Deaton, Alden tout Big 12's commitment, expansion plans

By Dave Matter
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As another school continues the formal exit process from the Big 12 Conference, Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton and Athletic Director Mike Alden expressed confidence in the league’s future Wednesday.

Shortly after Texas A&M President R. Bowen Loftin notified Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe that his school had applied to join another conference — the Southeastern Conference — and that it would leave the Big 12 effective June 30, 2012, Deaton issued a statement addressing the league’s expansion plans. Deaton serves as chairman for the Big 12’s board of directors.

“The chancellors and presidents of the Big 12 are committed to keeping our conference competitively and academically strong,” Deaton said in a news release. “We have a process in place that enables us to move aggressively regarding the possible expansion of the conference and to assure our members and student-athletes that we will take advantage of the most productive opportunities in the best interests of all.”

Alden later chimed in with a letter to MU fans posted on the athletic department’s website. As the Big 12 prepares to lose its third member in 14 months, Alden noted the league’s “aggressive approach” toward expansion.

“Dan and his leadership team at the Conference Office are working to expand the schools in our league and they have taken an aggressive approach in this manner,” Alden said. “As you might imagine, those workings by the league offices are highly confidential and require a great amount of research, coordination and focus.”

Alden also emphasized Missouri’s résumé, as if to underscore the selling points MU would have should conference realignment continue beyond A&M’s departure to the SEC.

“Rest assured that the Mizzou ‘brand’ is extremely strong nationally,” Alden said. “We are the flagship institution of the State of Missouri with nearly 6 million residents who passionately follow our University and the Tigers. As a proud member of the prestigious Association of American Universities, we are equally proud of the national recognition Mizzou Athletics has received for our academic, social and competitive accomplishments.”
Alden and Deaton were not available for interviews Wednesday in light of Texas A&M's latest developments.

Their statements came shortly after A&M released the content of Loftin's letter to Beebe, in which Loftin touted the Aggies' accomplishments in the Big 12 — four national championships and nine conference titles last season alone — but made clear the school's desire for better exposure and more stability.

"As I have indicated throughout this process, we are seeking to generate greater visibility nationwide for Texas A&M and our championship-caliber student-athletes, as well as secure the necessary and stable financial resources to support our athletic and academic programs," Loftin said. "This is a 100-year decision that we have addressed carefully and methodically. Texas A&M is an extraordinary institution, and we look forward to what the future may hold for Aggies worldwide."

Once A&M's exit becomes official, it will mark the third school to leave the Big 12 since June 2010, when Colorado left for the Pac-12 and Nebraska joined the Big Ten.

Meanwhile, media reports and speculation continue to center on Brigham Young and Pittsburgh as possible Big 12 expansion candidates. Pittsburgh competes in the Big East Conference, while BYU is independent in football and plays in the West Coast Conference in all other sports. Upon leaving the Mountain West Conference last year, BYU agreed to an eight-year contract with ESPN to broadcast its home football games.

BYU declined to comment on the speculation, issuing a statement that neither acknowledged or denied Big 12 interest: "Commenting on such conjecture is not productive and creates a distraction for our program. BYU is focused on the opportunities ahead. We are excited about our relationship with ESPN as a football independent and our affiliation with the West Coast Conference. The university will have no further comment."

BYU football Coach Bronco Mendenhall addressed the Big 12 talk during a conference call with reporters Tuesday.

"This move to independence was well thought out," Mendenhall said, as reported by the Deseret News. "I believe we're aligned and positioned where we belong. ... I like the exposure we now have."
Missouri officials comment on Texas A&M's move from Big 12

By Andrew Wagaman, Harry Plumer, Zach Murdock
August 31, 2011 | 9:19 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Missouri officials say they are disappointed about the departure of Texas A&M from the Big 12 but said the league will remain a solid fixture in sports.

UM System Board of Curators member Wayne Goode said he thinks the conference will survive without the Aggies.

"We think the Big 12 is still solid. I think things are going to go forward all right," Goode said. "The Big 12 is a big draw, a big power, and I don’t think that's going to be a problem."

Texas A&M notified the Big 12 on Wednesday that it intends to apply for membership in a new conference and, if accepted, will end its membership with the Big 12 on June 30, 2012. Texas A&M did not release the name of its new proposed conference membership.

According to aggieathletics.com, Texas A&M President R. Bowen Loftin informed Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe of the move in a letter dated Wednesday. Texas A&M has been a member of the Big 12 since 1996. The exit will leave the Big 12 with nine member schools.

MU Chancellor and president of the Big 12 board of directors Brady Deaton said Wednesday that the league "was disappointed" Texas A&M decided to leave.

"We tried to talk them out of it," Deaton said.

At this time, he said there was no concrete plan in place for how to proceed, both in regards to potential expansion and the 13-year television deal the league signed with Fox Sports, reported to be worth $1 billion. Texas A&M leaving the Big 12 could void the agreement or make it subject to renegotiation, which could spell legal trouble for Texas A&M and its new conference. It is not known whether Texas A&M's exit would change the television contract.
"Because we've been aware of this for a while, we've done some preliminary planning," Deaton said. "We want to round out the conference in the most effective way possible."

Deaton said there was no time frame in place at this juncture for putting that plan into action. He did say Tuesday, however, that a committee had been created to look at possible replacements for Texas A&M. Meanwhile, Loftin issued a statement Wednesday about Texas A&M's motives for leaving.

"As I have indicated throughout this process, we are seeking to generate greater visibility nationwide for Texas A&M and our championship-caliber student-athletes, as well as secure the necessary and stable financial resources to support our athletic and academic programs," Loftin said in a statement. "This is a 100-year decision that we have addressed carefully and methodically."

The announcement comes after speculation this month that Texas A&M plans to join the Southeastern Conference. ESPN.com reported Wednesday that the SEC has not yet received an application from Texas A&M to join the conference.

"The presidents and chancellors of the nine remaining member institutions are steadfast in their commitment to the Big 12," Beebe said in a Big 12 news release. "As previously stated, the conference will move forward aggressively exploring its membership options."

Goode said he had hoped the meetings following Nebraska and Colorado's departure last year would provide a resolution, but he knew the relationship between the University of Texas and Texas A&M could lead to more movement.

"After last year, the schools got together and had a pretty good understanding that everybody wanted to move forward," Goode said. "We thought 'everyone' included A&M, but anyone who is familiar with this knows A&M and University of Texas have had their differences over time. My personal opinion is that is the problem that surfaced here."

MU Athletics Director Mike Alden released a statement to Missouri fans acknowledging Texas A&M's departure and the university's commitment "to working hard to keep the Big 12 a strong and successful conference." The move means more questions for the Big 12, which was down to 10 teams after Nebraska and Colorado left the conference in July. Both schools paid penalties for leaving the conference, and it is likely Texas A&M will face similar penalties.

Tuesday, Southern Methodist University athletics director Steve Orsini said he believes SMU would make a good addition to the Big 12.
UPDATE: Texas A&M plans to leave Big 12 by July 2012

updated 12:20 p.m. CDT, Wednesday, August 31, 2011
BY KRISTIE RIEKEN/The Associated Press
MU mention page 2

HOUSTON — Texas A&M dealt a blow to the Big 12 Conference on Wednesday, saying it plans to leave by July 2012 if it is accepted by the Southeastern Conference or another league.

The move, which had been expected, may set off another round of conference realignment in college sports. The Aggies have made it clear they want to join the 12-member Southeastern Conference, and the Big 12 has been clear that it will move swiftly to find at least one replacement for the Aggies.

University President R. Bowen Loftin notified the Big 12 in a letter and said departing the league "is in the best interest of Texas A&M." He said he hopes the move can be amicable and presumably hopes to negotiate a reasonable exit fee. Texas A&M has been in the Big 12 since its founding in 1996.

But the school said it will submit an application to join another, unspecified conference. If it is accepted, Texas A&M will leave the Big 12, effective June 30, 2012.

"We are seeking to generate greater visibility nationwide for Texas A&M and our championship-caliber student-athletes, as well as secure the necessary and stable financial resources to support our athletic and academic programs," Loftin said in a statement. "This is a 100-year decision that we have addressed carefully and methodically. Texas A&M is an extraordinary institution, and we look forward to what the future may hold for Aggies worldwide."

The move by Texas A&M leaves questions about the future of the Big 12, which is down to 10 teams after Nebraska (Big Ten) and Colorado (Pac-12) left the league in July after a wild round of realignment that also affected teams in the Mountain West, Big East and WAC.
Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton, who serves as the chairman of the Big 12 board of directors, said Tuesday that the group has formed a committee to look at possible replacements.

"The chancellors and presidents of the Big 12 are committed to keeping our conference competitively and academically strong," Deaton said in a statement. "We have a process in place that enables us to move aggressively regarding the possible expansion of the conference and to assure our members and student-athletes that we will take advantage of the most productive opportunities in the best interests of all."

Loftin sent a letter to the Big 12 last week formally telling Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe they were exploring all options and asked the conference to outline the process if they decide to leave. On Monday, the university said it had received a letter from Beebe outlining the withdrawal procedure.

"The presidents and chancellors of the nine remaining member institutions are steadfast in their commitment to the Big 12," Beebe said in a statement. "As previously stated, the Conference will move forward aggressively exploring its membership options."

The SEC said earlier this month it was happy with its current membership but left the door open to expansion, and the Aggies certainly wouldn't have made this move if they didn't believe they could eventually join the conference.

The Big 12, including Texas A&M, agreed to a 13-year television deal with Fox Sports in April worth more than $1 billion. There is a chance the contract could be voided by the Aggies leaving the conference, which could lead to legal issues for Texas A&M and its new league.

The Aggies will also likely face an exit fee for leaving the Big 12, although it's unclear how much that could be. Nebraska paid $9.25 million, and Colorado paid $6.9 million.
A&M move doesn't put pressure on Mizzou

By Mike DeArmond - Posted on 31 August 2011

Within moments of Texas A&M's announcement it was leaving the Big 12 Conference I heard a Kansas City radio host opine that Missouri is now on the clock in the tick-tick-tick of college football reorganization.

Not so fast.

The timetable regards Missouri and its future conference address - the Big 12, the SEC, the Big Ten - is not likely to be measured in hours, or days, or even weeks, but possibly months.

"The insinuation that we're on the clock is false," said one of my sources this morning.

Do not doubt there are a ton of Missouri fans who want something to happen NOW! Those folk are not pleased with the noncommittal statements coming out of MU chancellor Brady Deaton and athletic director Mike Alden.

But there are two reasons that Missouri does not want to be perceived as knee-deep in exploring all its options.

The first is that just the hint of that - and some ill-chosen words from Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon a year ago brought criticism that it was Missouri's fault that Nebraska and Colorado were bolting the Big 12.

The way another of my sources put it: "No one wants to be painted as the architect of Armageddon."

Secondly, as many have noted recently, Missouri's demographics appear to put it in a prime position to be patient, to be approached rather than to be the one doing the approaching.

Chalk that up to TV sets, primarily in Kansas City and St. Louis. But also to Gary Pinkel's football program having won 40 games the last four seasons.

Sure, basketball is in the midst of some real helter skelter.

But football - and if the last year has shown us anything it is that football is the big dog in this fight - is alive and well in Columbia, Mo.
That puts Missouri in a position not of being a provocateur but of a girl walking down the street well aware that a bunch of guys are giving her the eyeball.

If the Texas A&M move is all there is, Missouri can wait it out in a Big 12 Conference that may or may not add new members.

If the SEC adds more teams, and if that causes the Big Ten or other conferences to respond, then Missouri looks to be in good shape in that end game as well.

For Missouri I just see no need to listen to that tick-tick-tick and assume it is a bomb just yet.
What's next for Big 12 with Texas A&M bolting the conference?

Texas A&M's announcement Wednesday that it plans to leave the Big 12 comes on the heels of Nebraska bolting to the Big Ten and Colorado joining the Pacific-12, both effective this season.

That leaves the Big 12, a league formed in 1996 by the merger of many of the schools in the Southwest and Big Eight conferences, with nine remaining members. Most major conferences currently have at least 12 schools.

The Big 12 has formed a special committee to examine schools that might be added and the conference will "move forward aggressively exploring its membership options," said commissioner Dan Beebe.

Iowa State athletic director Jaime Pollard said the league is more solid than last summer when Nebraska and Colorado announced plans to leave and the Pac-10 had tried to lure four more schools, including Oklahoma and Texas.

"The other nine schools are going to approach this like it's a coaching search," Pollard said. "It's kind of like a coaching search in the way you go about things and evaluate things."

Speculated options of Arkansas and Notre Dame appear unlikely. TCU is about to join the Big East in 2012.

Another option could be Brigham Young, which is starting its first season as an independent. The school issued this statement Wednesday.

"There is much speculation right now regarding conference affiliation that seems to change by the hour. Commenting on such conjecture is not productive and creates a distraction for our program. As we enter the 2011-12 athletic season, BYU is focused on the opportunities ahead. We are excited about our relationship with ESPN as a football independent and our affiliation with the West Coast Conference."

SMU, formerly in the Southwest Conference and now in Conference USA, has expressed its interest. Houston and Boise State are other possibilities.

The Big 12 could take further hits. Missouri has been mentioned as a possible new member of the Southeastern Conference, which would need to add another team if it accepts Texas.
A&M, making it a 13-school league. This could lead to what some college football analysts will be four super conferences of 16 teams each.

However, Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton, who also serves as the Big 12 board of directors chairman, said the remaining nine schools are solid.

"The chancellors and presidents of the Big 12 are committed to keeping our conference competitively and academically strong," Deaton said in a statement. "We have a process in place that enables us to move aggressively regarding the possible expansion of the conference and to assure our members and student-athletes that we will take advantage of the most productive opportunities in the best interests of all."

It might sound odd coming from the athletic director and former football coach of a school that just bolted league, but count Nebraska's Tom Osborne among those who hopes the league has a long future.

"I certainly hope the Big 12 does stay together in some fashion," said Osborne, a former U.S. Congressman who coached the Cornhuskers for 25 seasons. "The reason we left wasn't out of any animosity toward anyone, we just felt the culture of the Big Ten fit us better."

"I still have many close friends in the Big 12 and I would very much hate to see anyone left out on a limb. It's important for the sake of all those schools that there is a league and it remains viable."
What's next for Mizzou?

BY VAHE GREGORIAN • vgregorian@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8199 | Posted: Thursday, September 1, 2011 12:20 am

Mizzou and the eight other remaining schools in the teetering Big 12 once again must reassess the long-term viability of a conference that has had 25 percent of its original membership announce defections in just over a year after Texas A&M made official on Wednesday its determination to leave.

The renewed vows and goodwill that the conference and its members projected after Colorado and Nebraska decided to leave during the summer of 2010 now ring hollow amid the reality that A&M saw as meaningless the oath to stay with the Big 12 for the foreseeable future.

"We're in unchartered waters," a well-placed source in the Big 12 said. "I don't think this has really ever happened to a conference like the Big 12 before, mainly because some of the reasons people are choosing (for leaving) are not reasons we can control.

"Not money. Not quality of competition. Not natural rivalries. Not unwillingness to work through issues. It's just people thinking they'll pursue something else, so it's really kind of a unique spot. Obviously, everything's on the table."

The ability of the Big 12 to sustain the latest blow, likely by seeking to add a substantial 10th member by next summer, is about more than just one conference.

It also has considerable implications in the future structure of college athletics and football in particular.

If the Big 12 suffers more crucial losses — Texas and/or Oklahoma — it almost surely is doomed.

And its demise could trigger what one BCS conference insider called "the tidal wave" that may not ebb until there are four 16-team super-conferences — a structure befitting a football playoff.

Such a scenario remains a few steps away and isn't necessarily inevitable, but it helps explain why Mizzou again is at a critical juncture as it considers its best options and strategies.

The Big 12
A&M's departure for the Southeastern Conference, which as of Wednesday afternoon had not received an application from the school, weakens the conference again and threatens to void or at least greatly diminish the recently signed 13-year contract with Fox valued at over $1 billion.

Even so, Big 12 chairman of the board Brady Deaton, the Mizzou chancellor, reiterated in a statement that conference leaders are "committed to keeping our conference competitively and academically strong" and reminded that the conference has "a process in place to move aggressively regarding … possible expansion."

Deaton acknowledged through a spokesman on Tuesday that the conference already had formed an expansion committee, and therein seems to lie MU's best option for the immediate future.

If the Big 12 does land a suitably high-profile and ratings-valuable 10th school, a source familiar with the Fox deal said, it expects little or minimal devaluation of the Fox contract.

The conference won't reinflate to 10 just for the sake of having 10, the source said, and it also will seek to go outside its natural "footprint" in order to add some ratings juice instead of redundancies in Texas.

Sources familiar with discussions of the expansion committee have said Notre Dame, Arkansas and Brigham Young are the most likely targets.

Notre Dame's prime directive is maintaining football independence, as ND athletics director Jack Swarbrick reminded the Austin American-Statesman on Monday.

But Swarbrick didn't say it was out of the question, and the Big 12 believes the third-tier broadcast rights that essentially drove Texas A&M out of the conference because of its issues with the Longhorn Network could be appealing to the Irish because it would allow them to continue forging their own deals under the umbrella of the conference.

Arkansas, currently in the SEC, is believed to be happy in that conference, and many dismiss that notion as nearly as improbable as ND.

But the Razorbacks haven't won a conference title since 1989 in the Southwest Conference, would at least initially make more money in the Big 12 than the SEC (because of television contract overlaps) and would go from being a western SEC outlier to geographically snug in the Big 12.

Even as it experiments with independence, BYU seems the most realistic prospect. A place in a conference with an automatic BCS bowl bid should appeal to the school, and the Big 12 would not only regain a presence in the west that it lost with Colorado's departure but also gain a strong national brand and following.

The Big Ten
Whether Mizzou actually had something to go on or was just batting its eyes for a possible offer from the Big Ten last spring and summer may never be known. But two aspects of the dance still resonate:

MU believed it was a fit in the Big Ten, academically, athletically and culturally; the Big Ten didn't see it as an overwhelming case and took Nebraska.

And that was at a time the Big Ten had openly expressed it was studying expansion. Now it gives every indication it is content as is and not moved to react to SEC expansion.

Between that public stance and the way the Big Ten jilted MU last year, the Big Ten seems more a distant hope than a plausible landing place for Missouri in the near future. But does the Big Ten reconsider its stance as the musical chairs get going and view Mizzou differently?

**The Southeastern Conference**

Missouri touches three SEC states and would add nice markets in St. Louis and Kansas City for TV purposes.

But despite stray conjectures by some that the SEC wants Mizzou or vice versa, there is little to support the connection. A person familiar with conference expansion talks said MU has hardly been mentioned by the SEC.

For one thing, it's believed the SEC would tend to look eastward, possibly to Virginia Tech, if it goes to 14 to help preserve geographic balance.

For another, it's doubtful that MU would add enough to the SEC's value to merit dividing the pie another slice.

And it's also thought that SEC commissioner Mike Slive would prefer to see the Big 12 remain together. Despite the SEC poaching A&M, sources indicate that A&M initiated and vigorously pursued membership, not the other way around.

Even from the Mizzou perspective, the appeal seems minimal.

While the SEC would offer more apparent stability, MU would go from being an upper-tier Big 12 team to the middle of the most thorny league in the country, home of the last five national champions.

Moreover, as much as the SEC has endeavored to clean itself up, the Cam Newton saga at Auburn last year is a reminder of a renegade mind-set that still seems to persist around the conference. Either you change the conference, or you get changed to fit in. Which seems more feasible?

And while academics may ultimately be overrun by athletics in the scramble for a conference home, Mizzou has trumpeted its American Association of University membership in the context
of the Big Ten — each member of which a year ago was in the AAU. (Nebraska since has been banished). The Big 12 has five AAU schools, the SEC two.

But how differently might Mizzou and the SEC view each other if the SEC is thinking 16 instead of 14 and MU's options are dwindling?

**Other scenarios**

If Texas and Oklahoma stay put, so will the Big 12.

There are excellent arguments for each staying, not the least of which is that the conference may provide a more accessible route to the BCS championship game than any other scenarios being floated, from Texas declaring independence to both going to the Pac-12, etc.

But anything can happen. And committed as it must be to the Big 12, Mizzou thus must have contingencies in mind. It may not have the clout to drive change, but it has seemingly improved its pedigree and moved past last year's fears of ending up in the Mountain West or Conference-USA to become a valuable commodity if it becomes a free-for-all.

Could a Pac-16 be an answer, despite the obvious logistical issues even with eight-team divisions? What about the ever-expanding Big East?

Mizzou has to consider it all, form a strategy and alternatives, but meanwhile know that much is out of its control until the Big 12's next move.
With Texas A&M gone, who fills Big 12’s basket?

By BLAIR KERKHOFF

MU MENTION PAGE 2

Wednesday brought clarity in one sense for the Big 12. Texas A&M, rumored to be leaving the conference for the past month, made its intention official.

But no sooner were the Aggies out the door, likely headed for the Southeastern Conference, that speculation swirled about their replacement — and in a statement-flying and fan-letter writing afternoon the Big 12 schools and its Board of Directors re-emphasized the quest for aggressive expansion.

The buzz was so hot that Brigham Young, an often-mentioned target of Big 12 speculation, was compelled to issue a statement.

“Commenting on such conjecture is not productive and creates a distraction for our program,” it read.

But anybody wishing for a swift trade of schools and conferences was disappointed. The only announcement of substance came from College Station and served as the beginning of the end to a relationship with the Big 12 and perhaps its football rivalry with Texas, which began in 1894.

“I have determined it is in the best interest of Texas A&M to make application to join another athletic conference,” university President R. Bowen Loftin said in his letter to Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe. Texas A&M will leave the conference on June 30, 2012, if it is accepted by the SEC.

The Aggies’ disenchantment with the Big 12 has endured since last year, when the 15-year-old conference nearly split apart. With the Pac-10 poised to invite six schools, including A&M, the Aggies sent signals to the SEC that they would rather relocate there.

The Big 12 held together after Nebraska bolted for the Big Ten and the Pac-10 stopped at 12 after adding Colorado and Utah. But the Aggies weren’t happy in January when the University of
Texas announced the Longhorn Network, an ESPN product that will add $20 million to the coffers of A&M’s chief rival for each of the next 15 years.

The Aggies were further incensed having to fight the Big 12 on issues such as the Longhorn Network’s desire to broadcast Texas high school football games and a second Big 12 football game. The conference originally said each Big 12 school would be allowed to air one football game per season on a school-based outlet.

In a letter posted on the Texas A&M website, athletic director Bill Byrne said the Longhorn Network was a development that has “caused a great deal of uncertainty within the Big 12.”

Byrne said he saw the second game as “an attempt to coerce other Big 12 schools to move their football games in Austin to the Longhorn Network. Our understanding from day one was that every conference school would have the rights to one football game and a handful of basketball games.”

As of Wednesday, the Longhorn Network hadn’t secured a second game, and it cannot unless the game is approved by the opponent and Big 12 office.

Beyond replacement targets, many uncertainties remain in the wake of the Aggies’ departure.

First is the issue of exit fees. Under Big 12 bylaws, A&M could forfeit up to $30 million in conference-generated revenue, but it likely will work out a settlement for around half that, which would be distributed equally to the remaining nine schools.

Television money is another. In April, the Big 12 announced a $1.2 billion, 13-year deal with Fox Sports Net for second-tier, or cable, football broadcast rights. The deal was for a 10-team conference that included Texas A&M and could be voided if the Aggies leave. But the contract could also remain in effect if a suitable replacement is found for A&M.

According to a Big 12 source, the conference believes it will continue to hold sway in major Texas markets with Texas, Texas Tech and Baylor. And if a 10th team is added from another area of the country, such as what the Big 12 expansion committee is exploring, the conference will have expanded its viewership. In addition to BYU, sources say the Big 12 is considering Big East teams Pittsburgh and Louisville as well.

But while Beebe — and Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton, chair of the Big 12 Board of Directors — say the nine remaining Big 12 schools are committed to staying together and finding a replacement for Texas A&M, that may not be enough to stave off future raids on the league’s membership.

Assuming the SEC delivers an invitation to the Aggies, that conference would likely add a 14th team. ACC schools Virginia Tech, Florida State and Clemson have been largely speculated. Among others mentioned is Missouri.
Last summer, when the Big 12 stayed together, the Pac-12 added two and the Big Ten one, the 16-team superconference land rush was avoided. But would the Big Ten and Pac-12 respond to a 14-team SEC by luring away Big 12 schools such as Oklahoma, or even Kansas?

Pac-12 commissioner Larry Scott said Wednesday that his conference has no current plans to expand, but if so, schools such as Kansas State, Iowa State and Baylor could find themselves in the same position as last summer, without options in a BCS automatic-qualifier conference.

What they’re saying at ...

Missouri

Athletic director Mike Alden wrote to Tigers fans on MU’s website and spoke on behalf of chancellor Brady Deaton, who is also chairman of the Big 12 Board of Directors.

“I know that Dr. Deaton, myself and all of us at Mizzou are committed to working hard to keep the Big 12 a strong and successful conference. … Rest assured that the Mizzou ‘brand’ is extremely strong nationally.”

Kansas

Athletic director Sheahon Zenger issued this statement:

“We have known for some time that this was a possibility. We have nine institutions firmly committed to the Big 12 Conference. Chancellor (Bernadette) Gray-Little and I will continue working together with Commissioner (Dan) Beebe, the Big 12 Board of Directors and the other conference members as we take the necessary steps to ensure the continued strength of this conference.”

Kansas State

President Kirk Schulz and athletic director John Currie issued a joint statement:

“K-State remains fully committed to the Big 12 Conference and continues to be excited about its future. There is great solidarity among the nine league institutions and an eagerness to achieve the stability our students, fans and alumni deserve. We remain actively engaged with our conference administration and fellow presidents and athletic directors in proactively determining our next steps.”
Boys feel 'weird' when discussing their problems

BY HARRY JACKSON JR. harry.jackson@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8234 | Posted: Thursday, September 1, 2011 12:15 am

Forget those pop-culture talk shows saying that boys feel embarrassed when they talk about their problems.

The truth is, they really see it as a waste of time. And a study at the University of Missouri-Columbia suggests that this sentiment can carry into adulthood.

"For years, psychologists have insisted that boys and men would like to talk about their problems but are held back by fears of embarrassment or appearing weak," said Amanda J. Rose, associate professor of psychological sciences in the university's College of Arts and Sciences.

Instead, boys say they felt "weird" when discussing their problems, according to the study.

They didn't feel embarrassed, worried about being teased, or bad about not taking care of the problems by themselves, Rose said.

In fact, she said, boys, "didn't express angst or distress about discussing problems any more than girls."

Researchers used the same questions on different groups of boys and girls from from 1998 to 2007, Rose said.

"Because the results were surprising, we felt we needed to demonstrate several times to make it credible," she said.

The study, "How Girls and Boys Expect Disclosure About Problems Will Make Them Feel: Implications for Friendships," has been submitted to the journal, Child Development. The study was funded by the National Institute of Mental Health.

Rose said the study looked for gender differences in how teens communicate, she said. Researchers interviewed about 2,000 students from 1998 to 2007 in four segments of the study in central Missouri and had them fill out questionnaires.

One of the questions: "If you talked about a problem you had, how would you feel?" Rose said.
The multiple choice list of answers from boys to a question, about why they don't talk.

One of the choices was that talking about problems was a "waste of time," she said. That got the most responses, she said.

April Nesin, a pediatric psychologist, with St. Louis Children's Hospital, said the information in the study, "... speaks to some of the myths people have had about why boys or men don't talk.

"It's something I can use in my practice, especially when families are concerned that their boys aren't talking," she said.

The study recognizes that boys, like men, ponder problems to find solutions, Nesin said. So, "Boys say let's solve it, and if it's not solvable, move on."

Nesin also agrees with points in the study that say girls can take the other extreme.

"I think they can't let (emotional issues) go sometimes, that they talk about an issue to the point that they become obsessed with it," Nesin said.

The result is they saturate themselves with the bad feelings and slide into depression and anxiety, she said.

Rose said the implication is that, "Parents should encourage their children to adopt a middle ground when discussing problems.

"For boys, it would be helpful to explain that, at least for some problems, some of the time, talking about their problems is not a waste of time."

Often, Rose said, "Moms really push their boys to talk to them about their problems, and moms feel hurt and rejected when their sons don't want to talk.

"Mothers may need to understand that boys may be developing a different approach to handling their problems."

As for girls, "Girls should know that talking about problems isn't the only way to cope."

Researchers are planning to interview the original teens who will be 18 to 26 by now, Rose said. The start time on that hasn't been established, she said.

More study could find routes to help men and women communicate better in families and other relationships, she said.

The study is far from wrapping up a battle-of-the-sexes debate over why women talk and men don't, Rose said. "It will be long, hard road to change perceptions."
With more budgetary reductions to education, many government-sponsored, urban preschool programs are being underfunded or cut completely. However, a recent study by researchers from the University of Missouri and University of Minnesota show that such programs are vital to the future of many urban children.

In a study published in Science, Irma Arteaga, an assistant professor in the Truman School of Public Affairs at the University of Missouri, examined the long-term success rates of Chicago's Child-Parent Center Education Program, and found that low-income children who spent two to six years in the program had higher rates of high school graduation, fewer criminal arrests, reduced instances of substance abuse and earned more money than children of the same age who did not participate in the program.

Arteaga believes these positive results are applicable for most high-quality early education programs for low-income children.

"Early education programs can have a direct impact on economic success and good health," Arteaga said. "The findings of this study indicate that these programs provide a strong foundation for the investment in, and promotion of, early childhood learning."

The Chicago Child-Parent Center program is a publicly funded early childhood development program that begins in preschool and provides up to six years of service in the Chicago public schools. The researchers used data from the Chicago Longitudinal Study, which is an ongoing study of the development of a single group of low-income minority children growing up in the inner city.

The original sample of the Chicago Longitudinal Study included nearly a thousand children who attended or received preschool services from 20 Child-Parent Center Education Program sites in the early 1980s. Another 550 children of the same age did not participate on the center's preschool program, but participated in 1985-1986 of all-day kindergarten program in five randomly selected Chicago public schools serving low-income children at a time when all-day kindergarten was relatively rare.

The study, which is the longest follow-up of an established large-scale early childhood program, measured participants at the age of 28 and found a high school graduation rate increase of 9 percent for CPC participants who were in the program for at least two pre-school years. The
researchers also found that CPC participants were 20 percent more likely to achieve a higher level of socioeconomic status, 22 percent less likely to have a felony arrest, and 28 percent less likely to spend time in prison.

Arteaga says the findings show support for the enduring effects of sustained school-based early education to the end of the third decade of life, especially for males and children of high school dropouts.

Arteaga believes that support from the school districts, parents and the government are vital to the success of pre-school programs, which she says have proven to provide large advantages in school readiness and performance, enrollment, higher educational attainment, and socioeconomic status.

"Preschool programs are one of the most cost-effective of all social programs; yet only three percent of the $14 billion given to serve low-income children under the 'No Child Left Behind Act' goes to preschool," Arteaga said.

"State and federal policies need to reflect the importance and advantages of early childhood education."

Arteaga co-authored the study with Arthur Reynolds, Judy Temple, Suh-Ruu Ou, and Barry White at the University of Minnesota.
Law schools lure fewer students as jobs dry up

By Associated Press | Thursday, September 1, 2011

COLUMBIA, Mo. — Tenia Phillips has heard the horror stories about life after law school, circa 2011, from crushing student loan debt to recent graduates serving coffee at Starbucks.

"The reality check didn’t deter the 27-year-old Texan from pursuing her childhood dream, though it took four years of working as an apartment leasing agent before she could start fall classes last week at the University of Missouri law school."

"I had gotten to the point in my life where it was either now or never," she said. "Nothing in life is guaranteed. The job market can go back up again or back down."

The days of top law school graduates having their pick of six-figure jobs at boutique firms — or at least being assured of putting their degrees to use — are over.

Post-graduate employment rates are at their lowest levels in 15 years. The typical student leaves school nearly $100,000 in debt. And after several years of recession-driven enrollment gains, applications to law schools nationwide are down nearly 10 percent this year.

The sobering statistics have prompted plenty of soul-searching in the legal academy, with calls for schools to provide more accurate job-placement data as well as efforts by some law schools to admit fewer students to avoid dumping a glut of newly minted J.D.s onto an unforgiving job market.

"The sense that one can go to law school and get rich quick, that it is the lottery ticket—those days are well past," said law dean Larry Dessem at the University of Missouri, where first-year fall enrollment is down 11 percent and applications declined nearly 17 percent.
The lessening interest in law school can be seen at flagship public universities in Missouri and elite private schools such as Washington University in St. Louis, which reports a 12 percent enrollment decline.

New student enrollment at the University of California-Los Angeles is down 16 percent, while the University of Michigan reports a 14 percent decrease. WashU, UCLA and Michigan are top 25 schools in the influential U.S. News & World Report rankings.

"This year, people realize that this is not a one-year economic decline," said Sarah Zearfoss, assistant law dean and admissions director at Michigan. "It seems to be a much longer-term problem."

That’s not necessarily bad, she said. Long considered a refuge for the hyper-ambitious, law schools may now be attracting more committed students, said Zearfoss.

"Now that people are aware it’s not a cakewalk to get a big salary, they’re thinking more carefully and a little more rationally about making this choice," she said.

Or, as Dessem put it, "That’s going to lead to a lot more satisfied lawyers down the road."

That satisfaction could come without a fatter paycheck. According to the National Association for Law Placement, only slightly more than two-thirds of spring 2010 graduates had jobs requiring law licenses nine months later — the lowest mark since the industry group starting keeping count.

Overall, 87.4 percent of the class of 2010 had any sort of job nine months after graduation, a 15-year low.

Those figures include 11 percent working part-time and others holding temporary jobs. And the national median salary for new law school graduates declined from $72,000 to $63,000 over the past year.

Several colleges have recently scrapped plans to build new law schools, including the University of Delaware and the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Stung by criticism that prospective students aren’t aware of those unflattering statistics, law schools accredited by the American Bar Association will now be required to report the types of jobs their graduates obtained, not just overall employment rates. The ABA approved the change this summer at its annual meeting.

"The problem of a lack of transparency, a disingenuousness, is very real," said University of Colorado law professor Paul Campos. "The law school degree as a guarantee for job as a lawyer is just not anywhere close to being true."
The changing industry has more students questioning both the value and costs of a law degree. Disenchanted students — and at least one anonymous professor at a top school — are taking their complaints public on what have become known as law school "scam" blogs.

Others are taking their complaints to court, appropriately enough.

Earlier this month, former students at New York Law School and Thomas Cooley Law School in Lansing, Mich., filed a class action lawsuit over what they called inflated employment rates. A similar suit was filed in May against Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego.

James Leopold, executive director of the National Association for Law Placement, said such criticism "adds to that culture of doubt surrounding legal education."

"The whole economy of delivering legal services, and the structure of these services, is changing," he said, describing changes that include a move to "offshore" legal jobs as well as a growing reliance by corporations on contract attorneys rather than in-house counsel.

"Are we producing too many lawyers? It’s a question I can’t answer," Leopold said.

Larry Lambert, a 28-year-old veteran from St. Louis, struggled with that very question before deciding to enroll at Missouri this semester. A candid conversation with a burned-out lawyer had "stopped me cold in my tracks," Lambert said.

In the end, a strong public service ethic honed during his time in the Navy prevailed. Lambert hopes to work as a federal prosecutor or in another position where he can "be a part of something bigger."

"That’s one of the best things to happen to the profession in a long time," he said, referring to the declining interest. "People don’t go into social work thinking they want to get rich. They want to help people. The law should be like that."
UM System boosting aid to startups

Final stage of funding nears.

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri System is in the final stages of doling out its first round of Enterprise Investment Fund awards.

System administrators have narrowed the pool of 16 applications down to three finalists, and awards should be announced soon, said Mike Nichols, UM vice president of research and economic development. Awards of as much as $500,000 are aimed to help investors commercialize university research.

The enterprise fund is one piece of a complex economic development puzzle the UM System has been working on for the past five years. And the pieces are coming together, Nichols told a group of local leaders gathered at Stadium Grill this morning. The event was sponsored by Missouri Cures, a not-for-profit organization aimed at supporting research in the state.

Economic development was tacked on as a fourth mission of the UM System under former President Elson Floyd, and it is a mission Gary Forsee focused on during his three-year tenure in the system president's office.

The efforts have paid off, Nichols said: Last year, for instance, there were 131 invention disclosures on the four campuses, up from 91 in 2005, and seven startups came out of university efforts last year, up from none five years earlier.

UM's economic development efforts earned the system one of three 2010 Kauffman Foundation Commercialization Leaders awards, which recognize universities for creative approaches to bringing inventions to the market. UM joined recipients Carnegie Mellon University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

"Five years ago, you would have never heard our name in the same sentence" as the two other institutions, Nichols said.

He credited the university's development successes to three components: investments into commercialization efforts, innovation and infrastructure.

"If any one of those three is missing, you will always be idle," he said.
The Enterprise Investment Fund, created last year, is one of several programs the university system has to invest in research and commercialization. UM also offers faculty members funding for research and development and seed grants for spinal cord research through the Spinal Cord Injury Program.

Students have opportunities to apply for funding for their ideas, too, and, unlike many universities, the UM System allows students to keep their inventions.

The university has 10 research parks and business incubators to support development and commercialization efforts, including the 550-acre Discovery Ridge in Columbia that’s expected to support 25,000 jobs when it’s built out. And UM recently opened the Missouri Plant Science Center in Mexico, Mo., which is housing Soy Labs, a California-based company developing soy-based ingredients.

Nichols expects the momentum to continue.

“Missouri’s brightest days are ahead for innovation,” he said. “I really do see the future being extremely bright.”

The roughly 20 audience members this morning praised Nichols for his role in the system’s successes. Wally Pfeffer, who’s involved in the Mizzou Alumni Association and the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, offered Chamber Ambassador support for new developments.

“You have a lot to celebrate here,” Pfeffer said, “a lot to be proud of.”

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Business leaders say jobs bill could be all or nothing

By Jacob Barker

Columbia Daily Tribune Wednesday, August 31, 2011

There’s a little something for everyone in the economic development bill set to be taken up by the General Assembly in special session next week, but if support for some provisions crumble, the whole package could fall apart.

That was the prognosis offered by Missouri Chamber of Commerce President Dan Mehan during a conference call with other business and labor leaders yesterday. The group spoke to reporters about its strong support for the bill and the benefits it says the bill will bring to the state. Last month, Gov. Jay Nixon issued a call for a special legislative session set to begin Tuesday.

Some provisions included in Nixon’s call have the potential to be a boon for Mid-Missouri, such as the Missouri Science and Innovation Reinvestment Act, which would use a portion of increases in revenue from science and technology businesses to promote those types of businesses in the state. That could come in the form of research funding at the University of Missouri or investments in startups. Also included are incentives for data centers, which local leaders pushed for during last year’s special session.

But some provisions already have started to attract opponents. Most of the revenue assumed by the bill is generated by repealing the so-called circuit breaker tax credit, which provides as much as $750 annually for disabled renters and elderly, low-income renters and costs about $53 million a year. Much of the initial spending is for $360 million in tax credits to encourage the development of an air freight hub at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, and skeptics question whether it will actually lead to a sustainable cargo hub.

Mehan acknowledged the bill contains measures some interests dislike, but he said the package should move forward as a whole or it will risk losing support.

“These various components are all part of the package, and you get something like this with a lot of moving parts, it can be fragile,” he said.

Hugh McVey, president of the Missouri AFL-CIO, said the package represents a deal among interests across the state. “We’ve been trying forever to try and get pieces of this through,” he said. “We’d be silly to say we’re not going for this thing all the way.”
Importing and exporting have to begin at the cargo hub before the state is liable for “a dime of tax credit money,” Mehan said. And it was the governor’s decision to include tax credit reform, said Missouri Chamber Vice President Tracy King. The chamber mainly pushed for the economic development portions of the bill. “The tax credit reform just happened to get married to it.”
Editorial: Nixon focuses on wrong funding issue for higher education

By the Editorial Board | Posted: Thursday, September 1, 2011 12:00 am

Upon hearing Gov. Jay Nixon announce his proposal to change university funding to a more "performance-based" model last month, a University of Missouri faculty member used an unfortunate phrase to describe the move.

"It's kind of like No Child Left Behind for higher education," Leona Rubin told the Columbia Daily Tribune.

This aptly describes what is the wrong solution to a very serious problem.

Mr. Nixon seeks to recast what has been a decade-long decline in state support for higher education into a discussion about how to rethink the process by which the state pays for education.

In choosing a performance-based model, in which any amount of new funding over the previous year would be determined by a new task force using a series of standards yet to be developed, Mr. Nixon is recycling an old model previously used in Missouri and tried in other states as well.

"Pay for performance" sounds good. But like the failed No Child Left Behind program, it will be an utter failure if the promise of more accountability fails to come with the funds to do the job. And it could even reduce quality if colleges and universities feel financial pressure to dumb-down their standards, as happened in K-12 schools desperate to meet NCLB standards.

Just a week after Mr. Nixon made his announcement, the state revealed some distressing news: Access Missouri, the state's only need-based college scholarship program, has barely enough money to offer the statutory minimum of $1,000 per year to students who qualify.

If Mr. Nixon wants to make a difference, this is where his focus should be.

A thousand bucks is less than half of what lawmakers intended when they created the program. It's a symptom of a far bigger problem with Missouri's approach to higher education. Because of a decline in state funding, fewer poor and middle-class students can afford to go to college.

"We know what the problem is," state Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, told us. "The state has failed higher education."
The state's flagship public university, the University of Missouri in Mr. Kelly's hometown, now charges the second-highest tuition among sister Big 12 schools at more than $8,500 per year. Tuition at state schools that should be affordable for Missourians to attend has skyrocketed as state support has declined.

In 1991, for instance, the state provided 64 percent of the overall funding for costs related to running the University of Missouri system, while tuition accounted for 27 percent. Today, those numbers are upside down, with struggling parents and students paying 48 percent of the costs, and the state providing only 36 percent. The other revenue, such as from endowments and private donations, has remained relatively stable.

No plan to address college costs can succeed until the Democratic governor and the Republican-controlled Legislature show the political will to increase funding.

The sad reality is this: Lawmakers are willing to find $300 million to fund a risky economic development venture that might not work, but they are unwilling to invest the same amount of money in a proven long-term strategy for revving the state's economic engine.

Missouri's middle class needs relief, and its businesses of the present and future need a well-educated workforce.

The money is out there. It's time to muster the political courage to find it and spend it in the right places.
Waiting for NCAA is bad idea

By Joe Walljasper Columbia Daily Tribune

Wednesday, August 31, 2011

It’s been two weeks since Missouri got sucked into the University of Miami’s scandal. And rather than trying to determine whether basketball Coach Frank Haith is dirty — and then either supporting him or firing him — Missouri officials have punted to the NCAA.

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton and Athletic Director Mike Alden are doing this, as best I can tell, because the NCAA asked them nicely. It’s in the NCAA’s best interest that member schools do not interfere with its investigations. It is not necessarily in the best interest of a member school that is accused of no wrongdoing.

But Missouri, to its own detriment, is following instructions. During a radio interview with KFRU yesterday, Deaton said, “We were asked not to engage in discussion with Coach Haith about the allegations or the investigation.”

I guess the list of acceptable talking points between Haith and his bosses includes the Cardinals, the Chiefs and the weather (other than Hurricanes). Deaton also confirmed that despite Missouri’s pleas to expedite the process, the NCAA hasn’t interviewed Haith. Alden said last week that the NCAA has given Missouri no indication when the matter will be resolved.

So here we are, still, with everyone else talking about the topic that the accused party and his employer are not talking about to each other.

Deaton is a good man, a fair man, and Alden gets too much blame when things go wrong and too little credit when things go right. But in dealing with this mess, they are being way too passive.

Ceding the floor to the NCAA is a legally safe approach for MU, but it’s the worst course for the basketball program, which is puttering toward the edge of a cliff with an incapacitated driver at the wheel.

There is some evidence that whistle-blower Nevin Shapiro — sleazy felon that he is — did not concoct his accusations of wrongdoing at Miami. The NCAA ruled yesterday that 12 current Miami football players whom Shapiro accused of receiving impermissible benefits did, in fact, receive impermissible benefits. Eight of them were suspended for at least one game.
That doesn’t prove Haith acknowledged and thanked Shapiro for a $10,000 payment to Miami recruit DeQuan Jones, as Shapiro alleged, but there is no denying that Shapiro and Haith had a relationship. The evidence includes photos of the two together and 85 calls and text messages shown on Shapiro’s phone records, as Yahoo! Sports reported.

Haith has yet to specifically deny Shapiro’s charge, although he has nibbled around the edges of the matter. In the statement issued by Missouri after the Yahoo! report hit the web, Haith said the NCAA had instructed him not to comment but that “the reports questioning my personal interactions with Mr. Shapiro are not an accurate portrayal of my character.” He called the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on Friday in an attempt to explain that he did not lie to MU basketball spokesman Dave Reiter when a Yahoo! reporter called seeking comment.

But the bigger questions are whether there was a payoff to a recruit and, if so, whether Haith knew about it and, if so, whether the NCAA can prove it. Also, the NCAA will try to determine whether other violations were committed on Haith’s watch at Miami.

This will take time. Practice starts in six weeks, and the early signing period for recruits begins Nov. 9.

Haith already started in a deep hole, thanks to Mike Anderson leaving behind a top-heavy roster and no recruits, and to this point Haith has only signed two transfers who will both be eligible a year from now. That leaves eight more scholarships to be filled when this year’s senior class graduates. A recruit would be a fool to sign with the Tigers while Haith’s future is in limbo.

If Missouri spends the next six weeks — or six months — in neutral, its basketball program could easily sink to the bottom of the Big 12, or whatever conference the Tigers occupy in a few years.

Deaton and Alden don’t need permission to ask their coach tough questions about his relationship with a felon. They don’t need permission to talk to Yahoo! reporter Charles Robinson or even Shapiro himself. They don’t need permission to fire Haith or support him. They don’t need to play the victim.