although the university would not comment on the case because of personnel issues, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said it’s not unusual for classes to be canceled, even if students have already enrolled.

“When department chairs routinely monitor classes offered in order to maximize effective and efficient use of the university’s resources,” she said.

When making those decisions, Banken said, chairs take into account student demand, graduation requirements and the availability and capability of faculty and staff to teach the course.

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Gray Summit • They worked through the summer, washing cars and selling candy, to pay for their annual summer trip to Six Flags Over Mid-America. And on Thursday morning, triumphant members of the Red Regiment Band boarded two school buses for the nearly 70-mile trip from their high school in St. James, Mo.

They almost made it.

Just over a dozen miles from their destination, the buses — one loaded with boys, the other with girls — were ensnared in a crash on Interstate 44 that claimed the life of one of their own and the driver of another vehicle.

"They've spent the last two weeks in the hot sun doing their drills getting prepared for this year's program," said Steve Lorts, whose son Taylor suffered minor injuries. "They were going up there to celebrate the end of band camp, to relax and enjoy."

Exactly what happened around 10:15 a.m. remained unclear. Investigators — to include the National Transportation Safety Board — say it could take a couple of weeks to figure it out.

The crash, about 40 miles southwest of St. Louis, drew national news coverage to the drama of one bus sitting atop a large truck tractor, with a mutilated pickup sandwiched between them and a second bus embedded in the back of the first.

Killed in the impact were Jessica Brinker, 15, a member of the John F. Hodge High School band, who sat in the last row of the first bus, and pickup driver Daniel Schatz, 19, who was a reserve quarterback last year at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His father, Dave Schatz, is a Republican candidate for the state House seat in Franklin County.

About 60 people were aboard the buses, with dozens sent to hospitals by med helicopter or charter bus for treatment of injuries or precautionary examinations.

The *nileco* was alone a stretch of I-44, near Gray Summit, where road con...
The president of Climate Express, which owns the truck tractor, said his driver was slowing because of construction-related congestion when he was struck from behind by the pickup. The tractor was not towing a trailer.

The pickup was hit by the first bus, said Tim Laske, president of the trucking company, based in Washington, Mo. Then the second bus rammed the first.

The driver of the first bus—which carried the girls from the band—told investigators she had moved to the left to avoid a vehicle stopped on the right side of the road. She checked her mirrors and was unable to stop in time after realizing the pickup had struck the truck tractor ahead of her, said Missouri Highway Patrol Cpl. Jeff Wilson.

The scene was one of confusion and chaos, as first responders dealt with a wide range of injuries, a large number of victims and gridlocked eastbound traffic.

Erin Hall, of nearby Villa Ridge, said she heard a loud boom shortly after 10 a.m. but didn't think anything of it because of the construction activity. And then she heard screams.

Hall raced to the scene to find dozens of students on the south side of the highway, some lying on the grass and some wandering around, seeking and giving comfort.

"They all looked stunned or shocked," Hall said. "I heard a lot of crying and a lot of yelling."

Kolby Griffith, a student riding on the second bus, said those who weren't seriously hurt moved quickly to "evacuate, get away from the scene."

"We all just played our role," he said. "I was trying to get everyone away from the bus because I could smell gas."

Jim McClelland, of the Meramec Ambulance District, said he was the first emergency worker on the scene. When he arrived, students were working together to get off the buses.

"I was surprised the children on the bus were very calm," he said.

Rescuers set up a triage area to the south, treating the injured and packaging them for transport. A dozen of the students were not hurt.

Those with the more serious injuries were taken to St. John's Mercy Medical Center in Creve Coeur. One of them was then sent by helicopter to St. Louis Children's Hospital, and one was released. The injuries to the remaining four, ages 13-16, were characterized as in the class of abrasions and fractures.

The patient moved to Children's Hospital, identified as a girl, 16, was reported to be in stable condition.
Four other students were taken to St. Clare Health Center in Fenton, where they were treated for minor injuries and released.

The biggest group — three dozen — was sent to Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center in St. Louis. Those youngsters all walked off a bus and into the hospital for evaluation. Officials said only one of them was hospitalized, and that most of the injuries were scrapes, bruises and small cuts.

After the crash, eastbound traffic on I-44 was rerouted for six hours at U.S. Highway 50 to an outer road.

Drivers in the area have been dealing with construction-related congestion for several months. The Missouri Department of Transportation and its contractor, Fred Weber Inc., have closed one lane of I-44 in each direction during off-peak hours to add a third lane, resurface the road and improve drainage.

The work has choked traffic to a single lane in each direction between the Highway 100 exit in Washington and the town of Pacific. Speed limits have been reduced to 50 mph.

Before Thursday, there had been nine fatal accidents since January 2006 on the 14-mile stretch of highway between Highway 50 near Union and Six Flags in Eureka, according to the Highway Patrol database.

The National Transportation Safety Board has sent one its quick-response "go teams," which was expected to arrive Thursday night.

Christine Byers, Cynthia Billhartz Gregorian, Blythe Bernhard, Denise Hollinshead, Todd Frankel, Ken Leiser, Jesse Bogan, J.B. Forbes, Amy Verkamp McCarthy and Laura Black of the Post-Dispatch contributed to this report.
Towns mourn two killed in bus crash

BY MARGARET GILLERMAN • mgillerman@post-dispatch.com > 314-725-6758 AND
JESSE BOGAN • jbogan@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8255 | Posted: Friday, August 6, 2010 12:00 am

ST. JAMES, Mo. • A diminutive 15-year-old with a big, friendly heart and a 19-year-old former high school star quarterback lost their lives in the horrific collision that also injured dozens of band students.

The two - Jessica Brinker of St. James and Daniel Schatz of Sullivan - had endeared themselves to their small towns. On Thursday, the communities seemed more like large families as they mourned, shared hugs and cried.

Jessica's father, Mike Brinker, described his daughter as "beautiful and fun and a straight-A honor roll student."

"She wanted to be a teacher and volunteered in the summertime with kindergartners at grade school where her mother worked," he said as a stream of people came to the Brinker home.

"She's very sweet, very fun-loving and had a strong Catholic faith," he said.

Schatz's high school and college friends expressed their condolences on Facebook and Twitter. He had recently completed his freshman year at the University of Missouri-Columbia, where he had been a walk-on reserve quarterback last season.

"Life is fragile gift," Mizzou quarterback Blaine Gabbert wrote in a Twitter post. "We lost a teammate and a friend. RIP Schatzy."

A prayer service at 6 p.m. at St. James Middle School drew Jessica's friends and community members who filled up the school cafeteria and gymnasium. Jessica was going to be a sophomore.

Jessica, who was killed while sitting at the back of bus carrying the girls in the band, was described as a personable and fun-loving girl with her own sense of style. She liked to wear bright colors. Friends said Jessica was in the color guard and drama.

"She was just amazing," said Richard Smith, 16, who was on one of the buses Thursday.

Jessica was the youngest of four children. Her mother, Marsha, works in the district's elementary school office. Jessica had recently become an aunt for the first time.
Schatz was driving a pickup, flattened in the wreck. He was a standout quarterback at Sullivan High School, earning several "player to watch" accolades and earning second-team All-State recognition in 2008. He led the Sullivan Eagles to the state Class 3 semifinals that year.

He came from a prominent family in the community and Schatz's father, Dave Schatz, is the Republican candidate for the state House seat in Franklin County's 111th District. Schatz won his primary Tuesday. According to Dave Schatz's political website, Daniel is one of five siblings.

On his Facebook page, Schatz said he liked "being outside, hanging out with friends and playing sports" as well as fishing and hunting. He worked when not at school in the family business, Schatz Underground Inc.

He said on Facebook that he was studying business and accounting and planned to graduate college in 2013.

**In Columbia, Mizzou coach Gary Pinkel said he was saddened to hear the news just before the end of Mizzou's first practice and sent prayers to the Schatz family. Mizzou offensive coordinator Dave Yost, who worked directly with Schatz in his role as quarterbacks coach, said it was a hard day and that Schatz was a good guy who wanted to help the team.**

"It's a tragedy," Yost said. "He was a good young man with a bright future in a lot of ways."

Craig Tanner, who had been Schatz's youth pastor at Temple Baptist Church in Sullivan, said the young man was very active in the church.

"He came every Sunday to church and was active in all of our mission programs," said Tanner, who is now associate pastor. "He was always serving and he loved people."

That faith may now serve his family, said Elizabeth Ann Martin, a friend of Schatz.

"He was also part of a God-loving family who always made sure God came first and they know that God can bring them through the hard times," she said.

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Todd Frankel, Amy Verkamp McArthy and Vahe Gregorian, all of the Post-Dispatch, contributed to this report.
GRAY SUMMIT — Ashton Glaser, a redshirt freshman quarterback on the Missouri football team, looked down, shook his head and spoke softly about his friend Daniel Schatz. The first day of preseason practices in the heat of the Missouri summer is tough enough. The news of Schatz’s death made it tougher.

Two buses carrying high school band students to an amusement park Thursday slammed into a freeway wreck that happened right in front of them, crushing a pickup truck and killing its driver, as well as one of the students. Dozens of other students were treated for injuries.

The driver of the pickup truck was identified as 19-year-old Schatz, a former walk-on quarterback for the Missouri football team. Schatz, from Sullivan, joined the Tigers as a freshman in 2009 and left the team after 2010 spring practices, according to Chad Moller, the director of media relations for the MU athletics department. Schatz transferred from MU to Westminster College in Fulton after the academic year.

Word of Schatz's death reached his former coaches and teammates at the end of the team's first preseason practice Thursday.

Glaser knew Schatz well. He, like Schatz, had redshirted last season as a quarterback.

"I'm shocked," Glaser said. "When I found out, my heart kind of dropped."

Glaser said he and Schatz were warm-up partners, paired together to play catch before games and practices.
"He's just a great guy," Glaser said. "I feel horrible. He would have done anything for anybody."

"I'm just shocked," he said. "He drives a big truck, too. That's what really shocked me. It had to be brutal. I can't imagine."

Tigers quarterback Blaine Gabbert called the news of Schatz's death "horrendous."

The wreck near Gray Summit, about 40 miles west of St. Louis, happened when the pickup truck rear-ended a semi cab that had slowed down because it was nearing a construction zone, state police said. The first bus, which was carrying female band members from John F. Hodge High School in St. James, slammed into the back of the pickup, then was launched on top of it after it was rear-ended by the second bus, State Highway Patrol Cpl. Jeff Wilson said.

Kolby Griffith, 17, said he was chatting with a friend on the second bus when it crashed.

"It was all very, very quick," Griffith said. "I was trying to get away, trying to get everyone away from the bus because I could smell gas."

One student was also killed in the collision, Cpl. Jeff Wilson of the Missouri State Highway Patrol said. At least 42 other students were taken to hospitals. Most had injuries not considered life-threatening.

Many of them were at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center in St. Louis when they were called into a room and informed of the death of their bandmate, 15-year-old Jessica Brinker of St. James.

"There's a lot of pain," Griffith said, choking back tears.

The students were on their way to a Six Flags amusement park some 10 miles from the crash site.
"My goodness. You send your children off to Six Flags, you don't expect this to happen," Missouri State Highway Patrol Sgt. Dan Crain said. "Being parents, we cannot imagine how difficult this is."

Joy Tucker, the superintendent of the St. James school system, said the 3,700-resident town — known for its wineries, natural splendor and trout fishing in nearby Maramec Spring Park — was devastated.

"It's been a horrible, horrible day in our community, and we'll never get over this," Tucker said.

"Anytime you have something like this, it is big tragedy for a community," echoed Dennis Wilson, the mayor of St. James. He described the community as "one of those towns where you know just about everyone in town and know their kids," including the nearly 600 children who attend Hodge high school.

Ashley Wiehle, a spokeswoman for Cardinal Glennon, said 36 students were taken to that hospital, and that they appeared to be in good condition. They were to be examined as a precaution, Wiehle said.

Bethany Pope, a spokeswoman for St. John's Mercy Medical Center in suburban St. Louis, said six victims were sent there. One of them was later transferred to St. Louis Children's Hospital; the other five were discharged Thursday afternoon.

Jackie Ferman, a spokeswoman for the Children's Hospital, said an injured 16-year-old St. James girl was in stable condition and was being assessed by hospital staff.

Four other victims were taken with minor injuries to St. Clare Health Center in Fenton, a spokeswoman said.

Highway Patrol Cpl. Jeff Wilson said the driver of the first bus moved into the passing lane to give a distressed vehicle in the shoulder more room. She was
checking her rearview mirror while returning to the right-hand lane when she noticed the first impact but could not stop in time, hitting the pickup. The second bus then rear-ended the first, vaulting the first bus onto the top of the pickup, which was crushed.

The buses were segregated by gender, with girls in the first and boys on the other, Wilson said.

The pickup was barely recognizable in the tangled wreckage. Hours later, crews using a crane gently lifted the buses off of the crushed wreckage to try to clear the freeway, which was closed going eastbound. Traffic backed up in that direction for as much as 10 miles.

Wilson said it was too soon to say if any of the drivers would face charges.

A spokeswoman for the National Transportation Safety Board said a team of 14 investigators will look into the accident and try to determine if there's a broader safety issue.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*
COLUMBIA — Some of the construction at MU is expected to be finished by the time most students start moving back into residence halls Aug. 18.

Construction projects over the summer have closed parts of Rollins, Hitt and Sixth streets, as well as part of Conley Avenue and all of Pershing Drive. “Most of these projects, the streets will not be affected at all by the time the students get back,” Campus Facilities spokeswoman Karlan Seville said. "They're mostly wrapping up by Aug. 15."

The city is scheduled to pave Rollins Street next week. Renovation on Hudson Hall and Rollins Dining Hall is complete, and the buildings have been returned to the Division of Student Affairs to prepare them for an Aug. 10 open house, Seville said.

The Aug. 15 construction deadline applies to both Campus Facilities’ work and the city’s road paving after that construction is completed. Although Campus Facilities expects to finish projects on time, students will be able to move in regardless of the road situation.

“The city made it clear that they would always have at least one lane of traffic open at all times,” Seville said.

There will be some residual utility work on the north side of Conley Avenue near Maryland Avenue. The sidewalk will be rerouted, but both lanes of the road will be open.

“Obviously, there will still be construction on campus; it just won’t impact the roads as badly as it has this summer," Seville said. "We needed to get as much done as possible this summer while the students were away.”
Switzler Hall remains under renovation until summer 2011. The sidewalks around it have been altered, especially inconveniencing students with disabilities, Seville said. Their route takes a little longer now, she said.

Cramer and Stafford halls will be demolished beginning Aug. 23, the first day of classes, as part of University Hospital’s Patient Care Tower construction. The area they cover will be used to build new entrances to Ellis Fischel Cancer Center and Pershing Commons, some parking spaces and open green space.

Part of the new student center will also remain under construction, but Campus Facilities has been working with the Division of Student Affairs to prepare the building for its open house on Homecoming weekend in October.

Tate Hall remains under renovation until spring 2011, and Gillett Hall won’t be finished until fall semester 2011.
Possible pact between Google, Verizon would create Internet class system

By SCOTT CANON

8/6/10

The all-data-travels-coach ethos that has long ruled the Internet could be making way for business class.

Google reportedly is on the brink of an alliance with Verizon Communications Inc. that would give priority to a particular class of Internet traffic. It would pose a significant challenge to the current egalitarian flow of bits, bytes and terabytes over broadband connections.

Analysts, telecommunications firms and consumer groups say the pact, the first between a content provider, Google, and a broadband carrier, Verizon, would be a turning point in the debate over so-called net neutrality.

Those who’ve been briefed on the Google-Verizon negotiations say the deal would establish a model for cable and phone companies that paves an Internet express lane. That digital road would be reserved for Internet traffic created by businesses that pay an extra toll so their content would move faster. Various news agencies reported that a finished deal is just days away.

Now, the sometimes gridlocked lanes of data uploading and downloading across the Internet all move with the same right of way — a report from Library of Congress holding no preference over posts from any random blogger.

“The question is: ‘Do we want everybody to have equal access to the Internet?’ That’s pretty much what we have right now,” said Sandy Davidson, who teaches communications law at the University of Missouri. “I don’t think we want people who have bigger checkbooks (to) determine what goes to the head of the line on the Internet.”

Publicly, Google denied any such deal is imminent. A spokesman for the Internet search leader referred to a Twitter post from Google’s public policy team Thursday saying “we’ve not had any (talks) with (Verizon) about paying for carriage of our traffic. We remain committed to an open Internet.”
The spokesman also cited a June 16 company blog post spelling out Google’s view on net neutrality — where the firm said it opposed “building a new ‘fast lane’ online that consigns (some) Internet content and applications to a relatively slow, bandwidth-starved portion of the broadband connection.”

Verizon also denied a deal is in the works. “Our goal is an Internet policy framework that ensures openness and accountability, and incorporates specific FCC authority, while maintaining investment and innovation,” a Verizon statement said. “To suggest this is a business arrangement between our companies is entirely incorrect.”

Yet one person who was briefed on talks between Verizon and Google, Art Brodsky of the consumer group Public Knowledge, said that while any deal remains fuzzy, it would involve Internet priority for a price.

He sees it as a sharp turnaround for Google.

“On a practical level, you’ve got the biggest Internet company and biggest phone company skipping up to Congress and saying, ‘See, we’ve reached a deal,’ ” Brodsky said.

He was briefed on the matter because Public Knowledge was part of ongoing talks orchestrated by the Federal Communications Commission between large phone, cable and Internet companies and consumer groups. They have been searching for a compromise on how to regulate Internet traffic.

On Thursday, in the wake of the reported Google-Verizon deal, the FCC abandoned efforts to broker a compromise. That left a hazy view of how the Obama administration might move on the issue.

“We have called off this round of stakeholder discussions,” FCC Chief of Staff Edward Lazarus said in a statement. “It has been productive on several fronts, but has not generated a robust framework to preserve the openness and freedom of the Internet. ... All options remain on the table.”

FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski has said he wants rules that would require phone and cable companies to treat all broadband traffic the same.

A coalition of consumer groups and the online phone service Skype contends that net neutrality would keep Internet service providers from acting as judges over what data and applications deserve the fastest delivery.

They worry that cable or phone companies might put one type of Web transaction — say Hulu or YouTube video — on a faster route at the expense of others. That could slow or even block services like online phone calls or video offered by less well-heeled companies.
In contrast, phone and cable firms note they’ve been investing billions in their networks to make broadband more available and reliable. Regulations from the federal government over how they use those networks, they say, could stifle innovation by denying a possible stream of revenue.

The telecommunications industry was largely mum about news of a possible Google-Verizon pact. The two have found great success together with the unleashing last fall of Google’s Android operating system for the smartest web-surfing phones. Besides giving a challenge to Apple’s iPhone exclusive to AT&T’s wireless network, the Android is seen as a way to radically expand uses of the Internet on wireless devices.

Overland Park-based Sprint Nextel Corp. has filed comments with the FCC saying “marketplace forces are the best tool ... to promote innovation and investment in broadband and to ensure an open, consumer friendly Internet.”

A Washington-based spokesman for Sprint said the company has not taken a specific position on whether the FCC should regulate the sale of priority lanes on the Internet.

AT&T released a statement saying it was “disappointed that the net neutrality talks convened by the FCC have broken down. ... We put a number of significant concessions on the table and, despite today’s setback, remain convinced that a consensus solution can be achieved.”
Missouri medical school opens new training sites in Lebanon, Maryville, West Plains

By Associated Press

4:01 AM CDT, August 6, 2010

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A group of University of Missouri medical students will soon descend upon three new communities as part of a rural training program for future physicians.

The new training sites will be located in Lebanon, Maryville and West Plains.

Twenty-one students will spend up to six months training in those towns in the coming academic year. They'll be mentored by local doctors.

The university now has Area Health Education Centers in Poplar Bluff, Rolla, St. Joseph and Springfield.