MU drops night custodial shifts to trim costs

By Janese Silvey

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Nighttime custodians on the University of Missouri campus will become daytime employees in December, resulting in pay cuts for some employees but also a savings for the department.

The other option to plug budget gaps would have been to cut staff, said Gary Ward, associate vice chancellor of Campus Facilities.

"I'm not happy," he said, "but I'm not laying folks off. Because that's the next step."

Starting Dec. 5, the roughly 60 custodians who now work a 4 p.m. to midnight shift will join the 85 janitors who work 4 a.m. to noon.

The move is a cost-cutting effort after a year in which the custodial budget ended some $110,000 in the red, Ward said. He had an emergency fund to plug those holes but had to find a way to keep costs down this coming year. This was the best way to do it without compromising services, he said, noting the department already has cut administrative costs.

"I'm running out of rabbits to pull out of the hat," he said.

Changing the shifts, along with eliminating some currently vacant positions, is expected to save the department $100,000.

Because of a cost differential between the two work shifts, night employees now earn an extra 70 cents an hour that they will no longer receive when their hours change. On average, employees will lose about $1,000 in yearly salary, said Karlan Seville, spokeswoman for the department.

Budget cuts already have taken their toll on the department. In previous years, the department kept some custodians on call, allowing them to fill in when someone called in sick or didn't show up. Those positions have since been eliminated, which means janitors are forced to clean more space when their co-workers don't come to work.

By combining the night and day staff into one daytime crew, it will be easier to spread the work of an absent custodian among more employees, Ward said.
Campus Facilities isn’t concerned about not having janitors in the buildings at night, Seville said. The department has a 24-hour service line, allowing anyone to report leaks or other problems that might occur when crews aren’t around.

MU police Chief Jack Watring said he is not concerned about safety being compromised at night with custodians no longer in the buildings. “Our basic concern is getting buildings secured, and Campus Facilities will work out a way to do that,” he said. “I don’t see it as a big problem.”
MU Research Reactor Center holds emergency simulation

By Abby Eisenberg

July 18, 2011 | 2:23 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — As the alarm sounded, MU Research Reactor Center staff lined up and exited the premises, filing to a nearby tree for shade. Police cars and fire trucks blockaded the road leading to the center while paramedics and firefighters entered the building.

This was the beginning of the center's emergency simulation Monday morning, which began about 10:45 a.m. and lasted less than an hour.

The simulation was a fire inside a lab near the reactor but not directly connected to it.

One man played the role of a person who was burned on his arms, with a small amount of radioactive material contaminating the burned area. Within 20 minutes, paramedics were able to "stabilize" the man before bringing him to an ambulance on a stretcher to be transported to University Hospital.

While the center holds smaller scale emergency drills more frequently, the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission requires an extensive drill such as this one every two years. The drill involves many outside support organizations, MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

Representatives from the Columbia Fire Department, Public Safety Joint Communications, MU Police Department, University Hospital and Clinics, MU Environmental Health and Safety, MU News Bureau and reactor staff were all present at the drill, according to a news release from the MU News Bureau.

Basi said the most important thing is the coordination among these entities in emergency situations.

“What we’re doing at these drills is not just testing the procedures. We are testing how we are communicating, who we are communicating with and that we know where to go,” Basi said. “During an emergency, people need to know who to talk to and where to get information.”
Drill monitors in neon green vests took notes on the success of the drill. Involved parties will meet within the next couple of weeks to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the run-through and do a full evaluation of the procedure.
University of Missouri police arrested a 54-year-old Columbia man who returned to Ellis Library on campus Monday after being accused of exposing himself there Friday afternoon.

Willy Wood was arrested on suspicion of second-degree sexual misconduct. Officers sent a surveillance photo of him to media outlets and were notified within an hour that Wood had been spotted at Ellis. He was arrested at 3:17 p.m. Monday.

Police first responded to Ellis at 1:50 p.m. Friday after someone reported the incident to library security. Wood allegedly was masturbating in the restroom and at one point showed a man in the next stall that he was doing so, Chief Jack Watring said. Wood was gone by the time police arrived.
Providence Point’s future will rest with next leader

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Monday, July 18, 2011

One of the first tasks of a new University of Missouri System president will be to decide whether to live at Providence Point, the university-owned mansion tucked behind MU’s athletic complexes.

Steve Owens, the system’s interim president, was going to make the call during his tenure but has had more pressing budget issues to deal with, putting the house issue on a back burner. He also has decided the choice about where to live is a personal one best left for the next permanent leader.

Owens previously expressed concerns that the 12,630-square-foot Providence Point isn’t ideal for a university president. It’s spacious, but the public sections of the home aren’t large enough to host crowds. On the flip side, the rooms in the now-vacant home are too formal to provide a homey feel.

“Some people believe it’s a nice structure, a nice hybrid that can host official functions and also serve as a residence,” Owens said in February. “Others believe that, because we’ve tried to make it a hybrid-type building that does both, we got neither accomplished.”

Designed by Columbia architectural firm Hurst John and Associates, Providence Point was built in 1971 and has housed all eight presidents since. In 1985, a private section was added to the house, and various presidents have upgraded over the years.

The UM Board of Curators has not discussed what to do with the house, if anything, Chairman Warren Erdman said.

Providence Point is “not something I’m focused on right now,” he said in an email. “Certainly want the president to be part of the Columbia community.”

If the UM System were to convert the house into another use and allow the next president to live elsewhere, it would require a change in the collected rules and regulations.
Right now, the rules say the president and chancellors on all four campuses, “for the convenience of the University of Missouri, are required to make their residence in the residence provided by the university.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

University Hospital re-verified as Level I Trauma Center

By Samantha Chulick
July 18, 2011 | 7:00 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — University Hospital has been re-verified by the American College of Surgeons as a Level I Trauma Center.

A Level I trauma certification is the highest national designation a hospital can receive. University Hospital is one of three Level I Trauma Centers in the state, Matt Splett, MU Health Care spokesman said.

“We are proud to be recognized among the elite trauma centers in the country who have achieved Level I status,” James Kessel said in a news release. Kessel is the medical director of University Hospital’s Frank L. Mitchell Jr., MD, Trauma Center.

Each year between 1,200 to 1,500 trauma patients are treated at the hospital, Splett said.

“Mid-Missouri residents should take comfort in knowing that if they are involved in an accident, University Hospital’s trauma team is nationally recognized for providing the highest standard of trauma care,” Stephen Barnes, chief of the Division of Acute Care Surgery at University Hospital, said in the release.

The Committee on Trauma’s verification program was created to develop trauma centers that follow patients from the time they get to the hospital to the time they leave.

The verification process entails an on-site review of the hospital wherein the committee assesses relevant features of the program. According to the American College of Surgeon’s website, these features include commitment, readiness, resources, policies, patient care and performance improvement.

University Hospital goes through the process every three years. The next scheduled re-verification is in 2014.