The Tribune's View:

Deaton

Evaluating the chancellor

By Henry J. Waters III

Columbia Daily Tribune Saturday, August 13, 2011

Not long ago, the performance of University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton was the subject of a survey conducted among faculty on the campus. The results were generally positive, but Deaton and some observers found a few areas worthy of attention, mainly in the general category of communication with faculty.

Deaton promised to work harder to interact.

The survey was not a good indicator. Only 21 percent of faculty members receiving the questionnaires responded, a number that disappointed Sudarshan Loyalka, chairman of the faculty affairs committee. He blamed the low turnout on cynicism and on fear respondents' identities would be revealed. "This is indicative of not only disengagement but certain cynicism in faculty that what they say and do does not matter," the professor said.

Fewer than half of respondents ranked Deaton highly when asked whether he treats units fairly or holds other administrations accountable. Loyalka said people like Deaton, but "fairness is definitely an issue — colleges, departments and faculty being treated fairly."

One might also say the low turnout reflects a general faculty satisfaction with campus management in Jesse Hall. Likely as not, it reflects detachment among many faculty members more interested in their own careers than mixing it up over campus governance.

Not to say such disengagement is necessarily commendable, but it can represent a happy atmosphere as well as the opposite.

I know a few faculty members who live in a permanent state of angst over what they regard as a poor, even disdainful, management attitude at both campus and system levels. Some even have the courage to speak out with their criticisms, allowing the generally silent public more fodder for thought. And sometimes we see discord at department levels.

On a college campus, a certain amount of turmoil is expected and even welcome. If nobody was critical of the chancellor, the biggest target of all, I would worry about a communal case of myopia or worse among faculty.
On a personal level, I believe Deaton sincerely values faculty and the many departments under his watch. He is caught between faculty interests and pressures from University Hall and the UM Board of Curators. As the leader of the flagship campus, he is among the most pushed at by the public. Through all this, his most important attribute is his character, which has proved to be a dependable guide for doing the right thing even in the face of pressure from above.

Deaton’s personality is careful. He is not a rock star able to charm the most skeptical would-be critic out of his shoes. He is kind, thoughtful and receptive but not as quick to respond as a more nimble PR type might. In this regard, he suffers from the persistent UM/MU disease — a pressure not to disclose — but resists that virus better than many of his peers.

The university is getting better at public disclosure, but it comes from such a historic dearth that anyone in high office is likely to look less communicative. I can imagine Deaton getting lots of advice to say or do nothing in response to challenges. Curators and presidents are likely to think the less turmoil, the better from the campuses.

But the more open the communication, the more turmoil likely, and if open communication is not a desirable hallmark of the atmosphere on a college campus, what is?

I think Brady Deaton does a workmanlike job treading this minefield, but of course his avowed effort to engage himself more with faculty is good. MU has a very good chancellor, but when it comes to openness, the more the better.

HJW III
Lee the dog recently needed extra support to overcome his fears about entering a tunnel on an obstacle course. Offering the dog their encouragement were Navy veteran Marcus Friedrich (left) and instructor Helen Jameson.

Even fried chicken couldn’t coax Legs to get down on his belly and crawl through the yellow tunnel to meet his buddy beckoning from the other end.

But that was OK with John Picray. The Navy veteran, who served two deployments to Iraq and flew strikes over Afghanistan, understands fear.

Besides, Picray, 26, knows how far Legs, 3, has come. This was only the third hourlong training session the two had shared. When the part-Airedale mutt started, he wouldn’t even sit and stay.

Now that trick is a yawner. He heels, jumps a low obstacle and comes to Picray’s calls.

Legs learned it all from his amateur trainer, Picray, in the Veterans & Shelter Dogs program, part of a study at the Research Center for Human/Animal Interaction at the University of Missouri’s College of Veterinary Medicine.

The program puts two potentially troubled souls together — abandoned dogs and veterans, like Picray, just home from war.
A program called Veterans & Shelter Dogs benefits both Legs the dog and Navy veteran Marcus Friedrich. He was training Legs recently at the Columbia Canine Sports Center.

"When people come back from the military, they are changed," said Rebecca Johnson, the MU professor and lead researcher of the veterans/shelter dog project.

"Many of them come home with some degree of post-traumatic stress," she said. "Working with the dogs is relaxing and rewarding."

The dogs, either abandoned or relinquished, all come from the Central Missouri Humane Society. The shelter, the only open-acceptance facility within a 150-mile radius of Columbia, takes in about 7,000 animals a year.

"During the summer, the busiest time, the shelter can take in 30 to 40 animals a day," said former Marine Sgt. Nick Holman, who works for the Humane Society and volunteers with the veteran/dog project.

After too long in the shelter, dogs are euthanized. It's hoped that training from the study makes them more desirable,

"That's what we want, for them to be adopted and for the adoptions to stick," Johnson said. "We want them to find a forever home. The idea here is healing through helping."

Picray and Legs are part of a six-veteran group monitored for how their relationship affects them. Johnson and student researchers also follow a control group — six veterans who don't work with dogs and six dogs that don't get trainers. Also reviewed is the adoption rate for the dogs.

"It's behavior science," Johnson said. "We measure mood, anxiety, social adjustment."

Said Helen Jameson, a certified dog-training instructor who has worked in the program since it started in March: "Our observation is that the vets gain skills in dog training and get help being better people, help with their anxiety, aggressions and stress. They know they are helping the animal, too."
Picray finds it hard to put into words how time with the dogs affects him.

“When the dog does good, then you have done good,” he said. “Working with the dogs makes you feel like you are accomplishing something. And they are always happy to see you.”

Before, he slept poorly and often was stressed. It still occurs, he said, but not as often.

Marcus Friedrich, 25, is a Navy man, too. His service was in submarines, cramped for months with 150 other sailors.

“It’s kind of like riding around in your basement for six months,” he said. “I’ve been to the far sides of the world twice under water.”

Daily sunlight, open space and walking on solid ground “is a huge lifestyle adjustment. It’s like reverse claustrophobia. Going from being in charge of a nuclear engine room to sitting in a classroom and being just a student. It’s like having a split personality. There’s the machinist mate, then there’s Marcus.”

Friedrich said he knew his service had affected him. He has flashbacks in which he feels he’s back on a sub. Yet he said he would feel silly going for testing and treatment since he wasn’t amid combat like others with service-related disorders.

“Many veterans are never diagnosed. They suffer quietly on their own in their community,” Johnson said. “The Veterans Administration estimates that 19 percent of the vets who come home from these wars come with some degree of PTSD.”

Those are some of the people she hopes to help.

Johnson wants at least 50 veterans attending at the Columbia Canine Sports Center. She drives around the area talking it up among veterans and wants to expand into Springfield.

Friedrich is training Ross, a year-old shepherd mix, and making great progress. On a loose leash, Ross ran through an obstacle course — over a swinging bridge, through a tunnel, zigzag around cones — with no problem. He stopped periodically for chicken or cheese rewards from Friedrich.

“This program does the best thing you can do for a vet: give him a purpose,” Friedrich said.

Jameson said, “About 124 dogs already have gone through the program.” More than twice that number were unsuitable — aggressive or poor at being handled.

Ultimately, among the parade of shelter dogs in the project, researchers are looking for potential service dogs — those with exceptional trainability who could be companions for veterans suffering debilitating post-traumatic stress disorder.

Victims can experience panic attacks, severe depression, memory loss, nightmares and a fear of public places.

“We have vets who have it so bad, they can’t even leave their house,” Holman said.
"I can tell you about night terrors," he added, having served from 2006 to 2008 in combat zones in Iraq's Anbar province. "It feels like you are back in the combat zone."

So far, two females, Stella and Tiddley, have been identified with special abilities and are living with veterans while training to be service dogs.

"These dogs can go into a dark room ahead of their vet and turn on the light so the vet doesn’t have to walk into a dark place," Holman said.

"They are trained to go around a corner ahead of their vet and then let them know it’s clear. They sleep in the same room with their vet, and if the vet starts to have a night terror, the dog turns on the light, keeps its distance and barks to wake the vet out of the terror."

Recently, law gave these dogs the same public access as guide dogs for the blind.

Sometimes the veterans get to train dogs for several weeks, but most times their partnerships are short-lived because the pets find new owners.

"We celebrate that a dog has been adopted," Johnson said. "Veterans get medals from the program to mark that success."
Program that helps dogs get adopted also benefits veterans

August Kryger

Veteran Joe Simpson smiles at Tiddly on Monday after she successfully completed a command at the Columbia Canine Sports Center. Simpson is one of the veterans participating in a University of Missouri research study, working with shelter dogs to train them to be companions to veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder.

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Sunday, August 14, 2011

Aaron Johnson applauded when Stella, a boxer mix, made it through a dark, curved tunnel on an obstacle course at Columbia Canine Sports Center.

After all, it’s not easy to walk around a corner when you don’t know what’s on the other side.

Several times, Stella poked her head into the tunnel only to turn around and walk out. So when she made it through the other side, it was cause for celebration and a treat.

Being able to walk around dark corners and through obstacles is part of an advanced training program that will prepare her to become a service dog for a veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.
Ideally, Stella someday will be able to sense when her future owner is feeling anxious in a crowd and circle around him to clear some space. Or, if need be, the owner will be able to discreetly get the dog to bark, giving him an excuse to be excused in an uncomfortable social situation.

After training, Stella should be able to turn on a light and nudge her future owner when he’s having a nightmare.

And, in grocery store aisles, Stella will know to walk around a corner ahead of her owner to let him know the coast is clear. Walking around corners is stressful when you’re not sure whether there’s an improvised explosion device on the other side, Rebecca Johnson said. “It’s scary for people who have had to be vigilant all of the time.”

Johnson is an associate professor in both the University of Missouri’s Sinclair School of Nursing and MU’s College of Veterinary Medicine and is director of the campus Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction. She’s conducting a study that lets veterans train shelter dogs to become better pets or to go on to become service dogs for veterans suffering from PTSD.

The study has two components. First, a group of about a dozen veterans is teaching dogs from the Central Missouri Humane Society basic obedience skills such as walking with a leash, sitting and staying. The veterans are working with professional dog trainers at the Columbia Canine Sports Center in east Columbia. They’ve spent the past five months training 119 dogs, many of which have since been adopted, Nick Holman said. He’s a former Marine Corps sergeant who’s now a Central Missouri Humane Society employee serving as a liaison for the project.

Dogs that have shown extraordinary capabilities have gone into an advanced training class where they’re learning skills that will help them become service dogs for veterans suffering from PTSD.

Before Stella is turned over to such a person, though, she’s teaching Aaron Johnson, an Army reservist, a thing or two.

“One of my greatest faults is not being patient,” said Johnson, a soldier who has been deployed twice. “Here, I have to be patient. I can’t get angry at her because even if she does something wrong, she’s still a dog.”

Teaching a dog to sit might not sound like an earth-shattering accomplishment, but Rebecca Johnson is finding out that when the task involves veterans and shelter dogs, there are all sorts of positive consequences.

Not only are the dogs behaving better and getting adopted, but the veterans responsible for training them also are making new four-legged friends. And, unlike some civilians who might not understand what they’re going through, these friends love them unconditionally, don’t pry and just might have a deeper understanding.

Through the training program, Army veteran Joe Simpson has helped Tiddly, a black lab and pointer mix, overcome fear and anxiety. Those are symptoms soldiers can relate to.
“You maintain a state of hypervigilance,” Holman said. “You can’t just flip a switch when you come home.”

Marcus Friedrich, who was deployed twice on a Navy submarine, remembers getting off a plane in Kansas City after returning home. Going from a small submarine to wide-open spaces is overwhelming, he said, adding that he suffers from agoraphobia, the opposite of claustrophobia.

Perhaps the toughest part about coming home from war is losing a sense of purpose.

Friedrich was a mechanical engineer on the submarine, in charge of making sure everything worked. Now, he’s a sophomore at MU.

“I went from a big position of responsibility to now sitting in a classroom with 18-year-olds,” Friedrich, 25, said.

He has struggled with depression, insomnia and questions about his future, asking, “What will I do that compares to” Navy service?

Holman was in charge of 35 men and millions of dollars worth of equipment at age 23. Now, at 26, he’s also an undergraduate. “When you get out, you don’t feel as valuable.”

Aaron Johnson has had a hard time letting go of the tasks he had when deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq, he wasn’t just on the lookout for enemies but also was on patrol, watching out for civilian crimes or fires and keeping an eye on roads and other infrastructure needs.

Here, he has to remind himself there are police officers, firefighters and road crews for those types of duties.

“There are a million and one things a soldier is trying to do,” he said. “You come back here and aren’t needed in those ways.”

College, the 26-year-old Johnson said, is a “huge vacation.” Sure, there are tests, “but no one is trying to blow you up on the way to the test. No one is shooting at you while you’re taking the test. And no one dies if you fail the test.”

Simpson and Holman have regained some sense of purpose through volunteer work. Holman first volunteered with the Humane Society before getting a job there, and he’s president of the Mizzou Student Veterans Association. Simpson, 26, volunteers for food banks and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Knowing their shelter dogs someday will help veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder is incredibly rewarding, Simpson said.

“This is unique because I’m also volunteering for myself while I’m doing this,” he said. Tiddly “is excited to see me when I come home. She makes me more relaxed when something negative happens. She calms me down.”

Friedrich also has noticed immediate benefits of caring for his mixed-breed canine partner, Legs. The insomnia and depression have somewhat subsided, and although the questions about purpose linger, “it’s a little better,” he said. “I’m working on it, I guess.”
It’s too early to draw any scientific conclusions from the project, Rebecca Johnson said. The veterans who are training dogs took pre-project tests that gauged their moods, use of alcohol and other substances, stress levels and ability to readjust.

After they’re done with the training program, the veterans will take tests to see what the benefits might have been. Those reports will be compared to a control group of veterans who didn’t participate.

Likewise, Johnson plans to compare adoption rates of dogs that underwent the basic obedience training to those that did not. She also plans to follow up with families who adopted the dogs.

“We want successful adoptions,” she said.

Veterans with PTSD who adopt the dogs ultimately will be measured for the study as well, although she’s not sure when the dogs will be ready to be adopted. On Wednesday, Stella passed a “Canine Good Citizen” test, a training milestone, Johnson said. Tiddly is expected to pass the same test in tomorrow night’s class. Then, both will proceed to the next level of training, moving them closer toward those adoptions.

Although there’s no conclusion yet from the research, Johnson is noticing effects.

“What we’ve seen anecdotally is that the veterans’ training the dogs are reporting relaxation, a sense of purpose and satisfaction in seeing the dogs progress,” she said. “And, anecdotally, we’re seeing a lot of the dogs being adopted.”

Johnson eventually plans to launch a similar program in Springfield, pairing veterans in that area with dogs from the Southwest Missouri Humane Society.

Training dogs to become PTSD service dogs might be too cumbersome for some communities, but Johnson said the basic obedience component of the project could be duplicated just about anywhere.

“I think we’ve established a model,” she said. “Where there’s a shelter and veterans, the veterans could work to do basic obedience with the dogs, helping the dogs and themselves.”
SEC says 'no' to A&M, at least for now

BY VAHE GREGORIAN vgregorian@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8199 | Posted: Monday, August 15, 2011 12:15 am

For the moment, anyway, the Southeastern and Big 12 conferences will remain as they are.

The SEC on Sunday "reaffirmed our satisfaction with the present 12 institutional alignment," according to a statement released by SEC presidents and chancellors' committee chairman Bernie Machen of Florida.

Yet the cryptic statement added, "We recognize however that future conditions may make it advantageous to expand the number of institutions in the league. We discussed criteria and process associated with expansion. No action was taken with respect to any institution including Texas A&M."

The term "future conditions," of course, could mean within days, especially if the statement reflects the idea of decorum — read: legal concerns — that A&M would have to formally withdraw from the Big 12 before being offered a place in the SEC.

Arkansas Chancellor Dave Gearhart made a point of telling The Associated Press that "(Texas A&M) did approach the SEC, not the other way around," Gearhart said. "I'm not really sure of all the reasons for that. I'm sure that there's a lot of speculation on behalf of a lot of people (as to) what caused them to do that. The bottom line is they did approach the SEC."

A "high-ranking" SEC official told The New York Times this was a way to "tap the brakes" so A&M could get its "house in order," probably meaning for its board of regents meeting today and its hoedown with the Texas legislature on Tuesday.

If the brake tap suddenly becomes a screech, the Big 12 and A&M face the awkwardness of trying to extend their affiliation with A&M red-faced over its apparent rejection and the rest of the conference wary of A&M's sincerity in any renewed commitment it might make.

But at least temporarily — whether because the SEC is further plotting to add a 14th school at the same time it adds A&M, fears costly legal action from the Big 12, doesn't quite want A&M or doesn't want to expand at all — the Big 12 is tenuously holding with 10 members.
In a statement released Sunday afternoon by Texas A&M, school president R. Bowen Loftin said, "There has been a considerable amount of misinformation regarding these discussions and any associated timelines. ... These are extremely complex issues, and it is imperative that we proceed methodically and in the best interests of Texas A&M."

The Big 12 offered no immediate comment.

Scattered reports have suggested Mizzou also might be under consideration by the SEC, but an SEC official debunked that notion to The New York Times. And MU chancellor Brady Deaton told the Post-Dispatch Saturday night that Mizzou was "totally committed to the Big 12."

As chairman of the Big 12 board of directors, Deaton has particular reason to honor that commitment. MU athletics director Mike Alden also bluntly denied any contact or interest in the SEC.

Beyond that, it's both questionable how MU would fit in the SEC or whether the SEC would consider MU to have enough value to divide its pie further.

While Missouri touches three SEC states and has two major television markets to offer, it's hard to know how intriguing that would be to the SEC. Whatever virtues Mizzou offers, if it doesn't clearly and overwhelmingly bring increased television revenue value the SEC would have no incentive to extend an offer.

As for whether it makes sense for Mizzou, let's zoom in on one area:

Football clearly has been demonstrated to be driving conference realignment. And no conference is more nasty top to bottom than the SEC, which has won the last five national titles.

So in one sense, it's hard to resist the chance to join the best.

But while MU has become competitive in the Big 12 — its 22 conference wins the last four seasons are second only to Oklahoma's 24 — it hasn't won a conference title since 1969.

A schedule loaded with the likes of Auburn, Alabama, Florida and Louisiana State wouldn't be conducive to further prosperity.

While less scrutinized in the realignment hoopla, MU also has put a premium on the idea that any conference change needs to be beneficial for the overall institution. That's why Mizzou has been so enamored of the Big Ten:

Until recently, each Big Ten school was in the prestigious Association of American Universities, a criteria that MU meets and Nebraska met ... until after it was invited to join.

Five current Big 12 schools are in the AAU; only two make that grade in the SEC, Florida and Vanderbilt.
That’s only one measure, of course, for academic distinction. But it might be a useful common denominator in understanding Mizzou’s institutional view on the matter — which may be a moot point, anyway.

Either way, it’s first things first with A&M.

If the Aggies leave, the Big 12 then has to determine whether it will go forth with nine schools or expand.

But other members would seem likely to be wooed by other conferences, and with a third departure announced in just over a year those left probably would wonder who’s next … and where do I end up?
Big 12 to fight Texas A&M move to SEC

BY VAHE GREGORIAN • vgregorian@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8199 | Posted: Sunday, August 14, 2011 12:30 am

COLUMBIA, MO. • Mizzou chancellor Brady Deaton, the chairman of the board of the Big 12 Conference, said Saturday night that member institutions had "strongly conveyed" to Texas A&M their unanimous desire that A&M remain in the Big 12 but that the conference is prepared to move aggressively if A&M leaves for the Southeastern Conference as it appears bent on doing.

Speaking after a conference call with the other institutional leaders, including Texas A&M's R. Bowen Loftin, Deaton said the other nine had reaffirmed "long-term, unequivocal and unconditional commitments to the league" and believed they had addressed a key issue among A&M's apparent reasons for signaling it wants out.

Specifically, he said, the board reiterated that it had embraced the stated conference stance that any interest the new Longhorn Network has in attempting to feature a conference game could only be enabled with consent of the other conference school and the conference office.

Deaton also took a conciliatory stance toward A&M, declining to criticize it for its apparent breach of a vow of unity given a year ago amid the departures of Colorado and Nebraska and renewed just weeks ago.

"No one points a finger at anyone here," he said, adding, "We understand some of the differences that there are among members of the conference."

If those differences ultimately do result in A&M's departure, many wonder if the conference can remain in place with nine members and the perception that it is constantly at odds with one another.

But even steeped in the latest turmoil, Deaton said he believes members are "developing a framework" for "open, vibrant discussions" and added, "I genuinely can say that the entire conference is very excited about where we're going."

Deaton did not elaborate on whether the conference would seek to re-expand if A&M left, but it was clear that was his meaning, likely back to 10, when he said it was ready to move aggressively.
As for where Mizzou itself is going, the subject of ample speculation on Saturday, Deaton said, "I know there are all kind of rumors out there, but I can assure you that the University of Missouri is totally committed to the Big 12 in case there is any question."

His words echoed remarks made Saturday morning by MU athletics director Mike Alden, who emphatically said no Missouri representative had spoken to the SEC as some had suggested.

"No. The answer to your question is no," Alden said. "I want to make sure: No."

Moments later, ESPN's Doug Gottlieb posted on Twitter that a "high-ranking" source at A&M confirmed the Aggies will soon be SEC-bound and added that Clemson, Florida State and Missouri also are "likely to join."

Told of Gottlieb's post, Alden seemed more baffled than miffed and said, "There's nothing. ... No, no, no."

Gottlieb later back-tracked, and Pete Thamel of The New York Times tweeted that a "high-ranking SEC official just called to say (angrily) that any report involving Clemson, FSU and Missouri is totally wrong."

If the Big 12 doesn't remain workable, Mizzou's options aren't at all clear.

But while Alden denied any dalliances with the SEC and indicated the same about contact with other conferences, he said that shouldn't be "misconstrued as not working" on the situation.

Just what that means, and how it will play out, is anybody's guess. And that's even the case with Texas A&M, driven as it might be to ditch the Big 12 and the University of Texas in particular.

While the school's Board of Regents is prepared to vote on realignment Monday, an SEC official told Thamel that he believed there was a "30- to 40-percent chance" SEC presidents would rebuff A&M the day before.

And Orangeblossoms.com, the Rivals.com site covering UT, reported there could be severe financial consequences in play if A&M tries to leave:

"Multiple sources said the 13-year Fox television deal signed by the Big 12 in April for $1.17 billion can be voided if Texas A&M leaves. The sources said if the SEC, which has had ongoing conversations with Texas A&M since Mike Slive was on the College Station campus during last summer's realignment, could be seen as the instigator in A&M's actions, it could constitute a $1 billion lawsuit against the SEC as well as a lawsuit for damages against individuals involved."

Although Deaton said it was his understanding the TV contract wasn't necessarily in jeopardy, that possibility and a multi-million dollar sum withheld from A&M as an exit penalty could weigh heavily on SEC and A&M's actions.
On the surface, anyway, the Big 12 had seemed stabilized and energized since the departure of Nebraska and Colorado at the end of the school year until ESPN recently clarified its intention to broadcast on the Longhorn Network high school football games targeting UT recruits.

The idea rankled the rest of the conference, and the Big 12 put a moratorium on it before the NCAA struck it down altogether last week. But A&M wasn't appeased.

Should A&M depart, Alden believes the Big 12 could be "absolutely viable" with nine members. A key to that would be how media partners assess the new conference stock.

That was among the topics on a conference call earlier Saturday among Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe and nine of 10 athletics directors. Various reports indicated Texas A&M's Bill Byrne, in Europe with the A&M basketball team, did not participate.

If A&M goes, Orangebloods.com reported, the sentiment was that the league should add a school to get back to 10 and that initial targets would include Air Force, BYU, Houston and TCU.
All signs point to Texas A&M moving to SEC

BY VAHE GREGORIAN • vgregorian@post-dispatch.com | Posted: Saturday, August 13, 2011 12:45 pm

Since at least 1920, Texas A&M has had a tangible institutional obsession with the University of Texas.

Whether out of resentment, in jest or a little bit of both, it was cemented that year when A&M adopted the Aggie War Hymn as its fight song.

"Good bye to Texas University," it starts. "So long to the orange and white."

It took 91 years, but A&M now appears on the verge of doing just that as the school's board of regents has called a special meeting for Monday to discuss league alignment and presumably a move to the Southeastern Conference.

An A&M departure would re-destabilize a Big 12 that has with futility tried to project togetherness and optimism in the year since Colorado and Nebraska announced they were departing.

If A&M does leave, perhaps as soon as next year, it's uncertain what the implications are for the future of the conference.

It could remain viable at nine schools, seek to re-expand or be on its way to oblivion if others seek new alignments either in frustration or panic.

The University of Missouri's assessment of the matter is not known, and its options in the event of a future conference collapse are not obvious.

MU chancellor Brady Deaton, the chairman of the Big 12 board, was in meetings all day Friday and unavailable to comment.

In an email, MU athletics spokesman Chad Moller told multiple media outlets that athletics director Mike Alden could not be reached Friday, though Alden is expected to take questions at MU's football scrimmage this morning.

Reminiscent of last summer's conference realignment hysteria, the possibility of A&M defecting began with a trickle before becoming a deluge.
Ostensibly, it was triggered in the last few weeks by anger over ESPN’s plans to broadcast high school games featuring University of Texas recruits on the soon-to-debut Longhorn Network.

Even without the SEC publicly stating it was seeking expansion, and it still hasn't, and even after the NCAA ruled this week that high school games could not be televised in such a format, the idea that the Aggies would SEC-ede gained traction and intensified as it was believed that the school's regents would discuss the matter at their scheduled Aug. 22 meeting.

By Friday night, there no longer was any doubt of a collision course ahead. All signals were that A&M would be plowing through and moving on.

Trumping the Texas legislature’s call for a meeting on the matter Tuesday, to which it invited Big 12 and SEC officials, A&M moved up its regents meeting to Monday. The last item on the public agenda reads: "Authorization for the President to Take All Actions Relating to Texas A&M University Athletic Conference Alignment."

If that wasn't signal enough, Texas AD DeLoss Dodds told the Austin American-Statesman, "It looks to me like they're leaving."

Kansas AD Sheahon Zenger made it sound like a foregone conclusion to The Kansas City Star, saying the Big 12 had assured KU "that the nine schools are firmly committed to the Big 12."

According to The Daily Oklahoman, an OU administrator said he believes A&M is leaving and added, "Some of the egos are escalating."

In fact, it's hard to know to what degree logic and what degree emotion are at play in A&M's apparent thinking.

SEC schools have won the last five national football championships, and top to bottom the league is the most thorny in the nation. For A&M, whose athletic identity is banked on football, that's a lot of potential losses facing a program just returning to stability for the first time since it fired R.C. Slocum in 2002. Slocum, incidentally, was deemed unworthy after going 123-47-2 in 14 seasons, none of them with a losing record.

If the SEC does invite A&M in, one likely reason is to use A&M as a recruiting avenue into Texas. That, too, could backfire on A&M. It also could have ripples for a school such as MU, which has about 40 players from Texas.

The SEC has been publicly mum on the matter, but it seems doubtful that it would add just one school and have an imbalanced 13 members if it does expand.

Speculation has it that Florida State might also be invited as a 14th, although the FSU president told The Associated Press no talks had taken place.

As it was last summer, speculation has no sensible stopping point, either: Is an era of 16-school super-conferences at hand? Or is this just another mini-rumbling?
Little can be sorted out or solved until at least one domino falls, and it's all the more murky because few will state their true intentions publicly.

A&M, for instance, made an oath of commitment, as did other remaining members, to stay with the Big 12 last summer.

At the time, A&M president R. Bowen Loftin issued a letter to "The Aggie Family" that noted the school had been able to "more than double our financial returns" compared to what might have come from other conferences (the SEC among them).

"I am confident this decision will serve Texas A&M well in the years to come," he also wrote.

But Sporting News reported from SEC media days last month that an SEC source said the conference had remained in contact with A&M since June 2010.

If that ongoing flirtation is accurate, it calls into question the sincerity of Texas A&M's renewed vow and suggests it has been looking for ways to preserve options all along rather than trying to seeking solutions when issues arise.

At least from the outside looking in, then, it might be argued that A&M merely was waiting to find an excuse to leave and get out from under UT's shadow — one about 91 years in the making.

But while the Aggie War Hymn implores fans to 'saw (Texas') horns off," A&M's modern leaders might be disregarding the symbiotic relationship between the two and, in fact, impulsively sawing off its own roots.
Missouri, Clemson officials deny possible SEC moves

By Erick Smith, USA TODAY

Reacting to an ESPN report that his school will be pursued by the SEC, Missouri athletics director Mike Alden denied his school was talking about leaving the Big 12.

"No, no, no," was the response Alden gave the St. Louis Post-Dispatch when asked about the speculation. Alden expressed a commitment to staying in the Big 12 and said the league's athletics directors would hold a conference call Saturday to discuss the league's reaction to Texas A&M's possible move to the SEC.

While Alden said he didn't think A&M's departure was a certainty, the story by ESPN cited A&M school officials saying they intend to leave the Big 12 and hope to start play in the SEC in 2012.

In addition to Missouri, ESPN also reported that SEC would try to add Florida State and Clemson to bring the league to 16 teams.

However, both of those schools' presidents have now said publicly that isn't the case.

Clemson University President James Barker released a statement Saturday that the school plans on staying where it is, according to the Associated Press.

"We are committed to the ACC," Barker said. "We have had no contact with the SEC."

Florida State president Eric Barron said Friday that his school has had no contact with the SEC and is also committed to staying in the ACC.

The possible additions of Florida State and Clemson could face resistance from Florida and South Carolina, which may not be willing to add their in-state rivals to the conference.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: Missouri AD Mike Alden denies SEC move

By Harry Plumer
August 13, 2011 | 11:06 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Missouri Athletics Director Mike Alden on Saturday denied reports about a potential move for the school from the Big 12 Conference to the Southeastern Conference, saying he had not any contact with the SEC regarding expansion.

Amid speculation about Texas A&M’s departure from the Big 12 for the SEC, ESPN’s Doug Gottlieb reported Saturday morning that a high ranking source at Texas A&M claimed Clemson, Florida State and Missouri were likely to follow the Aggies.

“No, no, no, no, there’s not truth to that,” Alden said during Saturday morning’s football scrimmage. “Our priority is the Big 12.”

Alden did not confirm or deny anything related to Texas A&M’s potential departure, only saying that the Big 12 athletic directors were scheduled for a conference call at 3 p.m. Saturday with commissioner Dan Beebe. After meeting with the ADs, Beebe held another teleconference with the Big 12 Conference Board of Directors, which released a statement Saturday night saying the group "strongly conveyed to Texas A&M its unanimous desire that it remain a Big 12 member."

The statement also included that the rest of the Big 12 members "reaffirmed their long term, unconditional and unequivocal commitments made to each other and the Conference last summer," but that if Texas A&M were to leave, "the Board is prepared to aggressively move forward to explore expansion opportunities."

The conference unrest comes just months after the league negotiated a 13-year television contract with Fox that is reported to be worth over $1 billion. It is unclear at this time whether that contract would become void if Texas A&M left the conference.

“It’s frustrating because we’ve got a great league,” Alden said Saturday morning. “It’s frustrating and distracting.”
MU’s Deaton confident in future of the Big 12

By MIKE DeARMOND

The Kansas City Star

COLUMBIA | Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton acknowledges that many people doubt the veracity of his claims of Big 12 stability and MU’s allegiance to the league.

“The public doesn’t know exactly what’s going on, and they don’t necessarily believe you when you tell them what is going on,” Deaton told The Star on Sunday.

Deaton is head of the league’s Board of Directors and took part in a conference call with league and member school officials Saturday over Texas A&M’s flirtation with bolting to the Southeastern Conference.

“I’m very confident in the stability of the Big 12 Conference going forward,” he said. “And hopefully going forward with Texas A&M. But times are so rapidly changing that sometimes the best interests of an institution comes into conflict with the best interest of the conference. I understand that. We do understand that.

“But I speak for all the Big 12 Conference schools, and I feel very confident in the future of the Big 12.”

Widespread speculation on the Internet and in stories posted on newspaper websites was that several schools were seeking or had offers to change league allegiances.

Deaton put that denial even more forcefully in his interview with The Star on Sunday.

“Absolutely not,” Deaton said. “Missouri has had no discussions with any other conference, at least to my knowledge.”

It was a question Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe brought up Saturday.

“I was taken by surprise by Dan Beebe when he told me yesterday, ‘You’re all over the internet,’ ” Deaton said.

“You know, we don’t necessarily plan our weekends around the internet.”
Alden denies ESPN report of "likely" Mizzou move to SEC; reveals Big 12 call today

By Mike DeArmond - Posted on 13 August 2011

COLUMBIA – Denying the credibility of a tweet by ESPN’s Doug Gottlieb that Missouri appears ready to follow Texas A&M in bolting the Big 12 Conference for the SEC, Mizzou athletic director Mike Alden said MU has had no discussions on conference membership with any league other than the Big 12.

However, Alden added, he and other Big 12 athletic directors are set to take part in a 3 p.m. teleconference call today with league commissioner Dan Beebe.

Told that Gottlieb had just tweeted that a “high-ranking Texas A&M official” had told him Missouri, Florida State and Clemson were likely to join A&M in a move to the SEC, Alden responded:

“Where are we going? We haven’t had any discussions with anybody else. Our focus, as you know, is on the Big 12.”

After pausing to shake his head, Alden said: “Call Doug on the phone. Do you have his number? I may call him.”

Alden – addressing the latest expansion rumor while sitting in the Memorial Stadium stands watching Missouri’s first football scrimmage of the preseason on Saturday – added:

“I don’t know how you or any of us can follow all this? There’s just (stuff, stuff) every step of the way. On anything. On everything.”

That said, Alden left no doubt he expects Texas A&M to leave the Big 12 for the SEC, as has been widely reported over the last 24 hours.

“It certainly appears that way,” Alden said. “I don’t know that to be a fact. But that’s the impression I’ve been receiving with the volume of traffic over the last 24 to 36 hours.”

Alden said he has frequent contact with athletic officials from every major conference in the country on a regular basis simply as part of his serving on NCAA committees and as part of national athletic director functions.
Alden said he should have a better view of the stability of the Big 12 and any impending defections this afternoon after the conference call.

As for Missouri’s current and eventual status in the world of big time college athletics and its shifting conference scene, Alden said:

“I just know that the Mizzou brand is a really strong brand and it’s become much stronger over the course of the last five years.”
COLUMBIA, Mo. • Student leaders at the University of Missouri-Columbia hope the latest effort to offer their classmates a spot to tailgate will go over better than its predecessor.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported that the latest effort will be called The End Zone. It will be in the same lot where the school last year opened an unpopular tailgating spot called The Jungle.

"Since we didn't have much success last year, we felt it was time to rebrand and change the name and feel - just because people were used to The Jungle being a kind of joke," said Eric Woods, president of the Missouri Students Association.

Students said part of the problem were the rules. No vehicles were allowed and student organizations had to reserve spaces ahead of time. Plus, walk-in tailgaters weren't allowed.

"We had policies in place in the beginning that were not the most friendly or conducive to get students there," Woods said.

Like last year, hard alcohol and glass bottles won't be allowed, but beer in cans is OK. Woods says underage students shouldn't drink, but officers won't be checking everyone's IDs.

Students can reserve a spot ahead of time, but, starting with the first home game Sept. 3, that won't be a requirement.

The school also wants to get out the word that family members are welcome.

"That was allowed last time, but it wasn't communicated well," Woods said. "If you don't want to take Mom and Dad to Lot X, where they're going to be crawled on top of or crammed into a spot, this is a good alternative."

For people who don't spend $5 to park a vehicle, tables and chairs will be set up. Food also will be provided during the first several tailgates.

MU Police Capt. Brian Weimer said fights, alcohol-related injuries and other problems have decreased significantly since Reactor Field closed to tailgaters. He noted that there weren't many problems at the student space last year.

"It's not that we're against tailgating," Weimer said. "Obviously, we want everyone to be safe and have a good time, and, of course, that includes enforcing the law."
MU overhauls former 'Jungle' tailgate

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Friday, August 12, 2011

A new — or at least repackaged — student tailgate spot will open on the University of Missouri campus next month, and student leaders said they hope it goes over better than its predecessor did.

The spot will be called The End Zone and will be in the lot at Rollins Street and Tiger Avenue, formerly Maryland Avenue. That address might sound familiar: Last year, the same lot opened as The Jungle, a tailgating spot that didn’t prove to be popular for pre-football game parties.

“Since we didn’t have much success last year, we felt it was time to rebrand and change the name and feel — just because people were used to The Jungle being a kind of joke,” said Eric Woods, president of the Missouri Students Association.

Coming up with a better name was the first step, he said. The Jungle had a negative connotation that students wanted to drop.

Then there were the rules some believe kept students from tailgating there. The student lot last year didn’t allow vehicles, had MU police officers specifically assigned to it and required student organizations to reserve spaces ahead of time.

Walk-in tailgaters weren’t allowed.

“We had policies in place in the beginning that were not the most friendly or conducive to get students there,” Woods said.

That’s all going to change.

Starting with the first home game Sept. 3, students won’t have to be part of organizations or sign up ahead of time to tailgate there, although they can reserve space ahead of time if they want to.

Family members also are welcome.

“That was allowed last time, but it wasn’t communicated well,” Woods said. “If you don’t want to take Mom and Dad to Lot X, where they’re going to be crawled on top of or crammed into a spot, this is a good alternative.”

There also will be spaces open to vehicles for a $5 charge. Tables and chairs will be set up in other spots for students who show up on foot, and food will be provided during the first several tailgates.
Like last year, hard alcohol and glass bottles won’t be allowed, but beer in cans is OK. Underage students shouldn’t drink, Woods said, but officers won’t be checking everyone’s IDs.

MU police officers won’t patrol the lot the entire time like they did last year, although officers do patrol campus before games.

“Last year, because they were anticipating such a large turnout, many officers were hired for security,” Woods said.

MU Police Capt. Brian Weimer said he wasn’t aware of changes at the student lot and said the space last year didn’t experience the problems that typically plague tailgate locations. Fights, alcohol-related injuries and other problems have decreased significantly since Reactor Field closed to tailgaters, he said.

“It’s not that we’re against tailgating,” Weimer said. “Obviously, we want everyone to be safe and have a good time, and, of course, that includes enforcing the law.”

Kim Dude, director of MU’s Wellness Resource Center, said she hopes the changes make the student tailgate spot more successful. Having more positive environments and shutting down troublesome spots might be causing students to make better pregame decisions.

Dude said students last year reported drinking less before games than in the past. Last year, more students reported not drinking at all or drinking fewer than four drinks during tailgating than in previous years.

Dude has begun driving through tailgate spots on a golf cart to observe fan behavior. “The vast majority of people I see are just having a good time and a couple of drinks.”
Med journals retracting more research

Your doctor may be working off bad information

Updated: Friday, 12 Aug 2011, 6:36 PM CDT
(CNN) - You may trust what your doctors tell you, but studies show they might be working off bad information.

Physicians and researchers share breakthroughs in medical science and treatments in journals. Sometimes, however, these publications have to retract stories when they turn out to be wrong. The number of retractions is going up according to a Wall Street Journal investigation conducted by Thomson Reuters. It says there were only 22 retractions in 2001, but 339 last year—a fifteenfold increase.

John Budd's research also shows an increase over time. He’s a professor at the University of Missouri who spent years studying why publications are retracted. He found that between 1997 and 2008, 47% of the articles were pulled because of "misconduct or presumed misconduct." Errors accounted for 25%; 21% were taken down because the authors could not get the same results consistently. The remaining 7% were unclassified.

Budd says errors such as an accidentally contaminated tissue sample can be understandable—"it is just the way human beings are"—but the misconduct and fraud "is harder to understand." Budd’s research suggests it’s "almost certain that some people are motivated by the need or desire to advance." Publication in a major medical journal can help a researcher's career and lead to promotions or funding for additional research.


The number of retractions is small compared with the overall amount of research published, but it can have a big impact.

For example, a British study by Dr. Andrew Wakefield in 1998 reported that autism was linked to childhood vaccines. The paper led to some parents not vaccinating their children for measles, mumps and rubella. In January 2011 the journal BMJ retracted Wakefield's study, calling it an "elaborate fraud." Fiona Godlee, BMJ's editor-in-chief, told CNN it was a "deliberate attempt to create an impression that there was a link by falsifying the data." Wakefield has defended the research.
In 2005, the journal Science published an article by South Korean scientist Hwang Woo-suk who claimed to have cloned human embryonic stem cells. A year later the journal retracted it saying "data presented in both papers is fabricated." Woo later admitted to faking his findings saying, "It is true that the research papers had fabricated data, and I will take full responsibility. I acknowledge this and apologize."

When retractions happen journals publish notices, and on their websites many indicate in red type that the published report has been retracted. Since the initial publication, however, other authors may have based their research or cited parts of their studies on the now retracted study. Budd finds that most troubling. His research shows only 5% of the citations for works retracted in 1999 acknowledged the cited work had been retracted.

There are several ways you can be an empowered patient and protect yourself against treatment based on error and misconduct in medical journals.
- Review your own research. Budd recommends searching online libraries for research relevant to your health care that may be retracted. The website RetractionWatch also monitors studies that have been pulled.
- Remember that new treatments are not always necessarily the best.
- Keep following up with your doctor to make sure any treatment that you are on is still the best.
'Majestic study' casts doubt on bisphenol a scare

By JOE SCHWARCZ, Freelance August 13, 2011

I must say that I have never previously heard a study described as "majestically scientific." But the British do have a way with words. And those were the words that Dr. Richard Sharpe of the University of Edinburgh's Human Reproductive Sciences Unit used in his analysis of a paper titled 24 Hour Human Urine and Serum Profiles of Bisphenol A During High Dietary Exposure. That's quite a compliment from one of the world's leading experts on "endocrine disruption."

Sharpe was actually the first scientist to suggest, in a 1993 landmark paper in the British medical journal The Lancet, that exposure during pregnancy to hormone-like chemicals could lead to developmental problems in the offspring. Since that time, his research has focused on male reproductive health and the role that environmental chemicals may play in the increasing incidence of testicular cancer, low sperm count and low testosterone levels. Like most researchers in the field, Sharpe was open to the possibility that bisphenol A (BPA), a chemical that was widely used in the production of polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins, and which exhibited clear estrogen-like behaviour, could be a problem. After all, the chemical was showing up, albeit in trace amounts, in most everyone's urine.

But it was University of Missouri professor Fred vom Saal's finding of abnormal prostate growth and decreased sperm production in rats, at doses far lower than what was considered to be safe, that catapulted bisphenol A from obscurity onto the public stage.

Vom Saal's work, coupled with reports of female oysters acquiring male characteristics when exposed to the estrogenic detergent breakdown product nonylphenol, and penis deformities in Florida alligators linked to environmental contaminants captured the media's and scientists' attention. Grants became available and research mushroomed. It may now well be the most studied chemical ever, with more than 4,500 research papers devoted to it. One would think that would be enough to eliminate all confusion, but alas, no.

Reproducibility is one of the cornerstones of scientific research. But try as they might, other scientists were unable to reproduce the prostate problems in rats. Vom Saal argued that others were using the wrong breed of animals, or that the studies absolving bisphenol A were funded by chemical companies and could not be trusted.

Actually, various breeds of animals were used, and furthermore, if subtle differences between closely related species have such a significant effect on bisphenol A metabolism, then how can
we draw any inference about humans? And as far as studies are concerned, the relevant question is not the source of funding, but whether the data is robust enough to pass peer review.

The debate about bisphenol A quickly took on an acrimonious nature with both sides accusing each other of "flawed studies," a usual euphemism for poor work.

But virtually all regulatory agencies declared that there was no evidence of any harm to humans, although some, such as Health Canada, exercised the "precautionary principle" and banned polycarbonate baby bottles.

That sat well with vom Saal, who commented: "The science is clear and the findings are not just scary, they are horrific. Why would you feed a baby out of a clear, hard plastic bottle? It's like giving a baby a birth control pill."

Well, the truth is that the science is not clear, and a comparison with the birth control pill is absurd. The estrogenic potential of the amount of bisphenol A in our daily diet is about 50,000 times less than that of one birth control pill.

Of course, there is legitimate controversy with bisphenol A.

Some researchers have detected blood levels they claim are comparable to those that cause problems in animals, but these studies have been criticized because they do not mesh with what is known about the amount of BPA ingested, how the chemical is metabolized and the amount that shows up in the urine. Contamination of samples by traces of BPA in laboratory equipment has been offered as a likely explanation.

To truly evaluate the effects of bisphenol A, it is imperative to determine blood levels accurately. And this is where the "majestic research" comes in.

The study was carried out jointly by a U.S. Department of Energy lab, the Centers for Disease Control and the FDA, not exactly fly-by-night operations. Twenty subjects consumed a diet of mostly processed foods that had been in contact with bisphenol A, as in can liners. According to calculations, this put them in the highest possible category of oral exposure to BPA.

Blood samples were taken every hour over a 24-hour period, a type of investigation that had never been done before. Furthermore, the samples were sent for analysis of bisphenol A to two independent laboratories that were thoroughly experienced in preventing contamination.

In a nutshell, the biologically active bisphenol A levels in the blood throughout the day were below the detection capabilities of the most sophisticated instruments available! This meticulous study casts doubt on previously detected blood levels by others.

"Beautifully designed and executed," was Sharpe's comment about the study. His interpretation is that the majority of effects observed in animal studies can now be seen as probably not relevant to humans because they involved much higher BPA blood levels. Humans would have
to be thousands of times more sensitive to BPA than rats to experience developmental issues - a very unlikely scenario.

Is this the final word on BPA? No. The final word in science is that there is rarely a final word. Undoubtedly, those who look on BPA as the chemical from hell are scrambling to poke holes in this new study. They may point out that it is skin exposure to BPA from contaminated ink from cash register receipts, not oral exposure, that can lead to elevated blood levels. Unlikely, but possible.

The evolving BPA research, however, is enough to convince Sharpe and many other experts that enough money has already been sunk into BPA investigations, and that now, in light of the "majestic" blood level study, the time has come to put estrogenic concerns about this chemical on the back burner. Of course, that back burner needs to be monitored for flare-ups.

Joe Schwarcz is director of McGill University's Office for Science and Society (OSS.McGill.ca). He can be heard every Sunday from 3-4 p.m. on CJAD radio. joe.schwarcz@mcgill.ca
MU professor to test interaction of herbal supplements and prescribed medications

By Glyn Coakley
August 15, 2011 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — An MU biochemistry professor is working on a test that will tell people if the medicines they're taking are interacting negatively with something else in their system.

Bill Folk's experiences in South Africa sparked his idea for the test. He has been to South Africa multiple times to test plants used to treat symptoms of AIDS and other diseases. Many people in Africa use traditional remedies in addition to western medicine, and Folk became concerned about how the traditional plants might be interacting with the western medicines. The test Folk and other researchers and students are helping to develop would determine just that.

Folk is the principal investigator and co-director of the International Center for Indigenous Phytotherapy Studies. It's an organization led by MU and the University of the Western Cape in South Africa that is investigating the safety of a native plant called sutherlandia as part of a long-term study on the interaction of the plant with western medicine.

These kinds of interactions are the focus of the center's research, but it could be a long time before the results are known. Tests on sutherlandia alone will likely take years to complete, and it's one of thousands of plants used across Africa to treat some diseases and their symptoms. It is also used to treat stress.

Folk thinks that testing all of the plants would be the best option, but it would simply take too long to do enough research to have a large impact.

"We need an alternative to doing all this good science," Folk said.

The potential for a test that checks if treatments are interfering with each other extends far beyond Africa, though. In America, natural remedies are becoming increasingly popular.
They're already widespread in Europe, and people taking them often don't mention them to their doctors, either out of embarrassment or absentmindedness, Folk said. He also said that doctors aren't trained to ask if patients are taking them.

According to the American Botanical Council, the sale of herbal supplements in America totaled $5.2 billion in 2010, up 21.1 percent from 10 years earlier and 3.3 percent from the year before.

These supplements, which can be obtained without a prescription, can interfere with the body's drug metabolizing systems, causing drugs to be metabolized differently by the body, resulting in greater or lesser effect — or no effect at all.

This can cause doctors to prescribe different drugs, sometimes more expensive ones, when the real problem is something else the patient is taking.

One example Folk cited is Saint-John's-wort, a common herbal treatment for depression. The plant stimulates some of the body's eight drug metabolizing systems, which limits the effect of prescribed medications, including some anti-retrovirals used to treat AIDS, hormonal contraceptives and some immunosuppressants.

If someone were taking Saint-John's-wort in addition to one of those other medications, it might become less effective — and that could be fatal, particularly with anti-retrovirals.

Gina Butler, an acupuncturist and Chinese herbalist for the Women's Wellness Center in Columbia, said she always checks to make sure the herbs she recommends don't conflict with medications her patients are taking. She also makes a list of what herbs they're taking available to the patients and their doctors so they can head off interactions.

Folk's test uses a sample of a body fluid and checks it for a natural hormone. If the chemical is outside a certain level, the metabolizing system of a drug is being affected. The idea is to make it as easy and simple to use as a pregnancy test.

But the test is still several years from being finished. The hormone the test looks for is similar to another hormone that is often present in the body, and the researchers need to ensure that the test measures the right one.

"It's possible, but it's going to take a fair amount of work," Folk said.
When it’s ready, Folk said, it could affect millions worldwide, especially if it's as cheap as he hopes to make it. He said it will give people the ability to manage their medications more effectively, eliminating the need for doctors to determine if any treatments, traditional or otherwise, are counteracting each other.

It would be a lifesaver in developing countries, where doctors are often too few and far between for most people to see one when they need one.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Going trayless expands to dining halls across MU

By Don Baik
August 14, 2011 | 7:35 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – MU Campus Dining Services will expand a "trayless policy" in dining halls on campus at the start of the fall semester.

Except for those customers who need them, trays will no longer be provided at Plaza 900, Rollins, the Pavilion at Dobbs and Mark Twain Market. Campus Dining Services operated a pilot program in Rollins dining hall this summer.

"The pilot program successfully worked, with most customers providing positive feedback," said Michael Wuest, marketing manager for Campus Dining Services. Missouri Students Association and Residence Halls Association have strongly supported expanding the policy for the fall semester, Wuest said.

Campus Dining Services can focus more on offering higher quality food to students with trayless dining in place, he said. "We can purchase more of high-quality local foods such as Missouri Legacy Beef and from local farmers," he said. Going trayless will also save on wasted water and food.

"MU will be able to save nearly 100,000 gallons of fresh, potable water each year when all the dining halls carry out the trayless policy," Wuest said. "Approximately 65 tons of food and beverages — which is 26 percent of daily regular food waste in campus dining halls — will be saved."

When people are hungry, he said, they tend to eat with their eyes and not with what their stomachs can handle, he said. "People load their trays up with food and end up throwing a lot of that same food away."

Use of detergents and other chemicals will decrease by 10 to 15 percent, he said. Some students have been asking for trayless dining for as long as four years, Wuest said. "Over 600 colleges and universities in America have gone trayless," he said. "And the switch was successful."