Forsee to take leave from UM

By Janese Silvey

University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee is taking a leave from his post after learning that his wife has cancer.

Forsee called a special Board of Curators teleconference yesterday evening. The roughly hourlong closed session was hosted from the president's office at University Hall, but Forsee was not present and participated by phone.

Sherry Forsee's diagnosis followed an emergency appendectomy last week, Curator Warren Erdman said.

"We're stunned to hear and learn about Sherry's diagnosis," he told the Tribune this morning. "A week ago, they were here for the Missouri-Kansas game, and we were relieved when we learned her emergency appendectomy had gone fine. To later learn the biopsy was not encouraging, we're all just catching our breath from that."

Although the nature of her condition is serious, Erdman said he does not expect Forsee's personal leave to disrupt university business.

Curators have delegated the president's authority to General Counsel Steve Owens, who will facilitate day-to-day business. Owens will have access to Forsee on an as-needed basis, UM System spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said.

"The first thing to understand is that Gary isn't out of the picture," Erdman said. Forsee "has made it clear to us this is something he's doing in the very short term. While he's away from the office for a period of time, someone needs to be in a position to fulfill those duties. Steve Owens is capable of doing that, and I have no doubt that Steve will have conversations with Gary."

Curators will meet Thursday and next Friday in St. Louis as planned.

Hollingshead said Owens will fill in for Forsee during that meeting, but the leadership change won't affect the agenda, which will be made public next week. Someone other than Owens will serve as counsel for curators during that meeting.

It's too soon to know whether Forsee will return by the curators' Jan. 27-28 meeting on the MU campus, Hollingshead said.
Forsee has been president of the four-campus system since February 2008. He was previously chairman and CEO of Sprint Nextel in Kansas City.

Originally from St. Louis, Sherry Forsee received a degree in secondary education from Southeast Missouri State University. She is involved in a number of service projects, serving on the board of directors of the Starlight Theatre and Rose Brooks Center domestic violence shelter, both out of Kansas City, and the United Way.

Forsee and his wife have been married for 35 years and have two grown daughters.

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said this morning he was shocked to hear of Sherry Forsee’s diagnosis.

“The prayers of the entire university community are being sent her way,” he said.

In a prepared statement, Forsee said he appreciates the board’s understanding, “and Sherry and I appreciate the expressions of care and concern from our many university colleagues and friends around the state.”

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Russell gets permanent job as higher-ed chief

By Janese Silvey

With the “interim” label removed, Missouri Higher Education Commissioner David Russell is ready to take his role to the next level.

Russell — who has been serving as the head of the Missouri Department of Higher Education in an interim role since July — has created a new committee that will start work immediately. The Commissioner’s Advisory Committee on Higher Education will be composed of chief executive officers from Missouri’s two-year, four-year, private and public institutions, he said.

“This is going to be the first time we’ve been able to bring those groups together on a regular basis to share their multiple concerns and issues and to begin to actually work through those barriers,” Russell said. The goal is to “figure out how we can overcome some of the barriers we’ve had to creating a seamless network of higher education in Missouri.”

The Coordinating Board for Higher Education voted yesterday to name Russell, of Columbia, the state’s higher education commissioner. Russell has agreed to a five-year commitment and will receive a salary of $170,000, a bump of $20,000 from the salary he was receiving as interim commissioner.

Russell has proved himself since he agreed to fill the vacancy left when former Commissioner Robert Stein retired, said Lowell Kruse, chairman of the coordinating board. Russell has managed to work with the various entities without trying to micromanage and has gained the confidence of the various institutions, Kruse said.

“David has a nice style,” he said. “People trust him. He’s a good listener.”

Russell said getting insights to what various colleges and universities are doing has been a rewarding part of the job.

“They’re not sitting around waiting for the economy to improve,” he said. “They’re doing things right now that position us to be much stronger and effective in the future.”

Russell spent nearly two decades in various roles with the University of Missouri System, most recently as associate vice president.
Earlier this year, the coordinating board halted a search process for a new commissioner and tapped Russell as interim leader when lawmakers began to talk about merging the Department of Higher Education with Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. That merger is no longer on the table, but Kruse said there was no need for a new commissioner search.

"One question we asked him when he took the interim position was whether he'd consider staying on in the long term," Kruse said. "In our minds, we didn't want to go through another search."

Russell said he is thankful for the board's vote of confidence.

"To have the board's public endorsement of my leadership is very important," he said. "It enhances my credibility and, perhaps, reflects positively on the degree of trust and confidence that all players in the higher education community have expressed in me. That's very gratifying."

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Eliminating earmarks won't fix crisis

Why cede more control to federal government?

By KIT BOND

There are a lot of people out there who want to howl about earmarks to give them political cover while they spend trillions of taxpayer dollars on a stimulus bill that failed to create the jobs promised, a government takeover of health care that will increase health care costs for all Americans and bankrupt our country, and a cap-and-trade bill that is a job-killing energy tax. Quite simply, being against earmarks is the cheapest way in town to paint oneself as a fiscal conservative while voting to spend recklessly and pile massive amounts of debt on our kids and grandkids.

Kit Bond

What opponents fail to point out when touting the elimination of congressionally directed spending as a budgetary silver bullet is that it accounts for less than 1 percent of all federal discretionary spending. When it comes to this debate, the American people are being sold a bill of goods. Banning earmarks is a symbolic move that will save no money because the already-allocated dollars will be spent by unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats rather than directed by elected members of Congress. It is the political irony of the moment that my fellow conservatives believe the Democratic administration of President Barack Obama should not direct the current 99 percent of the spending but all 100 percent.
The real debate over earmarks is not about saving taxpayer dollars but instead represents two very different philosophies about the role government should play in our lives. Some believe that government bureaucrats know best what to do with the American people’s money, and that’s why higher taxes, more government regulations, bailouts and more spending are their solution to every problem. I believe that the money people earn is theirs and that they can make better decisions on behalf of themselves, their families and their futures if we allow them to keep more of it. Local leaders should set local priorities, and their representatives in Washington should trust and work with them to ensure that those local priorities aren’t neglected.

I support earmark reform, greater accountability and transparency, but I don’t support a full moratorium because it would hand all the power to direct federal dollars to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats. If you believe that all wisdom rests with Washington, then eliminating earmarks is the way to go. However, he warned — federal bureaucrats don’t always understand what Missouri communities need, a lesson I first learned as governor. Even worse, federal bureaucrats are not elected and not accountable to voters; it is difficult if not impossible to hold them personally responsible.

In fact, eliminating earmarks eliminates, in a large part, local leaders’ input on how taxpayer dollars should be spent in their communities. For instance, after scores of accidents, some fatal, on the dangerous highway-rail intersection on Highway 63 north of Route B in Columbia, local leaders sought a solution. In response, then-Congressman Kenny Hulshof and I secured funds for the COLT Railroad/Highway 63 overpass, which has substantially improved the safety of that highway used by thousands every day. Also, thanks to earmarks, we’re investing in life science, business and technology incubators at the University of Missouri to attract new technology ventures that generate high-paying jobs and attract capital investment in Mid-Missouri. We’re also making improvements to Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital, the Thompson Center for Autism and Ellis Fischel Cancer Center to ensure Columbia remains a destination for world-class, quality health care.

These are just a few examples of what we have accomplished that would not have been possible had we allowed unelected bureaucrats, many of whom have never been west of the Mississippi, to determine how your tax dollars should be spent.

I agree with my colleagues that our nation faces a debt crisis. Today, our debt totals more than $13.6 trillion, which amounts to more than $44,000 for every U.S. citizen. Likewise, our annual deficit, the amount we add to our children’s and grandchildren’s credit cards, stands at roughly $1.42 trillion. The administration’s failed stimulus plan alone contributed $1 trillion to our debt. This mounting debt is not only stifling economic growth; it is becoming a national security risk that we cannot afford to let persist.

In fact, according to President Obama’s top military adviser, the biggest threat to our national security is not al-Qaida; it is our national debt. The solution to tackle this fiscal crisis will require hard decisions. Entitlement and discretionary spending must be cut. Runaway entitlement spending is stifling our prosperity and will continue to hold our economy back if not addressed promptly. But eliminating earmarks will not begin to solve this problem.
For the sake of taxpayers and future generations, now is the time for real solutions, not political posturing.

Kit Bond, a Republican, represents Missouri in the U.S. Senate.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU autism center opens after $5 million renovation

By Regina Wang
December 3, 2010 | 3:54 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The MU Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders introduced its new facility to the public Friday.

Located at 205 Portland Drive, the center's new home boasts 26,000 square feet — almost twice the size of the old facility. Added therapy and examination will increase the visitor capacity from 2,000 to 9,000 people.

Patients will also have greater access to doctors through high-tech innovations such as Telehealth units.

Gov. Jay Nixon applauded the $5 million renovation that began in February.

"For five years the Thompson Center has been changing lives," Nixon said. "Today we're making a new chapter."

William Thompson*, founder of the Thompson Foundation for Autism and the center's namesake, credited the state-of-the-art facility to a collaboration of state and federal governments, as well as MU and the Thompson Foundation.

"There is only one word that described my feeling when I walked into the building," Thompson said. "Wow."

The new center also welcomed its new executive director, Joel Bregman, who has a medical degree from Yale and has done extensive research on autism.

The Thompson Center treats patients with autism ages 3 to 22. Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder, can be diagnosed as early as 18 months, according to the Center for Disease
Control and Prevention. The median age of children diagnosed with autism is 5.5 years old for white children and 8.2 years old for black children, according to Missouri Autism Guidelines Initiatives.

The grand opening came just before a recently passed state-wide autism mandate takes effect Jan. 1.

Under the new law, Missouri became the 21st state where insurance companies must pay up to $40,000 annually for therapies for children diagnosed with autism. The coverage applies to families that receive group insurance through their employers, not those with individual health insurance.

One in every 110 children in America have autism, according to the Center for Disease Control. Recent data collected by the center also showed boys are four to five times more likely to have autism than girls.
Well-deserved awards rolling in for Filbert

By Joe Wujcik

Bob Burchard got his start in college coaching when Gary Filbert offered him a job as an assistant at Missouri Western in 1981. After their one season together, Burchard got a taste of Filbert’s uncanny powers of persuasion.

“We had a great year, and he wanted to have a big banquet,” recalled Burchard, the Columbia College men’s basketball coach and athletic director. “He said, ‘Maybe we can get John Wooden to come in and talk to us.’”

Laughter filled the room. The greatest college coach of all time going to speak at a Division II team’s postseason banquet?

“Sure enough, John Wooden was our banquet speaker,” Burchard said.

Filbert’s friends and associates — a web that covers almost anyone associated with basketball in the state of Missouri and beyond — marvel at the crackpot ideas he has nurtured into lasting institutions. As Norm Stewart put it, Filbert knows “where to go and which foot to tickle.”

At Stewart’s suggestion, Filbert, then an assistant coach at Missouri, herded the disparate factions of the state’s coaching fraternity into one tent that was known as the Missouri Basketball Coaches Association. It annually hosts one of the largest clinics in the nation, with more than 1,000 coaches attending each year. He got the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame off the ground with the help of John Q. Hammons. And, perhaps most improbably, he turned the pipe dream known as the Show-Me State Games into the biggest event of its kind in the nation and an economic godsend for Columbia.

Stewart jokingly compared Filbert to Tom Sawyer, that fictional creation of Mark Twain, who convinced everyone that what they really wanted to do was paint his fence. He is the master of organization, motivation and delegation.

“I’ve never seen a guy like him that could get everybody to paint,” Stewart said. “That’s the idea. But, boy, he could do it. And he has done it.”

No need to talk about Filbert in the past tense, because he is with us. But he has been slowed by brain cancer, which was discovered in June. And that will make this weekend’s Norm Stewart Classic at Columbia College’s Southwell Complex a little more solemn than usual. Filbert’s
baby. the MBCA, sponsors the high school basketball event, and proceeds benefit Coaches vs. Cancer.

Previously, in the week before the Classic, a press conference was held, with coaches and players speaking to reporters to promote the two-day hoops fest. It was Filbert who made all the arrangements, of course. This year, no press conference, but the show will go on, with the Rock Bridge and Hickman boys and girls teams among the participants.

The teenagers who fill the court this weekend could learn a lot about shooting form Filbert. Six months ago, he won the Show-Me State Games free-throw competition by making 24 of 25 foul shots. Not bad for an octogenarian without sight in one eye. A few days later, he received the grim news that he had a brain tumor.

Since then, the honors have poured in, befitting a man whose impact on basketball in Missouri is immeasurable. His playing career at MU came in two parts, separated by a stint in the Marines from 1948-52. In his second tour with the Tigers, he was a teammate of Stewart, who joked that Filbert could have improved an anemic assist total if only he passed him the ball more. Filbert went on to a long, successful stint coaching Mexico High School before jumping to the college ranks at Missouri Western and MU.

In October, the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame created an award called “The Filbert Five” that honors five of the state’s basketball players each year, and yesterday the Hall announced that Filbert will be the 20th recipient of the Missouri Sports Legend award. A marble bench bearing his name was placed outside the north entrance of Mizzou Arena. On Tuesday night, Filbert was at the Sprint Center in Kansas City for Missouri’s game against Georgetown to receive the National Basketball Coaches Association’s Guardian of the Game award for achievement in growing the profession and the game of basketball.

Earlier in the day, his daughter Lisa Filbert said she and her mother, Glenda, were concerned whether Gary would be able to accept the award. The tumor causes balance problems.

“But he really does seem to rise to the occasion,” Lisa said.

Using a cane, Filbert walked onto the court and accepted the NABC award during an early timeout in the game. The fans rose and gave him a standing ovation, and he waved back. Unfortunately, the Tigers couldn’t use him to shoot free throws in the final seconds of regulation.

Given the chance, he probably could have talked the officials into it.

Reach Joe Walljasper at 573-815-1783 or e-mail jwalljasper@columbatribune.com.
Agriculture teachers are in high demand

Chuck Miller didn’t let his students get by with just tossing out the phrase “hybrid vigor;” he challenged two of them to tell the class what it meant.

Agriculture hooks in Miller’s classroom include “The Science of Animal Agriculture” and “Livestock and Poultry Production.”

Former student teacher Amy Gooding is finishing her master’s degree in agriculture education at the University of Missouri.

The boys, Brandon Gerardy and Kyle Butler, were prepared: It means the offspring of a buffalo and cow will be genetically superior to offspring of either purebred pair, they explained during their presentation on “beefalo.”

Last week in Miller’s animal science class at Hickman High School, 20-some students anxiously awaited their turn to present findings on cross-breeding studies. Before moving on to the next presentation, though, Miller provided a little more information about the beefalo meat produced when farmers cross buffalo and cattle. It’s lean and shouldn’t be overcooked, he warned. Oh, and if students are interested in trying it, there are farms in Missouri that sell beefalo, including one near Potosi, he noted.

A cattleman himself, Miller knows things like that. He’s got connections to ag producers and experts across the state and country. That network benefits Columbia Public Schools, he said, and he hopes it remains strong even after he’s gone.

Three of Columbia’s four agriculture teachers, including Miller, will reach retirement age within the next 10 years, and their vacancies might be tough to fill.

Nationwide, there’s a shortage of ag educators, said Ellen Thompson, coordinator of a campaign to turn that trend around. The National Association of Agricultural Educators launched the Teach Ag campaign last year.

“We’ve been really concerned as an organization about filling programs with quality ag teachers,” Thompson told the Tribune in a phone interview from an ag-education conference in Las Vegas last week. “It’s been an issue for the last 10 to 20 years.”

A couple of variables are coming to a head in the ag-education field. First, a large percentage of ag teachers are hitting retirement age. Adding to that pressure is the fact that businesses are
realizing students with ag-education degrees are handy when it comes to selling farm equipment or communicating ag-related messages.

Retirement “numbers are scary enough; we really needed to have something to defeat that,” Thompson said. “Couple with that the fact businesses and industries are realizing now how valuable ag students are, they’re grabbing them up before they go into the teaching profession.”

Few students are majoring in ag education nationwide, AgWeek magazine reported last month. Programs in upper Midwest schools such as North Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota, the report said, are starting to come back, but slowly. Right now, North Dakota State has 32 students pursuing ag-education degrees.

Missouri seems to be bucking that trend, though.

The University of Missouri has seen a steady rise in the number of undergraduates majoring in ag education through the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. This year, about 100 undergraduates are pursuing ag-education degrees, department Chairwoman Anna Ball said. Between 80 and 85 of them are interested in becoming high school ag teachers, and the rest hope to apply their studies in corporate or community positions, she said.

Thompson was impressed with those numbers.

“Missouri is really a fantastic ag-education state,” she said. “Missouri is doing things right.”

There seems to be a disconnect between ag courses at high schools and ag-education programs on college campuses.

Over the past decade or so, agriculture has regained popularity as a high school elective. That’s because in some cases ag classes count toward science credits, but it’s also because students are recognizing the demand for energy and food production is increasing and agriculture has merged with science and technology, Thompson said.

The popularity is true in Columbia Public Schools, too. Miller said the district could easily add two more ag teaching positions and fill their classrooms.

“There’s enough interest in what we’ve done here, I don’t see any end in sight,” he said.

By the time they get to college, though, most of those students aren’t choosing ag education. Part of the problem is a stereotype of teaching in general, Thompson said.

“There are so many areas in agriculture for them to go into,” she said. “If they’re not told they would make a great ag teacher, they don’t even think about it as a career. We want to encourage ag teachers to stand up in front of students and talk about why they love being an ag teacher, why it’s a wonderful job and students should at least think about it.”
Ag-education majors have little trouble finding work after college.

On average, there are between 50 and 70 ag teaching positions open in Missouri every year, said Terry Heiman, director of agricultural education at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. That’s about 15 percent of the roughly 480 teaching jobs open every year, he said.

The turnover is high not only because ag teachers are retiring but also because they often get offers in other fields outside of the classroom.

“There’s always room for the new graduate,” Heiman said. “That’s a real asset when you talk about the possibilities for students, that there will be annual turnover and opportunities for them, as new graduates, to pursue their careers.”

About half of all ag-education majors are recruited by businesses, Heiman said.

MU has recognized that and offers two areas of emphasis within its ag-education program: teaching and leadership.

“We’ve really expanded the mission to be about leadership and preparing students for more than just farming but careers in all aspects of the agricultural industry,” Ball said. “We get the word out that we are more than farming.”

In addition to high school ag programs, graduates have gone on to work in ag sales, ag-related policy positions, banking and as educators for corporations, Ball said.

“Ag-ed students know how to organize, they know how to synthesize and communicate information, and employers love that,” she said.

Amy Gooding of Hallsville is finishing up her master’s degree in ag education at MU and has landed a horticultural position within Lincoln University’s extension program. She would like to become a high school ag teacher but isn’t willing to relocate, so she’ll have to wait for an area ag teaching position to open.

Gooding said she likes the idea of teaching agriculture because it’s an elective, meaning students are taking the classes by choice. She’s also passionate about making sure young people realize where their food, clothing and home materials come from.

Passion is a requirement for ag-ed teachers, Heiman said. Perhaps more so than teachers in other fields, agricultural educators work closely with the industry, so they have to have an interest in agriculture and natural resources, he said.

“You have to enjoy a variety of work because classroom preparation is different from hour to hour,” he said. “You’re not going to be teaching the same topic over and over.”
The ag field is already varied, with educators teaching students about livestock, farm equipment and crop science, but it’s also expanding. Today, students learning about agriculture also get lessons in business and biology.

“Ag programs have had to change with that,” Thompson said. “We’ve not left production — agricultural programs still teach production — but we also teach agriculture through a scientific and business and entrepreneurial sort of lens. Instead of just teaching cotton and corn and raising hogs, it’s science.”

Miller is somewhat reluctant about that trend, saying colleges need to also make sure future ag educators are prepared to teach basic skills that mirror community needs. That’s why he continues to teach farm mechanics alongside more advanced ag science.

“The mechanics side of things is really a blend of a lot of skills, not only in math but design and construction,” he said. “A kid can go somewhere and say, ‘I can do this job. Not only can I design it and build it, but I can fix it if it breaks.’ That’s powerful.”

Miller doesn’t try to push his students into ag-education careers, realizing it might not be as financially rewarding as other positions.

“We just present the facts and let kids make decisions,” he said. “If they do something that makes them fulfilled as an adult, I’m happy with that.”

But teaching ag has its perks. Miller heads Columbia’s FFA teams that have gone on to receive national recognition. He and three students traveled to Scotland last year to compete in FFA’s international championships.

That’s just icing, though. Miller said the best part of the job is watching students learn.

“I really like working with young people,” he said. “It’s hard to put my finger on it. I enjoy seeing the light bulb come on when a kid finally gets it. It might be something really simple, or it might have taken years to get that kid to learn it, but when the light bulb comes on in their heads, it’s a charge. It’s really cool to see that.”

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
UMKC plans $45 million in improvements

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

Sat. Dec. 04, 2010 10:15 PM

Come summer, bulldozers will roll on the University of Missouri-Kansas City campus, moving dirt and making way for two new structures and the renovation of a third.

University of Missouri curators have approved funding for $45 million worth of construction aimed at supporting a projected enrollment increase of 3 percent a year for the next five years on the Kansas City campus.

With current enrollment at 13,900, the school expects 16,000 students there by 2016.

Further in the future, university officials hope to expand the medical school on Hospital Hill, but no funding is available for that.

For the main campus projects, the university will use Build America Bonds — established as part of the Obama administration’s stimulus program — to pay for:

• A new $23 million parking structure at Oak and 50th streets.

• An $18 million classroom addition west of the Miller Nichols Library building.

• $4 million worth of renovations at the University Center, where space was freed up when UMKC opened a new student union on Cherry Street this year.

“As we look at growing our undergraduate enrollment, all three projects are important to accommodate more students on campus,” said Bob Simmons, interim vice chancellor of administrative services at UMKC.

Tuition from the increased enrollment is expected to pay off the bond debt.

Part of the University Center project is a new student success center, which Simmons said is vital to keeping more of UMKC’s students in school and helping them graduate.

It’s a mission aligned with Gov. Jay Nixon’s goal to increase the portion of Missouri’s population holding a college degree from 37 percent to 60 percent in a decade.
Mel Tyler, vice chancellor for student affairs, said the success center will be a one-stop shop offering career counseling, academic support and advising for undergraduates, with a special focus on students who need direction in claiming an academic major.

The center will give these students “intrusive advising” to help them decide on an academic degree program within three semesters.

“We find that that helps the student connect with the university right away,” Tyler said.

That student then is more likely to stay at the university and graduate, he said.

The library project will create four to six large lecture halls to seat a total of 900 students, Simmons said.

“We have a lot of small and medium-size classrooms on campus, but not many large lecture halls.”

The parking garage will replace the existing 700-space structure built as temporary parking in 1960. The new one would double the number of spaces and provide covered bicycle storage, plus showers for students and faculty who ride to campus. It also will include charging stations for electric vehicles.

With funding secured for those three capital projects, UMKC administrators now are hoping the Missouri General Assembly, in its next session beginning in January, will pony up an additional $47 million to help fund a three-building expansion at the medical school on Hospital Hill.

“We are actively asking the state for this money,” Simmons said.

But with Missouri looking at a projected $700 million hole in the budget, legislators doubt they will be handing out any money for such purposes.

“I don’t see any capital money being available at all,” said Kansas City’s Ryan Silvey, chairman of the House Budget Committee. “And I can tell you that in the past, I supported helping to get financing for the health sciences building at UMKC. It’s certainly a worthwhile project. But I just don’t see it.”

For now, the medical school expansion is being discussed in “very preliminary” terms as a $75 million project.

Rough plans for the hospital expansion project call for:

• More than 192,000 square feet of classrooms, lecture halls, teaching labs, a medical library and two auditoriums at the existing Health Sciences Education Building.

• About 181,180 square feet of state-of-the-art laboratory space for clinical research and technology transfer incubation in the Health Sciences Research Building.
About 43,300 square feet of specialized labs in a building to go up next to the existing Health Sciences Research Building. Research in the new building will focus on bringing concepts from lab to market.

The imminent construction and the proposed medical school expansion are all part of the university's campus master plan developed two years ago.
MU professors offer perspective on Wikileaks' latest release

The legality of the release is at the heart of the debate.

By Jade Earle
Published Dec. 3, 2010

After four-year-old, media nonprofit website WikiLeaks released government documents ranging from commentaries on national dignitaries to the Obama administration’s plans for Guantanamo Bay, the website has sparked debate among journalists and media business organizations.

Also referred to as embassy cables, these documents were obtained by WikiLeaks in November allegedly from Pvt. Bradley Manning of the U.S. Army. The site released the cables to five mainstream newspapers including The New York Times and The Guardian, a London-based newspaper. The media outlets are releasing new documents periodically throughout the week.

This execution has made some journalists, including Jeffrey Dvorkin, executive director for the Organization of News Ombudsmen and former MU Professor, concerned about the effect WikiLeaks has on the future of investigative newsgathering.

"In this case, WikiLeaks let an ideological and anti-American assumption guide its motivation, which has been partly mitigated by the excellent work of the NY Times and others," Dvorkin stated in an e-mail.

He published a post on his blog, "Now the Details," criticizing the website for not showing any "ethical consideration" before publishing the documents and making it more difficult for reporters to get information from government sources.

"If the goal of WikiLeaks was to open up access from diplomatic circles to the public, it failed," Dvorkin stated. "The U.S. government will likely react by going after all whistleblowers and suspect bloggers now."

But many groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union, believe punishing WikiLeaks for the release would be equal to taking legal action against mainstream media organizations when they expose government documents.

"Prosecuting WikiLeaks would be no different from prosecuting the media outlets that also published classified documents," the ACLU stated in a news release. "Prosecuting publishers of
classified information threatens investigative journalism that is necessary to an informed public debate about government conduct, and that is an unthinkable outcome."

MU law professor Christina Wells agrees prosecuting content providers would be difficult, especially with the vitality of the Internet.

"Journalism publishing has evolved so much with the Internet that it would be impossible to stop the spread of information, even if the government legally could," Wells stated in a news release.

Although he does not agree with WikiLeaks execution, Dvorkin pointed out how the Internet media and mainstream media can work together to inform the public.

"The bloggers are the sharp end of the newsgathering lance and the mainstream media contextualize the content," he stated.

Although some public figures in journalism already view the WikiLeaks case as a threat, many others, including MU journalism professor Charles Davis, feel it is too early to determine the effect of the cable releases.

"I don't think anything released so far is a threat to national security," Davis said. "So far, (WikiLeaks) is filtering and letting (media) outlets have stuff first...they're taking a measured approach."

A schedule to periodically release documents over the next week is evidence that news editors at media outlets are doing some form of editing, Davis said. But he also said there is legitimate concern about whether reporters are using proper news judgment.

"The fact that we're in possession of something does not make it newsworthy," Davis said. "Are we really bringing meaning and context to these documents?"

Although considering WikiLeaks has collaborated with mainstream media outlets, Davis differentiates between journalists’ role and the role of the nonprofit website.

"WikiLeaks is a conduit of information that journalists then use," he said. "Mere disclosure of information does not make them journalists. We're sympathetic to whistleblowers, but what they did is not what we did."
Last lecture in diversity series discusses adolescent smoking

American Indians have the highest smoking rate.

By Lauren Bale

Published Dec. 3, 2010

The "Diversity in Action: Bridging Research and Practice" series presented its final lecture of the semester Thursday, with a presentation by ManSoo Yu, assistant professor in the School of Social Work.

Yu spoke about his extensive research on the similarities and differences in adolescent smoking behaviors in different racial and ethnic groups. Yu also presented his findings on the factors that contribute to adolescent smoking.

Yu said he hopes his research will help solve the high levels of nicotine addiction in adolescents of certain ethnic groups, including American Indian, Asian and black people.

"My research goal is to eliminate the health disparities among different segments of the population in terms of gender, age and ethnic and racial groups," Yu said.

Yu wrote his doctoral dissertation on the alcohol consumption and illegal drug use prevalent in American Indian youth.

"American Indian youth have the highest levels of drug use than any other racial group," Yu said.

According to Yu, environmental, social and personal factors all contribute to an adolescent’s decision to smoke, and the social conditions of American Indian reservations might be the reason for the high smoking rates among American Indian teens.

"Adolescents living on reservations are more likely to have some family issues and have limited access to services and are more likely to smoke than American Indian adolescents living in urban environments," Yu said.

School of Social Work professor Judith Davenport said her experience working with American Indian teenagers was one of the reasons she decided to attend the lecture.
"I have an interest and a background in working with American Indians and also with several other ethnic groups and cultures, so I was very much interested in the topic, and I wanted to get some new information of what is out there." Davenport said.

According to Davenport, high drug use by American Indian teenagers has been a problem for many years.

"I think things are improving from my experiences on working and living on reservations, and things are changing, but it's clearly still a problem," Davenport said.

Yu also presented his information on the smoking habits of other ethnic groups. According to Yu, Asian smokers are more likely than non-Asian smokers to have family members who smoke.

Yu also studied the percentages of Caucasian and black smokers and classified them into groups of experimental smokers, occasional smokers and regular smokers.

Yu found 17 percent of Caucasians fall under the experimental smoker category, and 22.8 percent of black people fill the same category.

But 7 percent of Caucasians can be considered occasional smokers, and 5.7 percent of black people occasionally smoke. As for regular smokers, 2 percent of black people fill the category, and 8.4 percent of Caucasians join them.

Yu said individual, social and environmental factors all contribute to an adolescent's decision to begin smoking.

"A lack of encouragement from family members and friends to stop smoking are barriers that stop someone from quitting," Yu said.

Yu said he hopes his research will help to decrease high smoking rates among teenagers.

"We need to work together to establish culturally appropriate smoking cessation and prevention efforts through research, blending and practice," Yu said.

Lecture coordinator Yuan Gao said the purpose of the diversity lecture series was to create a way for MU professors to share research and solve societal problems.

"Our original intention was for graduate students and faculty members to come attend the talks and enlighten their own research in similar fields," Gao said. "However, I've noticed there are a lot of undergraduates who come too, and I think it's great because you can expand the information you learn in the classroom."

Davenport said she believed the goal of the lectures had been achieved, and she found the presentation beneficial. "I feel that I'm taking a lot of information with me that I'll be able to think about and use in the future," Davenport said.
Feinberg tells students tales

Attorney was feds' 'pay czar.'

Kenneth Feinberg pulled back the curtain yesterday when he gave a few hundred University of Missouri students a behind-the-scenes glimpse of what it was like to negotiate the pay for 175 of the nation's top corporate executives.

A lawyer and mediator best known as the administrator of the federal 9/11 fund, Feinberg came to Cornell Hall on the MU campus as part of the Dawdy Speaker Series. He spoke about his role overseeing executive compensation as the "pay czar" for the government's Troubled Asset Relief Program.

Responding to the financial crisis, Congress last year passed a law giving the Secretary of the Treasury the authority to oversee executive salaries at seven corporations: AIG, Bank of America, Citigroup, General Motors, GMAC, Chrysler and Chrysler Financial.

Feinberg said he thought the move would generate controversy. "The very idea some government bureaucrat at Treasury would actually determine what a private executive could make?" he said.

But it quickly became clear to Feinberg that many Americans supported the action. "The only reason these seven companies survived is because the taxpayers bailed them out," he said. "Why shouldn't the government have a role in setting the pay for the companies that got into this mess? So there was very, very little criticism."

Feinberg started his work by examining the statutes closely. He then asked the companies — which hired their own consultants — to send their data to him. The executives claimed they were indispensable to their companies.

To help him analyze the situation, Feinberg hired academics from Harvard University and the University of Southern California. "My data showed" the executives' "data was inflated by 50 percent," he said.

To rein in excessive pay, Feinberg capped salaries at $500,000 a year and banned retention bonuses; tied an executive's compensation to company performance; paid executives in stock that couldn't be redeemed for a few years; and prevented executives from being reimbursed until the corporation has repaid the taxpayers 25 percent of what it owes.
“Overall, it was a worthwhile exercise,” he said, but he cautioned, “It’s not something that should be expanded.”

The experience taught him there is a gulf between the way people on Wall Street and Main Street think. Wall Street equates wealth to self-worth, he said.

Rachel Juergensmeyer, an accounting student, was intrigued by the idea of basing an executive’s salary on the long-term health of the corporation. “I think that’s a really great concept for businesses,” she said.

Vairam Arunachalam, director of the MU School of Accountancy in the Trulaske College of Business, said the lecture series helps students understand how business is linked to the law, economics and politics. He noted Feinberg had an “impressive” ability to explain things clearly.

“It’s what we seek to do on a daily basis,” Arunachalam said.

Reach Kris Hilgedick at 573-815-1722 or e-mail khilgedick@columbiatribune.com.

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Study shows Texas teacher merit pay helps keep staff, slightly helps test scores

12:00 AM CST on Monday, December 6, 2010

By TERRENCE STUTZ / The Dallas Morning News
 tstutz@dallasnews.com

AUSTIN — More Texas teachers stayed put and students saw a slight jump in their test scores at schools where teachers received performance-based pay in the first two years of a $400 million state program, a study indicates.

The work by researchers at Vanderbilt University, the University of Missouri and Rand Corp. also found that school districts got better results when they gave teachers bigger bonuses — $3,000 and up — although a majority of districts chose to spread the money around to more teachers and give smaller payments.

Results for the District Awards for Teacher Excellence plan could help the Legislature decide whether to keep the program — the largest of its kind in the nation — when lawmakers deal with a massive revenue shortfall next year. More than 200 districts participated, including the Dallas district.

"Students in DATE schools had greater gains on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills than those in non-DATE schools," said the report from the National Center on Performance Incentives.

The study cautioned, though, that achievement gains shown by merit pay schools were small and could have resulted in part from other initiatives at those schools. Student test scores are a primary factor in determining bonuses, a criterion that many teachers oppose.

Senate Education Committee Chairwoman Florence Shapiro, R-Plano, said she is encouraged by the initial results of the plan and said it should remain a priority in state spending on education.

"This program is showing results, and we need to give it more time," she said. "It is voluntary. No one is forced to participate. And if we're serious about education reform in Texas, we need to stand by this program."

On teacher retention, the merit pay program showed a more dramatic result than in student achievement.

"The probability of turnover surged among teachers who did not receive a DATE award, while it fell sharply among teachers who did receive such an award," the researchers said.
The turnover rate for teachers was affected by the size of the bonus: The larger the bonuses, the more likely teachers were to stay at their schools. Supporters of the plan had said that keeping good teachers at their schools by offering incentive pay was one of their primary aims.

**Participation small**

While participation was open to all school districts beginning with the 2008-09 school year, only 16 percent of districts applied, including the state’s two largest – Dallas and Houston. Superintendents in districts that stayed away from the plan cited the acrimony it might cause among teachers and the possibility that the state could end funding during a budget crunch.

Fourteen districts in the Dallas-Fort Worth area took part, including Dallas, Fort Worth, Garland, Irving, Mesquite, Plano and Richardson. The Dallas school district spent nearly $23 million on teacher bonuses over the last two school years.

Bonuses were based primarily on test scores of students, although each district developed its own criteria for distributing the merit pay money using state guidelines. In some cases, the bonuses were distributed to deserving teachers across the district, while in others, the money was directed at a select group of schools.

School districts that signed up were guaranteed funding for at least three years. At least 60 percent of the funds must be used for bonuses based on student performance. Remaining funds can be used as stipends for teachers at hard-to-staff schools or in high-demand subjects such as math and science. Stipends can also be used for teacher mentors and professional development.

The DATE plan is getting better marks than the state’s initial merit pay program – focused at schools in low-income neighborhoods. It was scuttled by lawmakers last year after dismal results for the $300 million investment.

Under the details of that plan, large numbers of campuses dropped in and out of the program every year, making it difficult to determine whether the teacher bonuses were improving student performance.

Teacher groups remain hostile to the current merit pay plan and point to a survey of teachers indicating that most felt it had little to no effect on teaching practices and student achievement.

"The study shows that teachers themselves didn’t see a big improvement in achievement because of the program," said Richard Kouuri of the Texas State Teachers Association. "Beyond retention of teachers, there was not much benefit to schools. And if you pay a teacher extra to stay at a school, they will probably stay there while the money keeps coming."

Test score link opposed
Josh Sanderson of the Association of Texas Professional Educators said his group remains opposed to any program that ties teacher pay to student test scores, although it supports other parts of the plan, such as providing bonuses to teachers in hard-to-staff schools.

The association will oppose any efforts to kill the program to save money next year, though, because that would reduce pay for thousands of teachers.

"We want to keep these funds targeted to teacher compensation," he said, noting that the program could be retooled to get better results.

While teachers want test scores dropped from the criteria, Shapiro and other legislative leaders have maintained that there are few objective ways to measure success in the classroom – and test results remain the best indicator.

The merit pay study indicated that slightly more than half of the teachers in schools participating in the program received bonuses over the last two years. That included schools that were part of a districtwide program as well as those where the funds were targeted to select schools.

But the average bonuses were much larger in select schools' plans. For districtwide plans that spread the bonuses out, the average payment was $1,361. Where the bonuses went only to a group of schools in a district, the average payment was $3,344. Generally, larger bonuses produced better test scores and teacher retention.
UPDATE: Missouri to play Iowa in Insight Bowl

By Dieter Kurtenbach
December 5, 2010 | 7:35 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The Missouri football team announced Sunday that it has accepted a bid to play in the Insight Bowl on Dec. 28 in Tempe, Ariz.

The Tigers will play the Big Ten's representative, the Iowa Hawkeyes, in Tempe. It will be the first game between Iowa and Missouri in 100 years.

Before Iowa and Missouri suspended their series, Missouri had a 7-5 record against the Hawkeyes between 1892 and 1910.

Missouri had arranged a four game series with Iowa to be played between 2004 and 2007, but Missouri backed out of that series before it could start.

"I would say that was a smart decision," Missouri head coach Gary Pinkel said.

The Tigers have played in the Insight Bowl once before. In 1998, Missouri, led by three rushing touchdowns by quarterback Corby Jones, beat Marc Bulger and West Virginia 34-31.

The Insight Bowl has a per-team payout of $3.325 million, but that money will go to the Big 12 Conference, where the revenue will be split amongst the teams. Even so, Missouri should receive a marginally larger share from the conference at the end of the year by virtue of being the fourth team chosen for a bowl from the conference.

This is the sixth consecutive season that Missouri has played in a bowl, the longest such streak in the football program's history. Pinkel said that he was excited the season again ended on a high note.
"It's real important to me and my players to have a good time, but what's more important is to win the football game," Pinkel said.

Last season the Insight Bowl selected Iowa State over Missouri because of attendance concerns, but Pinkel refused to comment on the slight, calling the bowl and the committee "first class."

The Insight Bowl will be televised on ESPN at 9 p.m. on Dec. 28.
UM system President Gary Forsee will take a temporary leave of absence from his position, a news release from the university stated Thursday. The announcement came a few minutes after the UM system Board of Curators met in a special closed session.

According to the news release, Forsee's leave of absence is due to his wife's recent cancer diagnosis following emergency surgery last week.

"I appreciate the board's understanding and support, and Sherry and I appreciate the expressions of care and concern from our many university colleagues and friends around the state," Forsee said in the news release.

Forsee's authority will be delegated to chancellors and vice presidents during his leave of absence. He asked the board to endorse an additional delegation of power to UM system General Counsel Steve Owens, who will deal with all other matters typically handled by the president.

The special meeting was announced Thursday afternoon. According to the public meeting notice, 24 hours notice of the meeting was both impossible and impractical. As much notice as reasonably possible was given.

The curators' meeting scheduled for Dec. 9 and 10 in St. Louis will still take place as planned.