Deaton didn't see Syracuse-Pitt move coming

By Mike DeArmond - Posted on 17 September 2011

Brady Deaton is Missouri's chancellor and also the chairman of the Big 12 Conference Board of Directors.

But following Missouri's 69-0 victory on Saturday night over Western Illinois, Deaton told The Star:

"I am very surprised," Deaton said of reports that Syracuse and Pitt of the Big East Conference had applied for admission to the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Further, Deaton contended, he is not sure what is going to happen on Monday, when the Oklahoma and Texas regents hold separate meetings, supposedly to decide whether to stay in the Big 12 or to seek sanctuary elsewhere.

"I'm in the same level of uncertainty that it seems everybody else is," Deaton said.
Conference change would affect more than sports

If the Big 12 Conference crumbles, more is on the horizon than just where the Tigers toss their pigskin.

By JANISE SILVEY

Published September 22, 2011

Jesse Hall, top, would still remain the centerpiece of the University of Missouri campus if MU were to align itself with a conference other than the Big 12. But some wonder how a conference shift would affect MU's identity.
Academically, conference alignment determines which institutions are considered peer schools. And that can have all sorts of implications when University of Missouri System curators are gauging faculty salaries or if, say, the state starts basing funding on a school’s performance against peer institutions.

Then there’s academic perception. MU faculty members had no problem when the university was thought to be a candidate for the Big Ten conference last year. But association with the Southeastern Conference? Not so much. Those schools might be known for nationally televised football games, but they don’t exactly have a reputation for their book learnin’.

“To a considerable extent, fairly or unfairly, we are all judged by the company we keep and our associations,” said Sudarshan Loyalka, a curator’s professor and member of MU Faculty Council. “In my view, our conference alignment is important to our academic reputation, and I would prefer that we have as high standards in this respect as practicable.”

**BIG MONEY**

For those not paying attention to talk of conference realignment, here’s the gist from Tribune Sports Editor Joe Walljasper:

Six conferences make up the Bowl Championship Series, the leagues whose champions are guaranteed a spot in the lucrative BCS bowl games. Conferences negotiate their own television contracts, and there’s a lot of money to be made.

Big Ten schools get about $22 million a year from their TV deal, and the SEC pays each of its schools about $18 million a year. Big 12 schools will get somewhere in the neighborhood of $13 million to $15 million this year.

But the Big 12 is down to 10 schools after Nebraska and Colorado aligned with different conferences last year. Now, Texas A&M wants to leave for the SEC, and there are rumors Oklahoma wants to bolt, too. The latter is considered a Big 12 leader and vital to the survival of the conference.

Without the Big 12, MU could be homeless — and without those lucrative TV deals — so fans have been encouraging school leaders to reach out to other conferences.

Some sports observers have said the Big East would be a good fit for MU, even though it would require Tigers sports teams to travel farther.

A group of MU alumni has launched an online campaign urging administrators to align with the SEC. The website, mizzou2sec.com, argues the SEC is the best athletic conference in the country, promising national exposure and more money to MU if it joined.

Scott Baldwin of Kansas City is one of the MU graduates behind the campaign. He said he is not against MU becoming part of the Big Ten but that the SEC makes more sense right now, offering MU athletics financial stability.

“The SEC, I would argue, is the most prolific conference,” he said. “That opportunity may not be there down the road. This is a very important and momentous time for MU athletics and the university.”

Asked about academic reputation, Baldwin said he is not sure that matters in conferences anymore. He pointed to Nebraska, which was booted out of the Association of American Universities in spite of its new place in the academically prestigious Big Ten.
PERCEPTIONS VS. REALITIES

Remember how residents of other Columbia city wards cried foul when they thought the city might move their streets into the First Ward during this year’s redistricting process?

It’s not that a shift in ward boundaries would change anything about the neighborhoods or the homes, per se, but some residents feared they would be perceived differently if they were part of a ward with a reputation for crime and poverty. Of course, Columbia’s central city — which includes downtown and part of the MU campus — is more diverse than that stereotype, and perceptions aren’t necessarily reality.

The same could be said of the SEC. It’s not known for having a strong academic reputation and is perhaps better known for athletic violations and suspensions.

“I think if we are in a conference with a reputation for skirting the rules, poor graduation rates and students taking non-rigorous classes, it reflects on the entire membership,” said Leona Rubin, associate professor of veterinary biomedical sciences. But it’s “hard to find a conference that does not have some of that, including the SEC and Big Ten.”

Rubin would prefer MU be compared academically with the other 60 members of the AAU. “In spite of our important membership in the AAU, many people still focus on the ‘sports conference,’” she said. “At times, even our curators do comparisons with Big 12 rather than AAU. Drives faculty nuts.”

But the reality is that MU would not rise to the top of the pack if it joined the SEC.

Although two of the 12 SEC schools are AAU members — as opposed to 11 of the 12 Big Ten schools — some academic indicators show MU is otherwise comparable with the Southern schools.

In the SEC, MU would rank in the top four schools with the best six-year graduation rates, but it would fall in the middle when comparing freshman retention rates, according to a comparison of data released last week by U.S. News & World Report.

And the magazine’s ranking system placed five SEC schools higher than MU’s 90th spot.

George Justice, dean of MU’s Graduate School, said MU would be a leader institution academically in the SEC but not superior to all of the conference’s schools.

“Certainly, I wouldn’t be afraid of the SEC or feel that our programs would be put at a disadvantage in terms of recruitment or faculty collaboration,” he said.

Academically, MU looks worse on paper next to Big Ten neighbors. All but one Big Ten school have a higher graduation rate than MU’s 69 percent, and all but two have higher freshman retention rates than MU’s 85 percent.

The Big East Conference is tougher to compare because it’s a mix of public universities and small private schools. MU would fall in the middle of the 16 schools in that conference in terms of graduation and freshman retention rates, and MU’s U.S. News & World Report ranking was higher this year than seven Big East institutions.

Those types of benchmarks might matter if the state adopts a performance funding model such as the one Gov. Jay Nixon has proposed. A task force is hashing out details of how to assess universities for a statewide system, but an internal UM System guide judges MU, in part, based on peer institutions.
The system looks at a variety of factors when deciding which schools are peers, spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said.

“In some cases, we are looking for comparator institutions that are most like us, and in some cases, we are looking at” peers administrators want MU to aspire to, she said. “In general, the comparator peer group for MU is other AAU public land-grant universities, some of which coincidentally are Big 12 schools.”

Nixon has said he also wants tuition rates to be taken into consideration under a performance funding plan. In the Big 12, MU’s tuition is on the high side, but not significantly.

In the SEC, seven of the 12 schools have lower tuition and fees than MU’s bill of $8,989, putting costs at Missouri’s flagship campus near the middle.

MU’s tuition would be among the lowest in the Big East and would look like a bargain in the Big Ten. All but two Big Ten schools charge more than MU.

Research endeavors are tougher to compare, but both Big Ten and SEC schools had larger average research budgets than schools in the Big 12 in 2009, according to a study on athletic affiliations from the College of Social and Behavioral Science at the University of Utah. According to that report, the average research budget for schools in the Big Ten was about $547 million, compared to the average of $238 million among SEC schools and $201 million among Big 12 schools.

MU’s 2010 research expenditures totaled roughly $238.5 million.

**BENEFIT MATTERS**

Carol Ward, a professor in the Department of Pathology and Anatomical Sciences, thinks conference alignment is primarily an athletic matter, but she is somewhat concerned about the effect on faculty salaries because they’re sometimes compared among institutions in the same conference.

“Some, like the SEC, are not as wealthy as others and have relatively low salaries, so it can hold down faculty salaries across the conference, affecting a university’s ability to recruit and retain quality faculty,” she said.

Right now, MU pays full professors an average of $111,100, according to recent data from the Chronicle of Higher Education’s annual AAUP salary survey. Associate professors on campus average $73,500.

All Big Ten schools pay their full and associate professors more. The closest second is Nebraska with an average professor salary of $112,300 — but most of the schools pay full professors, on average, more than $120,000.

All but three Big East schools pay full professors better than MU, and all but one pay associate professors more.

In the SEC, MU salaries would fall in the middle. Five of the 12 schools pay their professors more, and seven pay less. At the same time, 10 of the 12 SEC schools pay their associate professors more than MU, according to the Chronicle’s data.

It’s unclear whether the UM System would gauge salaries differently if MU aligned with a different conference. Right now, the system compares MU salaries to Big 12 schools. But that’s mostly because they’re comparable Midwestern public universities with similar costs of living, Hollingshead said.
Rubin is mostly worried about how a shift in conference might affect faculty efforts to bring domestic partner benefits to UM System campuses.

The Faculty Council has spent years talking about the need to provide retirement and other benefits to same-sex partners of faculty members. Most recently, the Council of Deans at MU and University of Missouri-Kansas City sent the UM System letters supporting domestic partner benefits.

But part of the argument for those benefits has been based on comparisons.

When making a case for domestic partner benefits here, Rubin likes to point out that MU is one of only three AAU schools not offering those benefits and that all Big Ten schools offer them except newly added Nebraska.

But the argument isn't as strong in the Big 12 and SEC. In MU's current conference, Iowa State is the only one of the 10 schools providing those benefits. In the SEC, two schools — Florida and Vanderbilt — offered domestic partner benefits in 2010.

"Not sure about the rest of the faculty, but my personal preference would be to see MU in any conference but the SEC," Rubin said.

Most conferences other than the Big 12 and SEC have embraced benefits for same-sex couples, she said. "As much as I hate to make this a litmus test, it does say something about the inclusiveness of these schools," she said.

ACADEMIC PROWESS

Conference alignment isn't a major factor when students make college decisions, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

"The campus tour is the No. 1 reason that students choose Mizzou over other universities," she said. "Students and their families are mostly interested in student life and academic opportunities. Of course, athletics is an important part of the entire Mizzou experience, but conference alignment isn't a top priority for our students when choosing Mizzou, we don't believe."

Todd McCubbin, executive director of the Mizzou Alumni Association, isn't sure how conference realignment might manifest itself in alumni support or donations.

"Definitely, we wouldn't put ourselves in a situation that's going to adversely affect our university," he said. Chancellor Brady "Deaton and the curators will do the best thing for the university. I trust that and know that."

Still, talk of realignment is getting plenty of attention at alumni events, McCubbin said. "It's certainly something that has been a big source of conversation, no doubt about that," he said. "There's a lot of fan interest, and that fan interest is from the athletic side."

Some faculty members said conference alignment is an athletics issue, but some wonder why MU fans don't seem as interested in their side of campus.

"I think at the end of the day, faculty who care about our conference alignment care only insofar as they are fans of the Tigers," said Nicole Monnier, an associate teaching professor of Russian. "I think we do care when discussions of our football teams seem to overshadow academic issues at the university."
Wouldn't it be nice to see as much discussion across the university community and beyond about, say, e-learning, performance funding, faculty and staff salaries, MU's role in higher education in the state, etc.?

Rubin is paying attention to the conference discussion, but she agreed.

"Although I am a strong supporter of our student athletes," she said, "even I wish we got as motivated about our academic prowess as we do our prowess on the field or court."
WELCOME TO CONFERENCE ALIGNMENT 101

BIG 12 CONFERENCE
Baylor University
Waco, Texas
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kan.
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kan.
University of Missouri
Columbia
University of Oklahoma
Norman, Okla.
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Okla.
University of Texas
Arlington, Texas
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas

Former schools:
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Neb. (joined the Big Ten Conference in 2010)
University of Colorado
Boulder, Colo. (joined the Pac-12 Conference in 2011)

BIG EAST CONFERENCE
University of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio
University of Connecticut
Storrs, Conn.
DePaul University
Chicago
Georgetown University
Washington, D.C.
University of Louisville
Louisville, Ky.
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wis.
University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, Ind.

SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE
University of Florida
Gainesville, Fla.
University of Georgia
Athens, Ga.
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Ky.
Univ. of South Carolina
Columbia, S.C.
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tenn.
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tenn.
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, Ala.
University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, Ark.
Auburn University
Auburn, Ala.
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, La.
Mississippi State University
Starkville, Miss.
University of Mississippi
Oxford, Miss.

BIG TEN CONFERENCE
University of Illinois
Champaign, Ill.
Indiana University
Bloomington, Ind.
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Mich.
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Mich.
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Neb.
Northwestern University
Evanston, Ill.
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio
Pennsylvania State Univ.
University Park, Pa.
Purdue University
West Lafayette, Ind.
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wis.

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Mizzou at OU could be beginning of the end

BY VAHE GREGORIAN | Posted: Monday, September 19, 2011 12:15 am

Mizzou plays Saturday at top-ranked Oklahoma in what was supposed to be its inaugural game in the fresh and revitalized 10-team Big 12.

But the conference with three teams in this week's Associated Press top eight and five in the top 19 is on the verge of extinction.

And now the most intriguing question isn't whether MU will win in Norman for the first time since 1966, but if it will be playing there for the final time as part of the last gasp of the league, or at least anything resembling its current makeup.

With reports intensifying that OU and University of Texas regents today will empower their presidents to navigate a future with the Pac-12 that probably would include tag-alongs Oklahoma State and Texas Tech, the league MU began with in 1928 as the Missouri Valley-spinoff Big Six could within days dwindle to an unsustainable five members.

Considering the stray thunderbolt this weekend when Pittsburgh and Syracuse stunned the Big East by leaving for the Atlantic Coast Conference, the future in some ways never has seemed more a puzzle not only for Mizzou but also much of college athletics.

"Nobody knows," one conference administrator said, "and who do you trust?"

Said another, "It's a game of dominoes, and there are still a lot of dominoes to fall."

But if the newest developments perhaps bear some distressing ripples for Mizzou, they also could have encouraging ramifications.

Assuming the Big 12 can't find a way to adequately repopulate if OU, Texas and Co. indeed leave, MU may be better-perched than ever for consideration by two of the most successful and stable conferences: the Big Ten and the Southeastern.

While Big Ten commissioner Jim Delany repeatedly has said he is comfortable with the league's 12-school structure and would not feel the need to grow because others are, it's impossible to know how other maneuvers may influence Delany.

And while the Big Ten twice has passed on an eager MU, if it were to look to 14 now, Mizzou would seem to be one of the few remaining worthy fits with potential former targets Pittsburgh and Syracuse presumably off the market.
Maryland of the ACC also was believed to have been scrutinized by the Big Ten before, and between its involvement in the ACC expansion and the ACC's vote last week to increase its exit fee to $20 million also appears now not to be a Big Ten option.

Meanwhile, the SEC seems to need to add at least a 14th — if for no other reason than to add a seventh league game to each conference football week — after Texas A&M clears legal hurdles for its escape from the Big 12.

That is, if there remains a discernible Big 12 to escape.

And therein may lie a key to renewed SEC thinking on MU.

Philosophically, the SEC all along had not wanted to be perceived as responsible for the demise of the Big 12, a stance no doubt since reinforced by the Baylor-led threats of litigation.

Between that and at least an initial desire to look east for geographical balance and questions about whether MU's brand and accompanying markets would add enough value to justify dividing the pie further, Mizzou hadn't figured in deep SEC thinking.

But if there is no Big 12 to invade, MU gets a stronger look.

And its two top 30 TV markets, academic reputation, recent football success and men's basketball tradition and the fact it's contiguous to three SEC states becomes more noteworthy, even if Mizzou would be hard-pressed to thrive in football.

Especially when the SEC appears to be holding tight to its "gentleman's agreement" not to add schools from states already within its footprint: Clemson, Florida State, Georgia Tech and Louisville, for instance.

In fact, in a world with no Big 12, and perhaps even with a dying one, MU and West Virginia appear to be the strongest suitors for the 14th spot.

If none of that comes to pass with so much yet uncertain, MU and West Virginia could be linked in another way.

Perhaps the seven remaining Big East football schools and the five standing Big 12 schools could be fused, even if the alliance would smack of the roots of the Big 12 as an unruly amalgam of the Big Eight and Southwest.

"I don't think anything's off the table," a well-placed source within those conferences said. "It's such a new world order."

So much so that NCAA president Mark Emmert on Sunday expressed concern about the tension and disruption even as he inadvertently demonstrated how powerless he is to stop it.
"This is not about playing Monopoly and moving pieces around on the board. ... There's a chance to do some things that would be helpful, and there's a chance to do some things that would be very wrong," he told USA Today, later adding, "We don't have the authority to manage or approve or disapprove of any of these situations."

It might help lend some peace to the never-ending turbulence if he did.

As the Big 12 has been contending with its anticipated downfall for weeks, the abrupt moves of Pittsburgh and Syracuse left the Big East office in a mix of 'shock, anguish and anxiety,' according to a conference source.

ACC Commissioner John Swofford in a teleconference Sunday morning left the door open to more mayhem ahead when he said, "We are very comfortable with this 14" but added the ACC is "not philosophically opposed to 16."

Asked if he was continuing to have dialogue with any of the "double-digit" other number of schools that had reached out to the ACC, he said, "Probably to some degree."

He added: "I've never seen this level of uncertainty and potential fluidity among schools and conferences. Schools are looking for stability and when that stability doesn't exist for whatever reason, as long as that's going on, I think the conferences that appear to be stable moving forward are going to receive inquiries from schools that are desirous of having that kind of stability."

He either ignored or didn't catch the irony of the fact that a willingness to swoop in on other schools is a prime reason for the instability.

As for whether he might be inclined to lay off the Big East and give it a chance to resettle and, in fact, survive, he said, "I'm not focused on that."

And the next dominoes wait to be tipped.
ACC moves could have impact on Big 12

By BLAIR KERKHOFF

Forces are mobilizing on most conference realignment fronts surrounding the Big 12.

To the south, the Southeastern Conference has invited Texas A&M. To the west, the Pac-12 could soon receive inquiries from Oklahoma and Oklahoma State.

To the east, Pittsburgh and Syracuse have asked to join the Atlantic Coast Conference and could be welcomed as early as today.

The Big 12?

“‘We can’t do anything until we know what Oklahoma and Texas are going to do,’ said a Big 12 source. ‘We’re waiting on them.’”

The answer could come Monday. The regents at both universities have meetings that day and the agenda items include conference realignment.

Meanwhile, Big 12 schools watch from the realignment sideline, and some don’t like what they’ve seen, even from their own members, which have at various times over the past year expressed confidence in the future of the Big 12.

“You have all those CEOs looking at each other and saying, ‘You know, we’re committed to the future of the Big 12,'” Missouri athletic director Mike Alden said before the Tigers’ game Saturday against Western Illinois. “When that fragments like it has ... that’s a little bit disappointing.”

With the ACC making its move, the two conferences that appear to be the most fragile are the Big 12 and Big East.

A combination of the conferences could be a future arrangement.

If Oklahoma and Oklahoma State are welcomed into the Pac-12 along with Texas and Texas Tech, five Big 12 schools — Kansas, Missouri, Kansas State, Iowa State and Baylor — would remain.
Starting next year, seven Big East football-playing schools would remain without Pitt and Syracuse: West Virginia, Louisville, Cincinnati, South Florida, TCU, Connecticut and Rutgers.

A merger could create a 12-team football conference ideal for a football playoff. Big East basketball also includes the likes of Notre Dame, Georgetown and Villanova, and a powerhouse hoops league could be formed.

Kansas State athletic director John Currie said Saturday at halftime of the Wildcats’ game against Kent State that he’s confident his school will be included in a Bowl Championship Series automatic qualifier conference.

“Regardless of our conference affiliation at Kansas State, we are going to be at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics,” Currie said. “I have full, 100 percent confidence in that.”

Realignment scenarios seem to change daily.

An ACC source told The Star on Saturday that Kansas and Texas would be considered by the ACC, if the league wants to reach 16.

But a Big 12 source said ACC commissioner John Swofford has told other athletic administrators that the league could stop at 14.

Kansas has been mentioned in speculation with the Pac-12, along with Kansas State.

Missouri has been rumored as a possible SEC target.

Texas’ situation is complicated by its lucrative in-house network. The deal with ESPN that’s expected to pay the university $247 million over the next 20 years, might have to be reworked if the Longhorns seek to join another conference.

That may leave making the Big 12 work the best option for Texas, even if only seven schools remain. If Oklahoma and Oklahoma State move, a seven-team Big 12 that includes Texas and Texas Tech could line up with the seven remaining Big East members.

Notre Dame athletic director Jack Swarbrick, talking to reporters during the Notre Dame-Michigan State game, said he was surprised by Saturday’s news of possible ACC expansion.

“I felt like maybe things were about to settle down a little bit,” Swarbrick said. “I think the Pac-12 was pretty intent on staying where it was, and if that were true, the Big 12 had a chance to hold. So this was a little bit of a surprise.”

Alden also was caught off guard by the ACC news.

“That just runs back to the fragility of college athletics,” Alden said.
Alden and Currie said both schools were working to keep the Big 12 together, as is Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton, chairman of the Big 12 Board of Directors.

"I understand there are a lot of other things going on," Alden said. "But that his (Deaton's) primary focus, to hold the (Big 12) together."

The Star's Mike DeArmond contributed to this report.
Live Blog Mizzou: Alden chides some Big 12 CEOs for flip-flop

By Mike DeArmond - Posted on 17 September 2011

COLUMBIA – Missouri athletic director Mike Alden admitted to being disappointed that Big 12 Conference stability – pledged by the presidents, chancellors and CEOs of 10 schools – has so obviously fragmented.

“You have all of those CEO’s looking at each other and saying, you know, we’re committed to the future of the Big 12,” Alden said prior to Saturday’s Western Illinois at Missouri kickoff. “When that fragments like it has, yeah, I would say that’s a little bit disappointing.”

Alden said the reports of Syracuse and Pitt applying for membership in the ACC “lends to the uncertainty around college athletics right now.”

Alden said he was not certain of the validity to such reports but admitted “I just caught a tweet on that.”

“That just runs back to the fragility of college athletics.”

In light of that, Alden was asked if he felt that limited Missouri’s options for a landing spot in the Big East Conference, of which Syracuse and Pitt are members. He dodged the question, saying that MU chancellor Brady Deaton – chairman of the Big 12 Conference Board of Directors – is “doing everything he can to hold the Big 12 together.”

“I understand, Alden added, “there are a lot of other things going on. But that is his primary focus, is to hold (the Big 12) together.”

Oklahoma and Texas board of regents are meeting on Monday over considerations of the Sooners and/or the Longhorns future conference affiliations.

“If it explodes,” Alden said, “he (Deaton) likes where Mizzou stands. I agree with that.”

Alden said he did not know if it was true what an MU source told The Star on Saturday, that Pitt was one of the schools that Big 12 representatives queried about its interest in joining the Big 12.

“I don’t know. I really don’t,” Alden said.
MU's Alden reacts to latest conference shuffling

BY VAHE GREGORIAN • vgregorian@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8199 | Posted: Sunday, September 18, 2011 12:15 am

COLUMBIA, MO. • Assuming reports are true that Pittsburgh and Syracuse are seeking to leave the Big East — and they could have applications to the Atlantic Coast Conference accepted as soon as today — Mizzou athletics director Mike Alden said, "It just lends to the uncertainty around college athletics right now."

Specifically, he said before MU's romp over Western Illinois Saturday night, it suggests instability and vulnerability in the Big East, which has appeared to be one of MU's alternatives should the Big 12 dissolve.

Asked if the development limits potential landing spots for Mizzou, Alden instead immediately referred to chancellor Brady Deaton's efforts to keep the Big 12 intact as its chairman of the board.

"Remember, he's doing everything he can to try to hold the Big 12 together," Alden said. "And I understand there's a lot of things going on out there, but that's his primary focus."

Among the things "going on out there" were reports by ESPN.com and The New York Times that quoted a high-ranking ACC official as saying eight other schools had reached out to it to discuss potential membership.

Asked if MU was among those, Alden said: "I don't know about that. That's not my role."

With regents at the University of Oklahoma and University of Texas set to meet on Monday regarding their future conference affiliations, the end may be near for the Big 12.

Alden said he didn't know what to expect from the meetings but acknowledged disappointment that those schools apparently are looking elsewhere just months after CEOs of each school were looking each other in the eye expressing their commitments to each other.

"I think when that fragments like it has, yeah I would say it's a little bit disappointing," he said.

Deaton told the Post-Dispatch last week that if Oklahoma and Oklahoma State were to leave, he still believes the conference could go on.
Add Texas to the departed, though, and it's almost impossible to understand how it could continue.

If the Big 12 is doomed, Alden reiterated his belief that Mizzou's credentials as the flagship university in a state of six million with two top 30 TV markets and American Association of University academic status makes for a brand "you've got to like."
Let’s just get this over with

By JOE WALLJASPER

Last week was full of red-hot realignment action, and this week promises even more boardroom thrills, with conference calls, closed sessions and prepared statements issued nationwide at a rate never before seen. It’s time for our favorite administrators to cinch up the Dockers, slip on the loafers and get ... it ... on!

Missouri fans, I fully expect you to show up in force on The Quad early tomorrow morning. And when MU Chancellor Brady Deaton arrives for work at Jesse Hall, boost his spirits by chanting: “Our Brand Is Strong! Our Brand Is Strong! We Are The Flagship University In A State Of 6 Million!”

Yell it so loud that conference commissioners from Birmingham to Chicago to Los Angeles can hear it.

Sorry about that. It’s hard not to get the fever while watching something as exciting as conference realignment — sarcasm alert — especially now, as we approach the finish line of the morbidly fascinating game that will change college sports for the worse.

All signs point to this being the week that will decide the fate of the Big 12. Tomorrow, the board of regents at Oklahoma and Texas will meet. They are expected to grant their presidents power to decide whether to stay in the Big 12 or go elsewhere. Every indication from Oklahoma since President David Boren announced OU wouldn’t be a “wallflower” is that his school is headed to the Pac-12 with Oklahoma State in tow.

That likely would be the deathblow for the Big 12, but there is a twist. On Friday, we learned that Big East members Pittsburgh and Syracuse have applied for membership to the Atlantic Coast Conference.

What does that mean? Well, it means Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe isn’t the only one curled up in the fetal position in a darkened room listening to Joy Division albums. Big East Commissioner John Marinatto is also on the verge of a bad breakup.

In the game of conference realignment, it’s always important to consider how your school can benefit from the pain of others. In this case, Deaton can scratch one bad idea — joining the Big East — from the list of Missouri’s options. At least he should eliminate that option, which never should have been high on the list.

Another good thing for Missouri is that if the ACC accepts Syracuse and Pitt, it could spawn the big shift to four 16-team super conferences. As more conferences expand, the demand for Missouri rises.

The Big Ten remains the dream option for MU, but Commissioner Jim Delany reiterated yesterday that he’s comfortable with 12 teams.
The SEC is likely to add either one or three teams, and Missouri makes geographic sense, although it would be harder to win there than in the Big 12 in just about every sport.

And if the Pac-12 wants to go to 16 and Texas says no, Missouri might have a shot at that league. A nice scenario would have MU and Kansas joining Oklahoma and Oklahoma State in a Pac-16. That would preserve a few traditional rivalries.

Any of those three conferences would offer long-term stability — a welcome change from the Big 12.

There is always the possibility, though, that the Big East could become an organ donor for the deathly ill Big 12. If the Big 12 could grab TCU, Louisville and Cincinnati from the Big East, would that convince Oklahoma to hang around? It wouldn't convince me to stay if I were Boren. Why remain in a league where Texas has a $15 million annual advantage from its ESPN-sponsored Longhorn Network when you could join an equitable conference that is in no danger of falling apart?

Conversely, if Oklahoma does go and the Big 12 does collapse, the Big East could fortify itself temporarily with Big 12 leftovers. ESPN reported yesterday that Iowa State and Baylor had already contacted the Big East just in case the Big 12 dies. I hope it doesn't come to that for Missouri, which would be falling into the lap of another league that soon will be picked apart.

And as exciting as this realignment ride has been, I'm ready to reach the destination.

Reach Joe Walljasper at 573-815-1783 or e-mail jwalljasper@columbiatribune.com.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri AD Mike Alden says Big 12 still MU's focus

By Harry Plumer
September 17, 2011 | 7:09 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Mike Alden reiterated his previous position on Missouri's conference alignment, speaking to reporters before Saturday's game against Western Illinois.

"I think that you guys have got to remember, (MU Chancellor) Brady (Deaton) is our chair of the Big 12, and he's going to continue to do everything he can to keep the Big 12 together," Alden said. "I understand there's a lot of things going on out there, but that's his primary focus, is to do what he thinks he can to keep that together."

Alden said he had no reason to believe there was any truth to the ESPN report that Syracuse and Pittsburgh have applied to join the Athletic Coast Conference.

"I don't know much about that, other than what people would tweet or text," Alden said. "I don't know the validity of that one way or the other. You guys may actually know more than I do, I just caught a tweet on that, but it just lends back to the fragility of college athletics."

The ESPN report also said that as many as 10 schools have approached the ACC, but Alden said he didn't know if MU was one of them.

"I don't know about that, that's not my role," he said.

More news is expected Monday, as both the Oklahoma and Texas boards of regents will hold meetings to discuss their school's conference affiliations. Alden said he didn't know what he expected to come out of those meetings but that he and Deaton were still confident in Missouri's position.

"If it (the Big 12) explodes, he (Deaton) likes where Mizzou stands," Alden said. "I agree with that."
Tech helps the elderly

By JANISE SILVEY

Researchers at the University of Missouri have found technology commonly used for video games and security systems is effective at detecting illness and fall risks in senior citizens.

The study comes several years after researchers started using motion-sensitive technology to monitor changes in health for residents of TigerPlace, an independent living community.

Marjorie Skubic, a professor of electrical and computer engineering, and doctoral student Erik Stone are using the Microsoft Kinect. That device has a motion-sensing camera that allows health care providers to monitor changes in behavior in patients that can indicate illness or fall risks.

"The Kinect uses infrared light to create a depth image that produces data in the form of a silhouette, instead of a video or photograph," Stone said.

Another doctoral student, Liang Liu, is collaborating with Assistant Professor Mihail Popescu to develop a fall-detection system that uses Doppler radar to recognize changes in walking or bending — movements that indicate increased risks of falling.

Both systems are used to monitor TigerPlace residents, allowing them to maintain independence while keeping an eye on their risks of illnesses or falls.

Stone's study, "Evaluation of an Inexpensive Depth Camera for Passive In-Home Fall Risk Assessment," won a best paper award at the Pervasive Health Conference in Ireland in May. At the same conference, Liu's study, "Automatic Fall Detection Based on Doppler Radar Motion," won the best poster award.

Reach Janise Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
UM system contracts pass audit of schools

The University of Missouri System apparently has reasonable contracts with its campus chancellors: The four schools dodged notice in a state audit of administrative contracts at Missouri's 13 four-year public universities.

Five Missouri schools were flagged by state Auditor Tom Schweich for making deals with presidents that might not comply with state law or be "in the best interest of the university," according to the audit released yesterday.

In most situations, the universities entered into contracts that allowed presidents to continue earning salaries or receiving benefits even after they resigned.

The schools and administrators in question include Missouri State University and former president Michael Nietzel; Truman State University and former president Barbara Dixon; Harris Stowe State University and former president Henry Givens Jr.; Northwest Missouri State University and former president Dean Hubbard; and Missouri Southern State and former president Julio Leon.
Audit flags college contracts

By JANISE SILVEY

Five Missouri universities have been flagged by the state auditor's office for having contracts with presidents or chancellors that might not comply with state law or be "in the best interest of the university."

Auditor Tom Schweich released findings Friday from his survey of contracts for all four University of Missouri System chancellors and the nine presidents who oversee Missouri's other public four-year institutions.

Contracts for MU Chancellor Brady Deaton and chancellors of all other UM campuses are apparently reasonable; none of them were flagged in the audit as having problems.

Here are the contracts the auditor deemed problematic:

- Perhaps least surprising is Michael Nietzel's arrangement with Missouri State University, which garnered plenty of media attention. Nietzel resigned as president after five years, but his contract entitled him to become a tenured professor in the psychology department for an annual salary of $160,423—roughly $68,000 more a year than the highest-paid faculty member in that department. Additionally, the contract entitled him to a semester of leave at the new full salary rate or one year off at half pay. Nietzel chose to take one semester off and was paid $80,211 during his fall 2010 absence. You'll recall he used that time to serve as an unpaid adviser to Gov. Jay Nixon.

- Also reported in news outlets was Truman State University's contract with former President Barbara Dixon. When she resigned after five years, she and the Board of Governors entered into a separation agreement under which she would receive $205,050 to serve as a consultant to the board. Additionally, she was entitled to receive $10,000 at the end of that year if she performed satisfactorily and to receive an additional six months of health insurance. The audit says TSU reported paying her the $10,000 but not for the insurance. So what did Dixon do as a consultant? According to the audit, her one documented task was recording thoughts and recommendations for cost-saving measures. (Oh, the irony).
Harris Stowe State University entered into a contract with then-President Henry Givens Jr. in August 2010 that provided he would serve as an adviser for two years post-resignation for $70,000 a year. During that time he was supposed to research and write a partial history of the school, assist in fundraising and provide advice on legislative matters and campus expansion projects. Givens told the auditor that the compensation would come from private funds, not university dollars. Givens was provided lifetime participation in the university’s health benefits and a lifetime $100,000 term life insurance in recognition of his 30 years of service and willingness to forgo other employment. Givens is also apparently entitled to a paid partial sabbatical leave, although he has said he doesn’t expect to take it.

Northwest Missouri State University executed an agreement with then-President Dean Hubbard that entitled him to his presidential salary of $224,762 for the year after he resigned as president but didn’t identify any specific duties he was supposed to perform. Additionally, he received health and accident insurance for himself and his wife for two years after his resignation. The university also spent nearly $9,000 to relocate the Hubbards to Kansas City.

Missouri Southern State University entered a separation agreement with then-President Julio Leon in August 2007 that entitled Leon to $168,518 upon his resignation, with no obligation to perform any future tasks. He was also supposed to be named “president emeritus” and be provided a faculty office and computer in the business school. He had the option of teaching part-time at the prorated compensation rate of the highest-paid professor, but he did not exercise that option. The agreement was a modification of Leon’s existing employment contract, which provided a six-month sabbatical at his monthly base pay upon resignation, provided that he gave a year’s notice. In addition, he would have the right to teach at a salary equal to 115 percent of the highest-paid professor’s salary and, if he were terminated for any reason other than for cause, he would receive his base pay for 12 months. Neither agreement explained the purpose for the post-employment payments, and the audit said the school did not provide an explanation at the auditor’s request.

A take-away from all this? Good for the UM Board of Curators and system leaders for not offering to funnel tax dollars to chancellors or presidents who are no longer actually doing any work.

Also, we might want to remember these names as the board continues its search for a new UM System president. I suspect most Missourians would rather the system pass on candidates who ask for or accept these types of benefits.
Former NASA astronaut brings extensive knowledge and experience to MU

By Raymond Howze
September 16, 2011 | 3:38 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Linda Godwin knows how to handle pressure. She’s been rocketed into space with more than three times the force of gravity bearing down on her. She’s seen the Earth from 100 miles up.

So staring down a lecture hall full mostly of freshmen? No sweat.

That’s the way it looked on Thursday when she announced to more than 100 students that the weekend’s homework awaited them in the back of the room.

A netting of angst seemed to fall over the class.

"You almost lucked out with no homework," Godwin continued. "But I went back and got it."

Godwin, an MU graduate and recently retired NASA astronaut, recently began her new career teaching astronomy at MU. As far as talking about astronomy goes, she brings the cachet of having been there, done that.

"Her teaching ties in life experiences," freshman Hillary Switzer said. "It makes it more realistic than a book and really enriches the class."

Born in Jackson, in southeastern Missouri, Godwin developed an interest in space at an early age.

"When I was a kid, they (NASA) were doing all the early programs with Apollo and walking on the moon — that influenced my interest in math and science," she said.

Godwin earned her doctorate in physics from MU in 1980, the year she joined NASA. She credits the education she received at Southeast Missouri State University and MU for giving her the background to apply to the space agency.
"She can answer any question you throw at her," said Megan Patzius, a junior majoring in environmental science. "She offers insight into what things are really like in space — you can feel her passion for it."

At the Thursday lecture, Godwin went through a series of slides, carefully describing eclipses and oceanic tides. Even students seated at the back of the hall appeared to be fully tuned in.

"It's really amazing," freshman Olivia Boyer said. "She's not just someone in astronomy but someone who has seen it themselves — she has those memories. It's not just a pretty picture on a board."

After working with NASA for about five years in the space program in Houston, Godwin finally was tapped to go to space.

"It was the phone call you dream of getting," Godwin said. "I feel very fortunate to have done it, and I wouldn't have changed a thing."

Godwin was on four space shuttle missions. Space shuttle flights are shorter than International Space Station flights — it's more a sprint than a marathon, she said. With little time for entertainment, free time was often spent just watching the world go by.

"Looking out the window couldn't be beat," Godwin said. "If I had any time at all, that would be my favorite thing to do."

Godwin's astronomy class meets four days a week for 50 minutes, but she happily stays after class to take questions and share her passion for astronomy.

Her husband, retired astronaut Steven Nagel, also has joined MU. The two met as astronauts — they went on one space shuttle flight together, Godwin's first — and have been married for 15 years. Nagel is working in the dean's office of the College of Engineering as he prepares to begin teaching in spring.

"I think she really wants to be here working with students and try to give them the benefit of what we learned over the years," Nagel said.

Godwin hopes to eventually create a class at MU about the physics and science that make space flight and research possible. The foundation for this class would be centered around space flight itself.
Godwin's ties to Missouri are strong. "She can serve as a great motivator for students," Nagel said. "She came from a background very similar to them and can show them they have the potential to accomplish many things."

Godwin said she was just a kid who read science fiction books.

"The reality is never quite like that, of course, but just the idea of leaving the earth and going somewhere — it seemed kind of like an adventure," she said.
MU develops free audio tour of campus

By Chantel O'Neal

September 16, 2011 | 4:37 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — While walking around MU, visitors may notice a set of signs that went up earlier this week. The small black signs mark the 16 sites included on the new Mizzou Audio Tour.

The tour takes visitors on an hour-long stroll circling Francis Quadrangle. Visitors can learn about each site by calling the phone number listed on the signs. Tour maps are available online, and printed copies can be found at the Reynolds Alumni Center or in the visitor center in the rotunda of Jesse Hall.

The audio tour uses technology created by Guide by Cell, a San Francisco company that organizes tours for museums.

While the tour is free, it does cost users mobile phone minutes. The recorded messages average two minutes in length.

Visitors can explore at their own pace and stop at sites in any order they choose.

"People are using their mobile phones to satisfy their curiosity — that's exactly what we're doing here," said Clyde Bentley, an associate professor in the Missouri School of Journalism who came up with the system of using cell phones. "This gives them a chance to hear the story behind these places."

The project is a collaboration of several university departments participating in the Pride of Place Campus Heritage Network, including University Affairs and Campus Facilities. For the first year, the Mizzou Alumni Association is sponsoring the tour.

The first planning meetings for the tour were held over the summer, and the project took shape in a matter of months.

"The reason we wanted to get it up and running was we wanted to promote it as alumni come in for the Centennial Homecoming," said David Roloff, the alumni association's director of
Membership and Marketing. "We just think that it’s going to be a great opportunity for people to rediscover campus."

Bentley approached the Heritage Network with the idea, using his research on mobile phones and his audio tour of the benches along the MKT Trail to demonstrate how the on-campus tour would work.

"What was important was to make it available to as many people as possible," Bentley said, pointing out that users don’t need a smartphone to access the tour.

For now, the voice of Nathan Hurst, convergence media manager at the MU News Bureau, will guide callers through the tour. However, there’s talk of getting Chancellor Brady Deaton to record the introduction and alumni to record the messages for specific sites, Roloff said.

Commentary includes basic facts, bits of history and useful information such as hours of operation for specific sites. The messages will also “uncover secrets,” which include student traditions and university legends, according to the tour’s website. For example, students commonly dress the statue of Thomas Jefferson in a party hat to celebrate his April birthday.

In the future, the tour might expand to include other notable locations and landmarks on campus, including Memorial Union, Tiger Plaza and Memorial Stadium, Roloff said.
Researcher illuminates tale of Neanderthals

By JACOB BARKER

Sunday, September 15, 2013

Although modern humans’ closest relatives, Neanderthals, disappeared about 28,000 years ago, those of us of non-African descent actually have a bit of them in us.

Research released last year suggests 1 to 4 percent of genetic material in humans who are of non-African descent came from Neanderthals, the tough, stocky, brutish human relatives that roamed Europe and Central Asia starting around 250,000 years ago. That means there likely was some interbreeding with the modern humans who migrated out of Africa into the Neanderthals’ European and Central Asian territory, said Libby Cowgill, an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Missouri.

"If there’s one thing anthropology teaches us, throughout human history, when you have population migrations ... if they can interbreed they’re going to try to," Cowgill told a packed Monsanto Auditorium during yesterday’s Saturday Morning Science at the Christopher S. Bond Life Sciences Center.

Cowgill, who studied at Washington University under preeminent Neanderthal expert Erik Trinkaus, gave attendees an overview of the differences between us and our biological brothers. Neanderthals took a different evolutionary track from modern humans because they migrated out of Africa into Europe and Central Asia long before modern humans did. Living in the colder climates of glacial Europe, they evolved with stockier bodies and shorter limbs to better retain heat.

The prevalence of Neanderthal fossils indicates that they often buried their dead because otherwise the bones would not preserve. But it’s unclear why the Neanderthals buried so many of their own. Cowgill compared a site in Sunghir, Russia, where a 9-year-old and a 13-year-old were buried around 26,000 years ago. In the site, there were thousands of crafted beads, a spear and other ceremonial items. “This burial meant something to whoever buried these children,” Cowgill said. “Neanderthals aren’t doing this.”

They did, however, make tools such as spears. The fossil evidence shows that the right arm bones of the species were as much as 50 percent thicker, likely the result of spear use that only required the non-dominant arm to stabilize the weapon. That and the prevalence of healed fractures suggest they lived dangerous lives hunting large animals.

“This in combination with other pieces of evidence may indicate they were spending a lot of time in close quarters with large animals,” Cowgill said. “Sneaking up on a large animal and jabbing it with a stick is not the safest way to bring home the bacon.”

It’s unclear why Neanderthals went extinct, but they would have interacted with modern humans as they began moving into Europe about 40,000 years ago. Neanderthals started behaving “weirdly” Cargill said, with jewelry beginning to show up in the fossil record. “There were about 10,000 years where Neanderthals and humans were occupying the same region of Europe,” Cowgill said. “And that, my friends, is the stuff really bad science fiction is made of.”
Getting students to stick around
Columbia's student population holds more potential than the dollars students pump into the local economy, and a new Columbia Chamber of Commerce initiative aims to tap into it.

By JACOB BARKER

It's the busy season for Kellie Faerber. With the fall semester in full swing, the director of VA Mortgage Center's internship program reckons she spends three to five hours on one of Columbia's college campuses each week.

Photo by DON SHRUBSHELL

Emily Hendren, left, tells Monica Surface, a Stephens College senior and biology major, about a program called Emerging Professionals in Columbia, or EPIC. EPIC is sponsored by the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitors Bureau and The District. It encourages college graduates to live and work in Columbia following their graduation.
Cathy Scroggs, University of Missouri vice chancellor of student affairs, speaks Wednesday during a Columbia Chamber of Commerce roundtable discussion at Harpo's about how to keep college graduates in town.

Photo by Ryan C. Henriksen

Honors College students are seated at the school's graduation ceremony.

The job fairs, talks with student groups and speaking engagements in business classes keep her busy, but they also keep young talent flowing into the rapidly growing local mortgage lender.

"Some of our best hires that we've had have come from our internship program," Faerber said.

Faerber's bosses, co-founders Brant and Brock Bukowsky, were University of Missouri graduates who decided to stick around and start a company eight years ago that now employs close to 600 people. They could have started their company anywhere, but their decision to stay in Columbia has been a boon to the area's employment base. As that example shows, Columbia's student population holds more potential than the dollars students pump into the local economy, and a new Columbia Chamber of Commerce initiative aims to tap into it.

The chamber has launched a number of efforts aimed at getting students involved with the local business community and keeping them here after they graduate. Networking with the city's business owners and familiarizing them with the resources Columbia has to offer might persuade the best and brightest students to start a business here or lend talent to a local company.

"This is something we have needed to do for a number of years, that we put emphasis on students," said Kristi Ray, the chamber's executive vice president.

The initiative really got under way this year during the business group's annual board retreat. "Two or three issues kept coming up, and what kept coming up was the students," Ray said. "If we can keep them here, let's try."

Although Ray said the effort is "more of a philosophy" than a single, branded campaign, it already has taken hold among chamber members. The group's young professionals arm, Emerging Professionals in
Columbia, or EPIC, is recruiting students for a steering committee that will develop a program and events for a new subgroup, EPIC Student. The chamber’s education committee is launching a program to find interns for local businesses. And the chamber, along with the Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau and The District, launched a marketing effort aimed at students using social media.

As Faerber’s company well knows, there’s a lot of potential value to seeking out talent at the university. As a member of the executive board of EPIC, she’s also involved in the effort to try and spread that benefit throughout the community.

“I want to see every company have an internship and offer that experience because it’s going to benefit everyone,” she said. “I think we really need to pay attention to the value of what these students bring.”

Joe Newberry, the co-chair of EPIC, said the organization is launching EPIC Student “so they can make connections with the business community, and we can show them there is a social life in Columbia after graduation.”

“I think there’s a misnomer among students that there’s nothing more to Columbia than downtown and the bar and club scene,” he said. “There’s just so much more to Columbia than that.”

After the leadership retreat this year identified keeping students in town after graduation as a chamber priority, EPIC quickly got involved.

“EPIC, being the younger arm of the chamber, we kind of felt this was something that fit our culture, so we decided to take it on,” Newberry said.

EPIC is developing an application process to recruit students to a steering committee that will determine the structure and focus of the new group. By making it a selective process, Newberry hopes to get the most motivated students interested in leading the steering committee.

“We’re not acting like we have all of the answers,” he said. “We’re really going to let that steering committee determine what we do with this group.”

Already, EPIC representatives have been on the college campuses to speak with students, and the group is planning a mixer next month where students interested in getting involved can network with chamber members and apply to be on the steering committee. Hopefully, Newberry said, the steering committee can be up and running by the end of the year.

“I think it’s important to Columbia and Central Missouri as a whole,” he said of the chamber’s student outreach. “I equate things to sports a lot, and you just don’t let your talent get away. If you’ve got good people on your roster, you try to keep them on your roster.”

The chamber, The District and the Convention and Visitors Bureau also put together a marketing campaign for the student initiative this year: Connect 2 CoMo. Banners were hung downtown welcoming students. The chamber set up Facebook and Twitter accounts for Connect 2 CoMo. There were Connect 2 CoMo booths at career and volunteer fairs on the campuses of MU, Stephens College and Columbia.

The response from local businesses has been great, Ray said, but the campaign was put together in a short time, and the chamber plans to do more with it. And actually connecting with students from scratch is harder than it might seem, she said.
Figuring out how to better connect with students and get them involved with the community was the topic of discussion at a chamber breakfast Wednesday. Members threw out ideas such as recruiting student focus groups and expanding social media outreach. But as Stephens College President Dianne Lynch said at the event, there’s likely only one big question on the minds of students.

“If we had a group of students in the room, they’d all be talking about, ‘How are we going to get a job?’ ” she said.

Loriana Tisher, who leads the professional development program at the MU Trulaske College of Business, told the breakfast group that often students want to do local internships because it allows them to take classes and work on career development at the same time. But local businesses need to compete for talent, she said, because many of the recruiters who show up at MU are from large and medium-size companies with established internship programs outside the area.

“I had about seven or eight companies contact me after that meeting asking about internships,” Tisher said the next day. “I definitely think there are going to be some more local relationships, which we’re excited about.”

The chamber also is launching an internship initiative known as “Project Intern.” Just approved by the board of directors, chamber members will now be able to fill out a form identifying what type of skills they’re looking for and other details about the job. Chamber staff members have identified the contacts at local colleges and universities who help students find internship opportunities, and they’ll work to connect the right kinds of students with the local businesses looking for labor.

“When a student does an internship, oftentimes that exposes them to the community in a different way, and they get to experience what life is like living here as a postgraduate,” said Cheri Ghan, who co-chairs the chamber committee that developed the program. “Ultimately, we’d like to see these students say this is a really great place to live and work.”

The chamber’s intern project already is working to place students in local businesses for next semester and will run through the 2012 summer and fall semesters before the chamber board re-evaluates the effectiveness of the program.

“I think it’s the classic, ‘Why didn’t we do this before?’ ” Ghan said. “I hope that’s what people think after our three semesters and we re-evaluate this.”

And it’s not just the chamber that’s looking to tap into Columbia’s student talent pool. When Regional Economic Development Inc. renovates its new office space in the Fifth Street parking garage, it plans to set aside 1,400 square feet for business incubator space aimed at student entrepreneurs. REDI President Mike Brooks hopes that will give students both space to work on their businesses as well as the chance to get acquainted with the community.

With about 7,000 graduates each year, persuading just a fraction to stay here and start a business could yield a hefty economic impact: “If we can capture one-half of 1 percent, that’s potentially 35 new businesses,” Brooks said.

This week, REDI was a co-sponsor of an “economic gardening” event on the MU campus, where students were given the chance to learn about the resources and groups in the community that cater to
entrepreneurs. Local officials and big players in the entrepreneurial community were on hand for the event, which gave students the chance to network as well.

"Part of our strategy is: How do we develop the kinds of activities, the kinds of things that generate the connectivity between students and the community?" Brooks said.

Although Columbia has a lot to gain by working to keep students in the community, students have plenty to gain, too. After all, Columbia has a lot going for it.

“There’s a lot of communities right now that don’t have jobs,” Ray said. “Now that we’ve got the positions available, we’ve got to find people to fill them.”

Reach Jacob Barker at 573-815-1722 or e-mail jtbarker@columbiatribune.com.
KC Chamber announces 'Big 5' ideas for growth

Posted: Sep 19, 2011 4:25 AM CDT Updated: Sep 19, 2011 4:25 AM CDT

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) - The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce has released its top five ideas for the region.

The chamber originally received 182 suggestions. It announced which ones made the cut last week.

Winning ideas include organizing and hosting a global symposium on animal health in an effort to bolster the reputation of the KC Animal Health Corridor between Columbia and Manhattan, Kan.

The Chamber and the Kansas City Area Development Council will work closely with Gary Forsee to organize the event. Forsee is a former Sprint Nextel CEO and University of Missouri system president.

Another goal is move the Conservatory of Music and Dance at the University of Missouri-Kansas City to a new downtown location. Officials estimate the move would cost $50 million to $80 million.
Lobbyists work around gifts ban

Groups pay to honor lawmakers and give to connected nonprofits.

WASHINGTON -- Former Rep. Ike Skelton was honored at a black tie charity gala last year that raised thousands of dollars for a nonprofit group that benefits the families of fallen soldiers.

Some of the country's biggest military contractors paid to be top sponsors of the event with the former chair of the House Armed Services Committee, and their executives were seated at the head table with Skelton, according to the Sunlight Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based watchdog group.


Altogether, these companies and others paid more than $400,000 in connection with the event, which benefited the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS).

Similarly, several top companies -- Chevron, American Petroleum Institute, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Marathon Oil -- donated a combined $17,000 to the Foundation to Eradicate Duchenne, a nonprofit established to find the cure for the world's leading childhood genetic disease.

The donations were connected to Rep. Jo Ann Emerson, R-Cape Girardeau.

Despite a ban on gifts to lawmakers and limits on campaign contributions, lobbyists and groups that employ them can spend unlimited money to honor members of Congress or donate to nonprofits connected to them or their relatives.

Often, the donations -- or attendance at events like the one held to honor Skelton -- provide a path for lobbyists and company executives to mingle in more intimate surroundings with lawmakers.
The public -- until now -- had little insight into the scope of this largely hidden world of special-interest influence.

Under ethics rules passed by Congress in 2007, lobbyists now must report any payment made for an event or to a group connected to a lawmaker and other top federal officials.

Skelton, who lost re-election in 2010 and is now a partner at the Washington-based consulting firm Husch Blackwell, did not return a call seeking comment. Emerson's office also did not respond to a request for comment.

These reports were compiled in a database by the Sunlight Foundation as a service to the public, said Bill Allison, editorial director of the group.

"The idea is that at events like this, someone will donate a lot of money to a nonprofit that a lawmaker is connected with to curry favor with that lawmaker," Allison said.

For example, several groups reported donating a combined $13,000 to the William L. Clay Scholarship and Research Fund, a scholarship program for high school seniors in Missouri's 1st Congressional District that was founded by the father of Rep. William "Lacy" Clay, D-Mo.

Both Clay and Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, D-Mo., were connected to donations to the National Urban League by Cox Enterprises and Eli Lilly, a pharmaceutical company.

Clay and Rep. Russ Carnahan and Sen. Claire McCaskill, all D-Mo., were all connected to a 2009 event that raised money for the Gene Slay's Boys Club of St. Louis.

Allison said that when looking at the database, it's important to understand that not every donation listed went to a charity or benefited a lawmaker. In many cases, a lawmaker could be a keynote speaker at an event and if a lobbyist was in the audience, they must report the cost of their ticket in connection to the lawmaker.

"The lawmaker might not even know that the lobbyist is in the audience," he said. "But the lobbyists are going because the member is there and they know that they might have a chance of running into them. That's why this kind of disclosure is required."

According to the database, Skelton was connected to 17 payments to groups or charities that totaled $408,550 -- the most of any Missouri lawmaker.

Former Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo., was connected to $103,000 worth of payments, with half of that coming from Boeing Co. for the University of Missouri's Bond Distinguished Lecture Series, which took place after he retired from Congress at the end of 2010.

Sen. Roy Blunt, a Springfield Republican, was listed in connection with several payments totaling $102,000, but it was unclear what the events were for or how he was related to them.
None of those listed were charities and none of the funds benefited Blunt or any causes he has championed.

"Senator Blunt has attended events that are hosted for hundreds of individuals where he was honored along with other members for his public service and policy work, and as a consequence of federal disclosure laws, the entire cost of those events was listed as a 'donation' on behalf of each member," spokeswoman Amber Marchand said.

Altogether, lobbying entities -- including lobbying firms and their clients -- reported spending $50.2 million on so-called honorary and meetings fees related to lawmakers and other federal officeholders between 2009 and 2010, according the Sunlight Foundation analysis.

Of that amount, some $709,000 went to charities, groups or events associated with Missouri lawmakers.
In a resurgent era of handmade goods, raised beds, canned fruit and urban hens, Joe Pintz is a bona fide do-it-yourselfer — his family had already adapted that mentality years ago. A new faculty member at the University of Missouri, Pintz, and his body of artwork, references the humble beauty of simple routines and the utility of tools and implements past.

Pintz is the son of German immigrants; both of his parents’ families left in the wake of the country’s fragmenting identity after World War II. Both families settled in a German-populated area of Chicago, where Pintz’s parents eventually met. They had “pretty much lost everything in the war,” he said. As he grew up in an urban setting, he experienced a melding of Old World and New. His family spent much time canning, gardening, picking cherries and making jelly. “Food was a huge part of our life and culture,” he remembered. “I love to cook, and that kind of rubbed off on me.”
The experiences of his youth and more adult, abstracted reflections on the historical framework of cultures past are manifest in the art he produces with hours of physically focused attention. Most of his ceramic sculptures and functional pottery objects are hand-built. In MU's recent new faculty exhibit at the George Caleb Bingham Gallery, earth-worn implements of faded hues — a cranberry scoop, a feeding trough, a cream separator, a muffin tin — rested in repose, inviting the viewer to come closer and inspect the traditional objects within an unfamiliar context. Some people, Pintz said, don't recognize every object. But for those who do, they "come to these objects with a story of their own," he said. More recently, he has worked on sculptures exploring the idea of weights and measures — including a bushel basket and a large abacus calendar.

The finishing technique Pintz uses for each sculpture creates a layer of continuity among his pieces. The clay he begins with is a type of minimally processed, coarse clay from Endicott Clay Products, a brickyard in Nebraska. After building an object, he paints a very fine, colored clay slip. This leaves the surface texture intact, instead of coating it completely, he explained. The technique is called "terra sigillata" — "terra" is Greek for "earth," Pintz said, and "sigillata" means "sealed." This particular finish leaves the rough surface texture exposed on each sculpture.

Because the surface, the weathered patina, of each sculpture is so important, Pintz uses varied washes and metal oxides to make sure the grooves, crevices and marks are preserved. Even the surfaces of his functional pottery — including bowls, cups and plates — echo that same patina. "But I'm not trying to fool anyone that this is 100 years old," he said with a smile. "They're definitely contemporary while referencing an earlier time."

The anthropological impetus expressed in Pintz's artwork is no accident. As an undergraduate, he studied anthropology and urban studies at Northwestern University. During that time, a couple of friends invited him to attend art classes, and he gradually became hooked, especially on ceramics. After graduation, Pintz taught elementary school for two years with Teach For America in Oakland, Calif., but the idea of going back to school to study art already was percolating. He studied ceramics at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville before attending graduate school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where he met his wife, Kristen Martincic, also a new faculty member at MU. Afterward, Pintz earned a Lincoln Fellowship to the Archie Bray Foundation for Ceramic Artists, a prestigious ceramics institution in Montana. He taught for four years at Bowling Green State University before coming to Columbia.

Pintz initially worked on the pottery wheel at SIUE, but at Nebraska, "my graduate faculty kind of challenged me to bring more of myself into my work, which is really difficult with pottery. You can decorate it and do things that can make it your own — but a bowl has been around for thousands of years. So how do you really make something so simple be your own?"

Yet hints of current artistic ideas were emerging in his graduate work, and his professors challenged him to move in that direction, pulling in his educational interests, family background and curiosity about the culture of handmade goods and deeper connection to the earth. Even the smaller functional pottery pieces Pintz forms and sells to consumers are attentively fashioned to be "a little more chunky" than normal tableware "and make you slow down," he said. The objects urge people "to enjoy each other and the meal a little bit more, which is something that's harder these days. But it's something I try and do with my friends and family on a regular basis — sitting down to break bread with them."
Although a general cultural narrative runs through the bulk of his work, Pintz believes the true worth of his art lies with the responder. "I think, in a lot of ways, that's what pottery is all about," he explained. "It's not really finished until it's put to use, and it's not really alive until it's in somebody's life."

Reach Jill Renee Hicks at 573-815-1714 or e-mail jrhicks@columbiatribune.com.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Student Success Center expanding into vacant McDonald's on Lowry Mall

By Melissa Gilstrap
September 18, 2011 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Expansion of MU's Student Success Center on Lowry Mall is likely to be finished by December.

The center will begin renovating the former McDonald's this fall, said Karlan Seville, communications manager for Campus Facilities.

The dining room will be renovated to increase the center's space for one-on-one and group tutoring.

The former kitchen will be sectioned off and repurposed for University Catering.

Refurbishing the space includes removing the short divider walls and tables, taking up floor tile and replacing it with new carpet, painting and installing new lighting, Seville said.

The ceiling tiles are being removed because of grease buildup and will be replaced with a new ceiling, said Jim Spain, director of the Student Success Center and vice provost for undergraduate studies.

MU Campus Facilities is still working on an estimate for the cost of the renovations, Seville said.

Spain said the expansion is needed because the number of students enrolled at MU keeps going up.

"Because of the growth of enrollment, our learning center now serves obviously a much larger number of students," Spain said. "Yet the space that we serve them in hasn't changed since we moved into the building."

The center has been on Lowry Mall for 10 years, since its establishment in the fall of 2001.
Student tutors have noticed the overcrowding.

"Usually it's really crowded in the science spot," said Chayla Hisel, a biology and chemistry tutor. "A lot of people use the computers and tables, so we get crowded back here near the whiteboards."

More than 8,000 students will use MU's tutoring services sometime during this year, Spain said. Tutoring, writing assistance, mock interviews and academic advising are some of the services that programs located in the Student Success Center provide.

"We work with some students that need a learning environment with less distractions," Spain said. "Now, because we are able to move our staff out of the tutor rooms into offices, those tutor rooms are now going to become available so that we can better meet the needs of those individuals."

The McDonald's on Lowry Mall closed last spring after the franchise owners decided not to renew its lease with MU. It started serving customers in 1978 and had been on campus for more than 30 years.
Osceola Calls on KU to Drop Jayhawks Mascot

Sunday, September 18, 2011

(AP) - A Missouri town that was nearly destroyed 150 years ago by a Kansas militia is calling upon the University of Kansas to get rid of its Jayhawks mascot.

A resolution passed this week by the Osceola Board of Aldermen also asks the University of Missouri educate Kansas on the historical origins of the "Border War."

Osceola is about 100 miles southeast of Kansas City with a population of 950. The Columbia Daily Tribune reports the town had 2,500 residents on Sept. 22, 1861, when U.S. Sen. Jim Lane led a band of 2,000 "Jayhawkers" in the Kansas Brigade on a two-day siege of the city.

A University of Kansas spokesman says a Jayhawk is not a terrorist, but rather a blue bird with a red head and yellow beak.