UM Presidential Search Committee begins informal talks with candidates

Monday, July 11, 2011 | 10:36 p.m. CDT
BY MEGAN CASSIDY

COLUMBIA — The UM Presidential Search Committee met for three and a half hours in a closed session Monday evening to discuss potential candidates for the new system president.

In a teleconference following the meeting, Curator Warren Erdman said the committee discussed somewhere in the neighborhood of 25 names as potential successors to Gary Forsee, who stepped down as president in January.

Erdman stressed that the number was not static and changed daily.

"The process remains open, and we intend to keep it open until there are finalists," he said. "We don't want to discourage any candidate."

Erdman said for the past three weeks, the committee had been engaged in informal conversations with various individuals regarding the position. He would not go into detail about any of those in the running, as nearly all had insisted on confidentiality.

In broader terms, Erdman described the candidates as extremely diverse and was encouraged by their qualifications.

"We are a very sought-after institution in terms of this presidency," he said.

Erdman calls the talks a "get acquainted opportunity," and said the committee plans to conduct formal interviews with the candidates in August.

"We're still at the very beginning stages," he said.
IPad users like to lounge in easy chairs, browse on Safari, report says

July 11, 2011 | 8:11 pm

It was only a matter of time before some institution of higher learning surveyed iPad owners about the burning question: Where are you usually when you're using the tablet computer? In a bus? Bedroom? Kitchen? Hiding from your boss in a cupboard?

Well, most owners (51%) spent more quality with their Apple iPads in the comfort of a couch or easy chair than in their office (only 6%), at work (7%), in the bedroom (17%) or in the kitchen (6%), according to a recent survey of 561 iPad owners conducted by the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri. Alas, the survey neglected to include bathroom as a category.

Those surveyed also reported that they most frequently used the Safari Web browser app (21%), followed closely by apps for Mail (20%) and the New York Times (13%).

And apparently people like to read a lot on their iPads: more than half liked to catch up with news using apps that aggregate stories. Furthermore, 41% read newspapers with an app and 39% read books.

And among those who buy magazines via the iPad, a good portion will work through them in the early morning (between 5 a.m. and 8 a.m.) or at night (between 8 and 11 p.m.).
MU expert studies Civil War weather

By Rudi Keller

The summer of 1861 was high tide for the forces hoping to take Missouri out of the Union and into the Confederate States of America.

In battles at Carthage, Wilson’s Creek and Lexington, the Missouri State Guard defeated Federal forces and sparked near-panic among Union commanders. Weather played a crucial role in each, according to a new study by University of Missouri scientist Tony Lupo.

Lupo, chairman of the atmospheric sciences department, used modern climate theories to explain the flooding rains and heat the soldiers endured. Assisted by meteorology student Mike Madden, he identified modern weather maps that mirror 1861 conditions.

“I have always had an interest in the Civil War, and I just happened to be talking about it to two students,” Lupo said. “We thought, ‘Let’s take our meteorological map down, try to apply it to Civil War times and reconstruct what the weather might have looked like.’”

They believe a classic La Nina weather pattern, similar to 2007 and this year, caused storm fronts to stall over the state. A La Nina pattern is characterized by cooler-than-normal water temperatures in the northern Pacific Ocean. Lupo and Madden used data from land stations and water temperature reports from British naval officers to back their theory.

“Weather had a huge impact,” Lupo said. “When the ground was very wet, it would be very tough to move heavy cannon and wagons. Rain had a big impact on munitions, which was tougher in those days to keep dry.”

Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon led Union forces to their first victory on June 17, 1861, at Boonville, but heavy rains delayed his pursuit of pro-Southern Gov. Claiborne Fox Jackson and the Missouri State Guard.

On July 5, 1861, Jackson defeated a badly outnumbered force under Col. Franz Sigel, who saved his forces from being surrounded during a 14-mile running battle.

“I have lost in reaching this place about four days time by the high waters in” the “Grand and Osage Rivers, which made it necessary to ferry them,” Lyon wrote from Springfield on July 13, 1861.
At Wilson’s Creek, rain caused state and Confederate soldiers to cancel a march against Lyon. Instead, Lyon surprised them by attacking at 5 a.m. Aug. 10, 1861, but he was defeated, and Lyon became the first Union general to die in battle.

And in September at Lexington, cool, wet days were followed by hot, dry weather as 3,500 troops sought to defend their trenches against more than 10,000 Missouri State Guard soldiers.

State troops used hemp bales soaked in Missouri River water as a rolling fortification. Even heated cannon balls, used in an attempt to set the hemp bales ablaze, were not effective. Lupo concluded a cold front that brought rain at the end of the siege helped keep the bales damp.

Studying the weather can explain why battles took place when they did and add insight to studies of the results, Lupo said. “It can just bring another dimension to show people that there are a lot of factors beyond the generals themselves and the military that helped battles turn and not turn,” he said.

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MU cheerleaders raise money at John Anderson Celebrity Golf Invitational

COLUMBIA — Two young women sat underneath a tent Sunday afternoon to shield themselves from the sun as they waited for groups of golf carts to park nearby at the 13th hole at the Country Club of Missouri.

"It's $10 for a raffle ticket," MU cheerleader Kourtney Doss explained to participants of the John Anderson Celebrity Golf Invitational, a tournament to help raise money to support students and teachers in Missouri and the relief effort for victims of the Joplin tornado.

Fellow cheerleader Marnie Matthews was helping Doss sell raffle tickets for a chance to win a new set of golf clubs. Participants attempted to get a hole-in-one on the 13th hole to win a new flat-screen television. If their ball managed to land on the green, their ticket was thrown into a drawing for the golf clubs.

"If it doesn't get on the green, you don't get in the raffle," said Ashtynn Smith, one of three MU cheerleaders sitting under a tree near the green to keep track of the players' shots.

"Once a ball lands on the green, our male cheerleader down there congratulates the player with a high kick," Doss said.

Missouri cheer coach and mascot coordinator Suzy Thompson said Anderson, an ESPN SportsCenter anchor and MU graduate, is a long-time friend and a big supporter of the MU cheerleaders.

"He's done a lot for Missouri and for athletics," she said. "This is our way to give back and help him."

Truman the Tiger also made an appearance with the cheerleaders but stayed out of costume most of the day to avoid getting heat stroke.
The majority of the money raised went to the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, relief efforts in Joplin and to Columbia Public Schools. But Matthews said some of the money will be given to the cheerleaders for helping out.

"It will help pay for our trip to nationals in April," she said. "It usually costs us like $30,000 to go."
Celebrities laud ESPN's John Anderson for charity golf tournament
Monday, July 11, 2011 | 10:14 p.m. CDT

BY DAVID CONWAY
COLUMBIA — After an early rain quickly ceded to an overbearing sun Monday morning, an impressive crowd gathered at the Country Club of Missouri: a former governor, an Emmy-nominated actor, former MLB and NFL all-stars, a slew of television personalities and a multitude of standout MU athletes, both past and present.

And yet, one person's name was on the tip of everyone's tongues. Everyone's but his own.

"I don't like to say my name if I can avoid it," ESPN SportsCenter anchor John Anderson said, shortly after declaring the winner of what he called simply the "Celebrity Golf Invitational."

While the spotlight on Anderson was partially because the John Anderson Celebrity Golf Invitational, now in its second year, bears his name, it's also because such an event could bear his name. Thirty-five celebrities descended upon Columbia and weathered the intense heat, and many of them were quick to list Anderson as the primary reason they were there.

"He's so folksy," fellow ESPN anchor Linda Cohn said. "Being a New Yorker, he represents kindness, and he makes me laugh. Anytime you can hang with someone that makes you laugh, you do it."

The primary benefactor of the Celebrity Golf Invitational is the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri. The group uses the funds to help fuel its Buddy Pack program, in which school children throughout the state are given a backpack full of nutritious food each week.
"We give the children the backpacks on Friday, and they bring them home. They use the food over the weekend, and they bring them back on Monday," said Bobbie Kincade, the Food Bank’s director of development. "Through the generosity of John Anderson and their foundation, we are able to increase the number of backpacks we are able to supply to children that are hungry."

Because of incoming stimulus money, Anderson said Food Bank executive director Peggy Kirkpatrick encouraged donations to other causes as well. In addition to a $20,000 donation to the Food Bank, $22,500 was raised for relief efforts in Joplin, and another $20,000 went to Columbia Public Schools.

In addition to the golf tournament, which was won by a group featuring former standout Missouri basketball player Jon Sundvold, a school supply drive for Joplin schools was held both at the country club and on Sunday at Shiloh Bar and Grill. Further funds were raised via a silent auction, which featured items including ESPN “swag bundles,” Royals and Cardinals ticket packages and jerseys autographed by recent MU quarterbacks Blaine Gabbert, Chase Daniel and Brad Smith.

Anderson’s wife, Tamara Anderson, serves as a trustee for the Anderson Family Charitable Foundation, the group behind the Celebrity Golf Invitational. She said the foundation was formed because the Andersons wanted to give back to the many communities that had been important to them.

John Anderson is a graduate of MU, and Tamara Anderson was born in Carthage, a city 20 miles from Joplin. In addition to their support of Missouri schoolchildren, the Andersons also hold events in John Anderson’s hometown of Green Bay, Wisc.

“We have two young children that are in the elementary school age range, so we can see the effects of that and see where there are needs in that age range,” Tamara Anderson said. “That’s how we decided to make that a mission for our foundation.”

That mission is realized in large part because of the strong connections John Anderson has made with so many people. Big Ten Network anchor Mike Hall said he relishes the rare opportunity to come back to his former campus, but Anderson’s involvement made the invitation to participate in the event an offer he couldn’t refuse.
"John was my mentor at ESPN and at Mizzou, so basically I owe him a life sentence," Hall said. "When he wants me to kill someone, I do it. When he wants me to come do a golf event, I do it."

Anderson's reach extended beyond the world of sports. Arguably the biggest star participating in the tournament was actor Jon Hamm, star of AMC's "Mad Men." Hamm and Anderson met at the 2009 MLB All-Star Game in St. Louis, and a delay in the television show's production opened up the door for Hamm, an MU graduate, to return to Columbia.

"It beats working, I'll tell you that much," Hamm said of the event.

The event also featured a representative from the other side of the Missouri-Kansas rivalry. Former Kansas basketball standout Isaac "Bud" Stallworth, the 1972 Big Eight Player of the Year most noteworthy for scoring 50 points in a game against Missouri, said his degree in social work and the opportunity to help children drew him to what otherwise might be less-than-friendly confines.

"You kind of set aside the rivalry when you're doing things that are real life situations, so to speak," Stallworth said. "When you look at the big picture, it is what it is — a game is a game, and life is life."

Thanks to the hard work and donations of Anderson and all those involved in the Celebrity Golf Invitational, a game helped improve the lives of many. Upon receiving the check for the Food Bank, Kirkpatrick articulated a point that several other people had all but said.

"I have never, ever, ever met a man like John Anderson," Kirkpatrick said. "He is the most humble, unassuming, generous person I have ever met."
Project eases recovery from cancer treatment

By Janese Silvey

In the midst of treatment for lung cancer, Louise Still bruises easily, is often weak and has a tough time breathing. So, needless to say, it’s sometimes a challenge to find the motivation to get up and exercise.

“You feel better when you do exercise, but you’ve got to pull yourself out of bed,” she said.

A new pilot program at Ellis Fischel Cancer Center is making it easier for Still and others going through or finished with cancer treatment. The six-week exercise class allows them to work at their own pace while learning movements they can continue when the class is over.

“The focus is that you can do all of this at home,” said Karen Wingert, a physical therapist and clinical associate professor at the University of Missouri who leads the class. “The whole focus is you do not have to go to a gym to be physically active.”

Although they use weights in the class, “I say use a can of corn” at home, Wingert said. “You don’t have to buy weights.”

Still already is finding herself mimicking the movements several times a day, comforted by the fact she’s not expected to follow a rigid workout schedule.

Previously, Still — who never smoked — tried her hand at yoga, but the classes proved to be too pricey. At an overall cost of $15, the weekly courses at Ellis are more affordable, she said.

Other than group warm-ups and stretches, the exercise routine is customized to fit each person’s needs and physical abilities.

“Karen doesn’t push you,” said Toni Martin, a breast cancer survivor. “It’s go at your own pace.”

Exercise is good for anyone but has been shown to be especially beneficial for cancer patients and survivors. Research has shown breast cancer is less likely to reoccur among post-menopausal women who work out, Wingert said.

Another MU researcher, Stephanie Reid-Arndt, an assistant professor and chair of the Department of Health Psychology in the School of Health Professions, has found that tai chi specifically might help cognitive functions in cancer survivors. She published a study last month
showing those who practice the Chinese martial art saw improved memory and mood and less fatigue.

Tai chi involves slow-motion routines that are suited to a range of abilities, so it’s something a lot of patients can do.

“It can be an empowering experience,” Reid-Arndt said. “A lot of times, when people are going through treatment for cancer, they receive a lot of care from others — and that’s wonderful — but they’re also looking for ways to be proactive and take care of themselves as well. Nonmedicine-based interventions are appealing to a lot of people.”

Kathy Windmoeller, a breast cancer survivor, was among the group that participated in Reid-Arndt’s 10-week trial. “It was calming and gentle and really helps with balance,” she said.

Today, Windmoeller continues tai chi along with other workout routines at Wilson’s Fitness.

Wingert is considering incorporating tai chi into a future six-week exercise program that would piggyback the current class.

She’s looking at several activities to see what works best for her patients.

Still, for one, is hoping the group exercise programs continue. “It helps to be around other people who are going through similar things,” she said. “And it helps when you know what to expect.”

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The miseducation of America's legislators

College degrees don't correlate with policy success.
By Robert Maranto

The Chronicle of Higher Education recently published a fascinating article titled "How Educated Are State Legislators?" It pointed out that 74.7 percent of America's 7,400 state legislators have a bachelor's or more advanced degree, and that few attended elite or out-of-state universities. The share of lawmakers with at least a bachelor's degree ranged from just 53.4 percent in New Hampshire's citizen legislature to 89.9 percent in California's highly professional one; Pennsylvania's and New Jersey's were toward the more educated end, at 75.5 percent and 79.9 percent, respectively.

Some of the experts interviewed by the Chronicle admitted that more than a few great policymakers never set foot in a college, but the quarter of legislators with no college degree caused concern. University of Missouri political science professor Peverill Squire told the publication that he sees college as essential for leaders, since it teaches the analytical skills needed to think independently. Policymakers "must be able to critically analyze large quantities of conflicting information that special interests and others provide," he told the Chronicle. "The great value of a college education is an improved ability to assess such competing claims."

State legislators are in fact far more educated than their constituents, just 28 percent of whom have college degrees. Yet they are far less educated than members of Congress, just four of whom (or less than 1 percent) lack a four-year degree. Compared with state lawmakers, members of Congress are also more likely to have gone beyond a bachelor's degree and more apt to have attended elite universities. One of 30 Congress members has a degree from Yale, compared with only one of 189 state legislators.

But the Chronicle didn't directly address Professor Squire's claim that more education provides better analytical skills. In their just-published Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa point out that colleges have watered down standards in recent years, partly in the interest of retaining students. Summarizing data from more than 2,000 undergraduates at 24 colleges and universities, the authors report that 85 percent of students have a grade-point average equivalent to a B-minus or higher, while 55 percent have a B-plus or higher.

This is despite the fact that the average student studies less than two hours a day. In a typical semester, half of America's college students don't take a single course requiring 20 or more pages of written work, and a third won't take a course requiring at least 40 pages of reading per week.
With so little academic work, the average college does little to improve the skills that Squire finds so vital. Arum and Roksa tested students at three points in their college careers, and they found depressingly little evidence of improvement in their complex reasoning, critical thinking, or writing skills.

But maybe college helps in other ways, such as financial discipline or ethics. Might those qualities make college-educated legislators better stewards of the public trust?

To crudely test this, my research assistant Charlie Belin compared the prevalence of college education in each state's legislature with its estimated budget deficit as a percentage of total revenues, as calculated by the Pew Center on the States. If college is so useful, then states with more educated legislators, like California, should have lower deficits, since their leaders would be more capable of, as Squire puts it, thinking independently and assessing competing claims.

Alas, it was not to be. As the percentage of legislators with four-year (and higher) college degrees rises, so, too, does a state's relative budget deficit. The correlation between a state's budget gap and its legislature's college education is 0.25 - with zero being no correlation and 1 being a perfect correlation - which despite the small sample size (i.e., the 50 states) is statistically significant. The budget deficit correlates even more highly with the percentage of legislators with an advanced degree, at 0.29.

Meanwhile, Congress, which is more educated than any state legislature, also has a proportionately bigger budget deficit. And regular citizens, who are less educated, have relatively less debt on average.

Of course, correlation does not prove causation. Still, the numbers provide little reason to think that more college leads to more responsible policy-making.

Perhaps college makes people better at evading data than at facing it. As a professor and former government employee I know jokes, "It takes a lot of sophistication to run a huge deficit."

As a member of a university faculty, I am pained to admit that somebody looking at these numbers might get the impression that the way to end state budget woes is to defund the universities.

Robert Maranto is a professor in the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas and the author of "The Politically Correct University." He can be reached at rmaranto@uark.edu.
Danforth Plant Center named a best place to work

BY ROBERT KELLY • rkelly@post-dispatch.com • 314-340-8345 | Posted: Monday, July 11, 2011 12:56 pm | (3) Comments

No MU mention

The Donald Danforth Plant Science Center is ranked eighth in The Scientist Magazine's 2011 "Best Places to Work in Academia" survey, up from number 18 last year. The survey is conducted among respondents identified as life scientists with permanent positions in an academic, hospital, government or research organization.

This year, the survey received more than 2,200 qualified responses ranking a total of 111 organizations -- 92 from the United States and 19 international organizations. In this year's survey, the Danforth Center received strong marks in the "Management and Policies" as well as the "Infrastructure and Environment" categories.

In addition to the Danforth Center, the top 10 institutions of 2011 in the survey are:

J. David Gladstone Research Institutes, San Francisco;

St. Judes Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, Tenn.;

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Seattle;

Carnegie Institution for Science, Stanford, Calif.;

Children's Hospital, Boston;

Midwestern University, Downer's Grove, Ill., and Glendale, Ariz.;

The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Ardmore, Okla.;

Princeton University, New Jersey;

Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, Oklahoma City, Okla. The survey results are online at: http://the-scientist.com/2011/07/01/best-places-to-work-academia-2011/
College gets waiver for tuition increase

Associated Press Monday, July 11, 2011

NO MU MENTION

JOPLIN (AP) — The Missouri commissioner of higher education has waived a state penalty against a university in Joplin for its proposed tuition increase.

The Missouri Southern State University’s Board of Governors in April approved a tuition increase of $20 per credit hour for in-state students, to $163 per credit hour. The board had approved a $5.53-per-credit-hour increase last year but delayed implementation.

The two increases combined is considered by the state to be a 9.27 percent increase, which would trigger a state penalty because it exceeded a cap on tuition increases.

However, Education Commissioner David Russell notified the university June 30 that the penalty would be waived. The Joplin Globe reports he cited the tornado that struck Joplin on May 22 as the reason for the waiver.
Is that watermelon ripe for the picking?

BY JOE BONWICH jbonwich@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8133 | Posted: Tuesday, July 12, 2011 6:00 am

Picking a perfect watermelon is an inexact science.

"You don't really know until you bring it home and cut it open," says Eric DeMange, who has about 25 acres of watermelon growing on his family’s farms in Southern Illinois. He expects to start harvesting melons next week.

How does he decide when the time is ripe to pick them?

For his first test, he uses a criterion well-known among watermelon lovers. "When you pick them up, they have a nice yellow area on their bellies," DeMange says.

Then he performs a less orthodox test.

"I run my hand across the melon perpendicular to the stripes," he says. "It should have a little ridge that you can just barely feel."

Once the melon gets to market, he adds, people have their own tests.

"They thump and do all kinds of things," DeMange says.

For the "thump test," one commonly cited standard is that the thump should result in a sound similar to hitting a jug of water.

Then there's the belief that seedless watermelons are less sweet than seeded varieties.

Not so, says Stephanie Simek, a spokeswoman for the National Watermelon Promotion Board, which says that 86 percent of watermelons sold in the U.S. are seedless.

Seedless and seeded watermelons "have the exact same nutrient profile," Simek says. "And they're both subject to the same minimum Brix level (a measure of sweetness) if they're sold to the consumer."
That, however, is only a minimum level — 8 degrees, as measured on the Brix scale. Most consumers, Simek says, are used to watermelon sweetness corresponding to 11 to 12 degrees Brix.

Numerous academic studies confirm that sweetness is less about seeds and more about variety of melon. A taste-test conducted by Purdue University found that the Brix level for five varieties of seeded watermelons ranged from 11.6 to 12.1 degrees, while 16 seedless varieties ranged from 11.3 to 12.8 degrees. Closer to home, a joint study by the University of Missouri and Lincoln University found Brix levels in 15 seedless watermelons ranging from 11.5 degrees to more than 18 degrees.

Unfortunately for consumers, watermelons are rarely marketed by variety, and heritage and heirloom varieties are, by their nature, not widely available. So if you're confused about how to choose the best watermelon, you're not alone. Your best bet might be to shop at farmers markets and farm stands, where the grower is often there and will cut open samples of the day's crop.