Which of the following locations does not qualify as a typical vacation destination?: A) Hawaii, B) Europe, C) the Caribbean, or D) Tornado Alley?

The answer, of course, is "D." But not so fast. An increasing number of people are spending their vacations in Tornado Alley, in the Midwestern United States, to witness up-close one of nature’s most powerful and dramatic weather events.

Researchers with the University of Missouri label them "Tornado Tourists" and recently profiled them as part of a study that entailed interviews with this unique breed of vacationers and their guides, who charge up to $5,000, besides food and motel costs, for van or SUV tours that can last two weeks.

"With the help of movies like `Twister,` storm-chasing has become an international phenomenon," Carla Barbieri, one of the researchers, said in reference to the 1996 disaster movie, starring Helen Hunt and Bill Paxton.

Barbieri partnered with colleague Sonja Wilhelm Stanis in the study, which found that Tornado Tourists are attracted by the risk associated with being delivered so close in proximity to potentially deadly and unpredictable tornadoes, but also the raw, natural beauty of severe weather events.

The guides, who have developed a seasonal industry that lasts through the spring and into summer, are generally meteorologists or veteran storm chasers, who operate between three and 10 tours a season. Nearly two dozen tour operators cover an area from mid-Texas northward into Kansas, Minnesota and Canada.

During the 2009 study period, more than half of their clients were from the U.S., but nearly a third came from Europe; 13% were from Canada and 11% were from Australia. (The 2010 storm-chasing season recently concluded.)

Most of these tourists were male, middle-aged and single, earned higher-than-average incomes, and did not have children.

By and large, they were satisfied with their experiences, even though only one-third actually got to witness a tornado.

Half of the clients saw a funnel cloud nearly all of them reported seeing a significant atmospheric event, which might include lightening and hail.

"Although tornado tourism is a small niche
market, the market continues to grow with help from television shows and movies," Wilhelm Stanis said. "Storm-chasing tours continue to develop as part of the Midwest's tourism scene, with tours filling up as much as a year in advance."

The researchers did not mention whether any of the Tornado Tourists have injured or killed by tornadoes.

Mike Meadows, a professional photographer who for the past five seasons has accompanied experts in pursuit of tornado-producing storms, said in an interview that he has witnessed the growth of the tornado tourism industry firsthand, and added that not all storm chasers are part of organized tours.

During a recent pursuit of a severe storm in southern Kansas, Meadows and his group were chasing the disturbance at 65 mph on a rain-soaked road. "We counted 77 chasers that passed us going at least 90 mph," Meadows said.

The photographer added that the storm stalled, as his group had anticipated, and it was the group that saw what the overly-eager chasers had missed by driving too fast: the spawning of two tornadoes.

-- Top photo courtesy of Mike Meadows. Bottom photo courtesy of Cloud 9 Tours
Hit the gym to maintain health gains

ANI, Sep 23, 2010, 02.14pm IST

Putting on the pounds after weight loss? Well, you need to hit the gym, suggests a new study.

Although obesity is a major risk factor for disease, much of the threat may be associated with the metabolic (or cardiometabolic) syndrome, a cluster of risk factors related to diabetes and heart disease. Losing weight can improve health and reduce many of these risk factors. However, many people struggle to keep the weight off long-term.

Now, researchers at the University of Missouri have found that people who perform resistance training while regaining weight can help maintain strides in reducing their risks for chronic disease.

"Long-term weight loss maintenance is uncommon without regular exercise," said Shana Warner, a doctoral student in the MU Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology.

"It is very important to address other things that can be done to maintain health as opposed to focusing solely on body weight. Our research indicates that following a consistent exercise program can help maintain certain aspects of metabolic health, even in those who experience weight regain," Warner added.

Researchers found that resistance training during weight regain has a positive effect on health, which can reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease and other diseases.

The study consisted of two phases, meant to simulate real-life weight loss and regain. In the first phase, overweight and obese participants lost 4 to 6 per cent of their initial body weight by following an eight to 12-week regimen of diet and aerobic exercise.

In the second phase, participants regained 50 per cent of the weight they had lost. During the regain phase, participants performed 45 minutes of supervised resistance training three times each week.

Researchers found that weight training during weight regain has a positive effect on health, which can reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease and other diseases. Participants maintained improvements acquired through weight loss in cardiorespiratory fitness, body fat percentage, systolic blood pressure and other factors.

In addition, participants significantly increased strength and lean body mass. However, they did not maintain reductions in visceral abdominal fat: the fat deposited around internal organs.
This study furthers research completed earlier this year, in which MU researchers found that participation in aerobic exercise while regaining weight counters many of the risk factors associated with chronic diseases. These studies are some of the first to consider the effects of exercise on people's health who regain weight they recently lost.

The study was published this year in *The Journal of Clinical Hypertension*. 
Funding woes at heart of UM curators' concerns

By Josh Barone, Walker Moskop
September 23, 2010 | 9:46 p.m. CDT

SPRINGFIELD — At its meeting Thursday, the UM System's governing body returned to one perpetual issue: funding.

The system's president and top human resources administrator began the meeting by fielding questions from the Board of Curators about the objectives of creating a new retirement plan.

At the issue's heart is how the system could move from its current pension-based plan to a different one, based on employee contributions. The Missourian previously has reported on the two plans in depth.

In creating objectives for the new retirement plan, the administration has been working "tirelessly" to listen to employee concerns, UM President Gary Forsee told the board.

Meetings on campuses with Betsy Rodriguez, UM vice president of human resources, are providing faculty and staff input. Those meetings will continue through October, Rodriguez said.

Any new retirement plan, which likely would take effect in 2012, would apply only to new employees. Some faculty and staff have argued that the change's short-term costs could jeopardize their pensions.

“Our challenge will be to design the plan so as not to have an unintended consequence for existing employees and retirees,” Forsee said. “And we think that is possible.”

In an effort to save the system money, Curator John Carnahan suggested trimming the benefits offered under the current plan. Rodriguez acknowledged it as an option but said it would not be in the best interest of employees.
Thrown into the discussion was a recommendation from Curator David Wasinger that the system look into outsourcing its retirement plan to the Missouri State Employees' Retirement System, or MOSERS.

"The board frankly does not have the time to devote to all of these issues," Wasinger said about the system's administration crafting a new retirement plan.

The agency has the "breadth and expertise and manpower to address a large retirement fund as it does with other colleges and universities within the state of Missouri," he said. "It's my understanding that many other states have a similar process in which the statewide retirement fund is managed as opposed to having a standalone defined benefits plan within the university itself."

Wasinger had not mentioned the idea to the other curators before the meeting and said he would like them to "digest and analyze" it for future discussion.

"There may be issues or problems that I haven't thought about," Wasinger said.

The curators plan to continue discussion on the matter at a special meeting in November, and Rodriguez expects to present a proposal to them at their December meeting in St. Louis.

**Facilities proposals**

To take advantage of historically low interest rates, UM wants to borrow $190 million to finance several proposed projects, including the renovation of a residence hall and the construction of a chilled water plant at MU, said Nikki Krawitz, UM vice president of finance and administration.

"At this point in time, we don't have alternative ways to finance these buildings," she said. "It would perhaps be a mistake to pass up the opportunity to take advantage of (low interest rates)."

The debt would be issued at an interest rate of about 3.25 to 3.5 percent, she said.

Some of the money for the proposed projects could come from Build America Bonds, which are 35 percent federally subsidized. Krawitz said because the current bond
subsidy expires Dec. 31, the system would like the board to approve the projects early that month.

She said for several of the proposals, debt would be repaid by revenues generated from sources such as student housing fees, parking fees and energy-cost savings.

Although several of the curators agreed now is a great time to take advantage of low interest rates, they were hesitant to consider approving projects that don’t generate their own revenues, as is the case with some academic buildings.

“We’ve got to have a dedicated revenue stream that we know is going to pay off,” Curator Don Downing said.

Forsee acknowledged the board would have to assess the risk of projects that don’t produce natural revenue.

“We’ve been encouraging campus leaders to think outside the box about creating a revenue stream or finding partners to share space in a building,” he said.

The board agreed to discuss the matter at a later date.

Financial aid shortfalls

Although UM’s financial aid grew from 2005 to 2009, funding shortfalls could cut a major Missouri grant by more than half by fiscal year 2012, Krawitz told the curators.

Access Missouri, a taxpayer-funded grant that in fiscal year 2010 gave an average of $1,383 to 8,919 students, is projected to be so underfunded in fiscal year 2012 it would only be able to provide $549 per student, Krawitz said.

Gov. Jay Nixon earlier this year announced $50 million in cuts to the grant program, which $30 million from the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority helped to offset. The loan authority’s funding is finite, however, and might not be able to aid the program in the future, Krawitz said.

“We’re concerned, because we think students are borrowing at close to their maximum level of eligibility,” Krawitz said. “Therefore they’re going to have to look for alternative means ... or their parents will have to help them with additional loans.”
On the plus side, UM's change in demographics from 2005 to 2009 reflects a growing likelihood that new students can pay tuition without aid.

In fiscal year 2009, there were 14,954 UM students with need-based aid — a 1.5 percent change over five years — while 6,101 students could pay in full without aid — an increase from 5,366 in fiscal year 2005, or 15.4 percent.

“So while enrollments increase, the increase is in students who can pay,” Krawitz said.

The board's meeting will continue Friday morning with an executive decision and votes on many discussion points from Thursday's committee meetings.
Board of Curators discusses employee benefits, retirement plan

The reform to health care law resulted in expansion of the UM system's coverage.

By Jared Grafman

Published Sept. 24, 2010

The UM system Board of Curators met Thursday in Springfield to continue discussion of the employee benefits and retirement plan and other subjects.

An employee retirement plan project update was presented by Betsy Rodriguez, UM system vice president for Human Relations.

During the presentation, Rodriguez said the UM system medical plan doesn't look too different from plans at most universities across the country in the sense that employees and the UM system will see an additional 13 percent increase in expenses. The UM system will maintain its current 73-27 split between the system and faculty in paying for medical expenses and will also share in the additional cost from the increase.

There are many reasons for the increase to the medical plan, Rodriguez said. The first reason is simply an increase in medical costs occurring across the country. The second reason is there is more utilization on the plan than was available in previous years.

"I'm particularly concerned about it in some areas we think are preventable," Rodriguez said. "We would like to start taking a really deep dive into some wellness issues and trying to do some wellness incentives with our campuses."

Rodriguez said there is already a pilot program at the Missouri University of Science and Technology.

State mandates also increased costs, and health care reform required the UM system to expand its definition of dependent children.

But there will be no increases in costs of other health care plans, including dental, Rodriguez said. The UM system has a new provider network that Rodriguez said she believes will reduce costs to employees who use the new provider.

UM system President Gary Forsee introduced the presentation of the retirement plan project to the Board of Curators.
The UM system conducted a review of employee preferences about their benefits last year across the university system, Forsee said.

"Betsy and her staff and I have worked tirelessly to communicate and listen to employee concerns about benefits," Forsee said. "The presentation this afternoon is with the Board of Curators as the principal and primary audience, but we have invited employees across the system to listen in, in order that they can stay abreast of the discussions we are having with the Board of Curators."

Forsee said discussion of employee benefits will continue throughout the next several months as data is presented.

"Two years ago we took a very decisive action, having employees contribute to the pitch and plan," Forsee said. "We did that as a further mitigation action, attempting to ensure our plan, as it has historically, remain fully funded."

The primary objective for presenting the retirement plan project was to give updates made to the project and to take an inventory of questions to research and report back to the Board of Curators committee during the November meeting.

The Finance Committee met after the Compensation and Human Resources Committee, according to the Board of Curators agenda. A Financial Aid Report was presented in addition to the Endowment and Retirement Fund Performance Annual Report and other business.

The Academic, Student and External Affairs committee was the last committee to meet. An update on the rank of MU's law school was discussed before the committee adjourned.

The Board of Curators will be called to order again at 8 a.m. Friday. Several reports will be heard, including addresses from chancellors of the four system universities.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

The Jungle tailgating spot opens to all students

By Cherish Grimm
September 23, 2010 | 5:46 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — MU's desolate student tailgating spot will undergo changes this weekend to increase participation.

The Jungle will be open to all students Saturday when the Tigers take on Miami University of Ohio. Previously, only student organizations could reserve the lot.

Tim Noce, president of the Missouri Student Association, said the new rules are meant to welcome more students to the tailgate.

“We know not all student organizations are socially driven,” Noce said. “The lot is still open to organizations, but we are widening the spectrum.”

Turnout for The Jungle was low for the Tigers' first two home games. There was also confusion about the rules since it was a school-associated event.

“Some thought alcohol wasn’t allowed and that’s not true,” Noce said. “There is not much that separates this tailgate from the others.”

Other changes going into effect this weekend include:

- One car will be allowed on the lot per organization. Previously, no cars were allowed.
- Glass is still not allowed, but courtesy cups will be provided for tailgaters who have beverages in glass containers.
- Wristbands are not mandatory. Wristbands entitle the people wearing them to some of the perks such as games and food at the tailgate, but they are not required to enter.
Even with the expected increase in attendance, MU Police Captain Brian Weimer said police will not change how they patrol The Jungle.

"There is still the same number of spaces," Weimer said.

The changes won't alter the original goal of making The Jungle a safe and fun tailgate for students, but Noce said he hopes the changes will move the tailgate lot in a positive direction.

“Although we have seen an increase in the weeks since starting The Jungle, we really hope this gets students going and geared up to reserve spots for conference games.”

Spots can be reserved for all remaining home games at the Information Desk in the Center for Student Involvement on the second floor of the Student Center.
Biological Sciences professor wins $100,000 award for research

He was one of 10 recipients and the first at MU.

By Allison Prang

Published Sept. 24, 2010

MU Biological Sciences professor Fred vom Saal was named one of 2010's 10 recipients of the Heinz Award this week.

The Heinz Awards are awarded by the Heinz Family Philanthropies to people based on their contributions to the areas of arts and humanities, environment, human condition, public policy, technology, economy and employment, according to the Heinz Awards website. Recipients are also awarded $100,000.

Vom Saal received the award for his scientific research on the chemical bisphenol A (BPA) and its detrimental effects on humans' body systems, especially babies.

"Because he established health problems linked to exposure to chemicals at levels that had previously been thought safe and it really will turn some of the regulatory policies upside down," Heinz Awards Director Kim O'Dell. "It was a big shock to a lot of the research community."

BPA can be especially dangerous for the fetus during pregnancy, because BPA can get through the placenta and become trapped in the fetus, harming the child.

"What happened about 15 years ago is that we stumbled onto the fact that a chemical that is used in a huge number of different products is able to cause harm at exposure amounts that the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and FDA (Food and Drug Administration) had assumed were completely safe," vom Saal said. "And the way that we went about testing for harm of this chemical was not the way that had been used by people working in the field of toxicology looking for toxic effects of chemicals."

Vom Saal said the amount of BPA he and his research team found that causes harm was 25,000 times lower than what toxicologists had studied, which he said is not a tiny error in estimating safety.

The BPA manufacturing industries first tried to bribe vom Saal and his research team so they wouldn't publish what they had found when vom Saal presented the team's findings at a meeting.
Vom Saal said the chemical industry hired people to write articles personally attacking his team’s research as well.

“There’s evidence that they were following me around, going through my garbage, doing anything possible to discredit me, and none of it worked because ultimately in science you are vindicated or shown to be wrong based on whether other scientists can confirm or not confirm your findings,” vom Saal said. “And now there is just a massive amount of information that the basic ideas that we proposed are right.”

Vom Saal said after he and his research team discovered the dangers of BPA, he spent time trying to promote reform in chemical regulatory agencies to help make their products safer for human use.

As far as what he is planning to do with the $100,000 award, vom Saal said it will help pay for his business travels, including his trips to help promote reform in chemical regulatory agencies.

“When you get an award like this, it makes it easier to do things like go to meetings and have the message that there is a problem given greater credibility,” vom Saal said. “A lot of the things that I do, I pay for. No one pays me to talk with decision makers.”

Venkateshwaran Ganjam, an MU researcher in the division of biological sciences, said he has worked with vom Saal in the past and his accomplishment is excellent for MU.

“It’s a real feather in the cap of Dr. vom Saal and it really puts the University of Missouri on the map because it’s such an important topic right now because of all the dangers we are facing with this compound BPA, which is heavily used in the plastic industry,” Ganjam said.

Julia Taylor, a research assistant professor in biological science, worked with vom Saal studying the effects of BPA.

“I think it makes the department look very good,” Taylor said. "It’s always great when something like this happens to someone at MU."
Washington makes first court appearance

Photo by Joshua A. Bickel | Buy this photo

Former University of Missouri running back Derrick Washington, right, walks out of the courtroom with his attorney, Christopher Slusher, left, after his bond hearing at the Boone County Courthouse.

By Dave Matter

Published September 23, 2010 at 11:16 a.m.
Updated September 23, 2010 at 11:27 a.m.

Appearing in court this morning for the first time since being charged in separate assault incidents, former Missouri running back Derrick Washington had his bond increased on one charge, requiring he briefly be taken into custody.
Washington is charged with felony deviate sexual assault from an incident on June 19 and two counts of misdemeanor domestic assault from an incident on Sept. 12. Wearing a black pinstriped suit and white tie, Washington arrived at the courthouse with his parents, Donald and Sarah Washington.

Boone County assistant prosecutor Andrea Hayes filed a motion to increase Washington’s bonds for all charges, from $4,500 to $25,000 for the felony charge and from $1,000 to $5,000 apiece for the misdemeanors.

Associate Circuit Judge Deborah Daniels denied the motion to raise the felony bond but stipulated that Washington must appear in person at every court appearance.

Daniels granted the request to increase the bond for the domestic assault charges and ordered that Washington have no contact with the alleged victims in either case and not consume or possess any intoxicants. She also warned him not to violate any laws, including speeding tickets.

“You need to be responsible for not having any contact with law enforcement,” she told him.

Washington was briefly taken into custody but posted bond at the courthouse shortly after the hearing.

Arguing that Washington was not a flight risk, his attorney, Chris Slusher, told the judge Washington has moved back home to Kansas City with his parents and that he has attended several counseling sessions. Slusher also told Daniels that Washington is pursuing his education at a different school.

A preliminary hearing was set for 2 p.m. Nov. 5. The prosecution will subpoena witnesses for that hearing, during which the charges will be handled separately.

Reach Dave Matter at 573-815-1781 or e-mail dmatter@columbiatribune.com.
MU police report rise in burglary arrests

Thursday, September 23, 2010

University of Missouri police statistics for 2009 show burglary, drug and alcohol arrests have increased since 2007.

The information released yesterday, which includes off-campus calls for service, shows burglary arrests have increased by nearly 41 percent, liquor law violations by nearly 40 percent and drug law violations by 74 percent. Weapons law violations increased from five arrests in 2007 to nine arrests in 2009, and forcible sex offenses increased from three arrests in 2007 to six arrests in 2009.

Robbery and aggravated assault arrests were idle, and motor vehicle thefts and arson slightly decreased.

On-campus statistics show slight variations in most categories except burglary, alcohol and drug offenses. Burglary decreased by 18 percent since 2007, and liquor law violations were down by 15 percent, but drug law violations increased 7 percent. Hate crimes decreased, from seven arrests in 2007 to four arrests in 2009.

These numbers are not the same as Uniform Crime Report statistics that are reported to the state.
UT warns students of online stalker

Scam uses Facebook to make threats, school officials say

By Matt Lakin

Friday, September 24, 2010

Michele Jensen is not your friend, and she doesn't have dirt on you - not yet, anyway.

University of Tennessee officials say a Facebook stalker contacted some Knoxville students this week as part of what appears to be a nationwide scam aimed at sorority pledges. In the two local cases, the person used the online name "Michele Jensen" and claimed to be a UT graduate.

"It's very odd," UT Police Chief Gloria Graham said Thursday. "This person friends these young ladies, and they accept. Then the person starts saying, 'I have photos of you I'm going to post on the Internet if you don't chat with me.' What they do from there is ask the person to get on Skype and video-chat."

The students didn't follow instructions. Police got the first report on Monday and the second on Tuesday, the chief said.

UT officials sent out an e-mail Wednesday warning students about the scheme.

"We just wanted to be pre-emptive," said Tim Rogers, vice chancellor for student affairs. "It's very much like identity theft. You have to be very careful with whom you share information online."

Other colleges across the country, including Auburn University in Alabama and the University of Missouri at Columbia, have reported the same activity in the same time period, the chief said.

"We've stumbled across a number of them," she said. "In our case, they used Skype and Facebook, but there may be other social media used."

Columbia police said their stalker used the same name and demanded to chat with a student on Yahoo! Messenger. That student reported the threats Sept. 10.

"Nothing serious happened, but it could have led to something menacing," police spokeswoman Jessie Haden said.
The stalker - whether female or otherwise - apparently timed the messages to coincide with the fall rush at UT and other schools and claimed to have the inside track to membership in a sorority.

"She never names the sorority," said Graham, the UT police chief. "It appears to have been a random selection as far as we can tell. They're just throwing something around to see if it sticks. We're guessing there are others out there who probably got the request and just ignored it because it was from someone they didn't know."

Facebook lists more than 130 members using the name "Michele Jensen." Graham said UT police investigators haven't been able to trace the messages so far.

She said the university hasn't asked the FBI to assist with the case yet but hasn't ruled out that possibility.

Matt Lakin may be reached at 865-342-6306.
MU hosts first Celebrate Ability Week

Organizers hope to change the public view of disabilities.

By Jimmy Hibsch

Published Sept. 24, 2010

MU will host its first Celebrate Ability Week next week, 20 years after the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act, which prohibits discrimination based on disabilities.

Celebrate Ability Week is a collection of events intended to change the public's view of disabilities, Great Plains ADA Center Specialist Troy Balthazor said.

"This week is about celebrating ability, certainly not disability," Balthazor said. "I think it's important for our university community to show support for people with disabilities at Mizzou. It's just an opportunity to experience something you haven't experienced before."

Disability Services Director Barbara Hammer said she is anxious to learn the results of the week, as she sees it as an opportunity to dissolve any ignorance regarding disability.

"What we want is for people to start viewing disability different, because disability should not be viewed as a problem or something that limits people," she said. "We want people to really see the environment in which we live as the thing that needs to be adjusted, not the people."

Events range from a Tiger Wheelchair basketball open house Monday to 10 forums and seminars held throughout Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Planning for the week's festivities has been an extended and rigorous process, Balthazor said.

"The idea's been floating around out there for a while," he said. "It certainly wasn't my original idea. It was something that a number of people around campus had considered doing. I saw what I thought was a good idea and tried to run with it, and with a lot of support from students, staff and faculty at Mizzou, we've been very successful in getting it off the ground."

More than 10 organizations collaborated to make the week possible, Hammer said.

"It has been a really good mutual effort," she said. "We've got a lot of folks on board with us."

The Missouri Students Association is responsible for Wednesday's screening of "Murderball," a documentary following paraplegics who play full-contact rugby. The star of the film, Mark Zupan, will share his story following the presentation.
The week will end with a universally designed presentation of the comedy "Date Night," which accommodates anyone interested in watching.

"If you are blind and you want to watch and enjoy a movie, there is a voiceover that describes what is going on in a movie when no dialogue is going on," Hammer said. "As you're sitting there not seeing the film, you can still follow what's going on."

ADA Coordinator Lee Henson said intermingling between students with and without disabilities is an intended outcome of next week.

"It's very important that students with and without disabilities get to know one another," he said. "Participating in these events provides them with an opportunity to have a really good learning experience."

Balthazor said Celebrate Ability Week is just one method of working toward a more inclusive experience at MU.

"The goal is for people with disabilities to have an inclusive experience attending the University of Missouri," he said. "We have a responsibility to provide an accessible experience for the people who are here at Mizzou and for the people who want to be here in the future because we are accessible and we are welcoming."

Hammer said she hopes next week will empower students with disabilities.

"This just gives a chance to showcase a lot of positive things that are associated with disabilities and ways that people can access programs and services and participate in life just like the rest of us," she said.

Although this is MU's first time hosting Celebrate Ability Week, Hammer said it is certainly not the last. "I'm calling this the first annual," Hammer said. "We're going to try to do this next year."
Area pharmaceutical firm signs deal on developing treatment for dogs with cancer

J-W Staff Reports

September 23, 2010

An area pharmaceutical firm has signed a deal with the University of Missouri in hopes of developing a drug to treat cancer in dogs.

Lawrence-based CritiTech Inc. has reached an agreement with the Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine to study whether its drug Nanotax can be used in canines.

CritiTech, 1321 Wakarusa Drive, has long been developing Nanotax to treat cancer in human patients. But the company also believes the drug has potential for veterinary use. The deal with the University of Missouri will allow veterinarians to begin testing different dosage levels on dogs.

CritiTech leaders expect the study to take about 18 months to complete.
Cotton Summit teaches attendees about sustainability

Cotton is natural, renewable and biodegradable.

By Megan Swieca

Published Sept. 24, 2010

The Textile and Apparel Management department hosted the Sustainable Cotton Summit on Tuesday and Wednesday in the Donald W. Reynolds Alumni Center. Industry professionals spoke on sustainability in textiles, specifically cotton, at each of the seven sessions.

Co-organizer and TAM assistant professor Jung Ha-Brookshire said an estimated 150 to 200 people attended each of the sessions.

Many of the attendees were TAM students who were required to attend one session for each TAM class in which they were enrolled.

"Students have the chance to be exposed to this type of perspective, beyond organic, a more balanced view," she said.

The sessions explored the cotton industry from three different perspectives: as a fiber, product and the incorporation of the consumer. Among others, attendees heard from cotton farmers, small businesses and large corporations about their efforts toward sustainability.

"It was cool to hear about the statistics and the grower’s perspective," senior TAM major Lynnette Yarger said. "I didn’t even know that there were cotton farmers in southern Missouri."

Cotton farmers spoke on advances in technology, specifically in machinery. These tools are more expensive, but the farmers purchase them because of their efficiency.

One session with a large turn out from students was "Shades of the Green Consumer," given by Genessa Devine, Market Intelligence Corporate Strategy and Program Metrics manager.

"We do reach out to the consumer with environmental messages about cotton, but the great opportunity for improving cotton’s environmental footprint is within the global supply chain," Devine said.

Devine described the different levels, or "shades," of the "green consumer."
Through research, Cotton Incorporated has found the majority of consumers are more likely to act in sustainable ways if there is the added bonus of saving money, she said.

"Environmental friendliness isn't always the primary purchase driver," Devine said.

MU students and Columbia residents have a direct connection to the industry right here in Columbia. Mustard Seed is a nonprofit fair trade retail store on Ninth Street.

Like "environmentally friendly" products, fair trade products are oftentimes more expensive. But, some include premiums in the price in order to give scholarships and other things back to the local community where the good originated, Mustard Seed Executive Director Jessica Canfield said.

"As sustainable manufacturers become more and more widespread, environmental friendliness will become inherent and the need to market products as sustainable, and at a premium, will likely become less common," Devine said.

The Sustainable Cotton Summit informed attendees of the various steps between the cotton field and the everyday T-shirt in a sustainable way, from gathering the cotton to the dyes used and the way the cotton is spun and manufactured. They were also challenged to make sustainable decisions.

Right now it is 7 percent more expensive on average to buy a product with environmentally friendly terms attached, said Devine. Most people are tight on money in this economy, especially college students, but the small price increase might mean a large payoff for the environment and workers abroad.

"Cotton is here," Brookshire said. "It is natural, renewable, biodegradable and therefore can be sustainable. I wanted students to appreciate it more accurately."