

SEP 21 2011



## **Gig.U requests info from private entities**

Gig.U has released a formal request for information for private-sector entities looking to partner with the universities and governments that make up the group.

Gig.U is a consortium of universities and the communities they reside in that aims to accelerate the development of ultra-high-speed broadband networks.

The University of Missouri and the city of Columbia announced they were joining Gig.U, led by the Washington, D.C.-based The Aspen Institute, at the end of July. The city contributed \$6,000 and MU contributed \$7,500 to help fund the development of the group's RFI.

Gig.U hopes that by putting together a consortium of institutions and communities interested in developing high-speed Internet, they can use economies of scale to persuade providers to build the infrastructure in smaller markets.



## Missouri curators to meet amid conference issues

By The Associated Press

Wednesday, September 21, 2011

**COLUMBIA (AP) — The Missouri Board of Curators has set a public meeting for Thursday morning followed by an executive session.**

The meeting was scheduled after the Southeastern Conference issued a statement Tuesday saying it had not extended an invitation to Missouri to leave the fast-disintegrating Big 12, contradicting a media report.

The school said in a release the executive session would deal with, among other things, lease, contract, personnel and confidential or privileged communications with university counsel.

On Monday, boards of regents at Texas and Oklahoma voted to authorize their presidents to pick a new conference.

Oklahoma State's regents scheduled a special meeting for this afternoon about conference realignment.

University of Oklahoma president David Boren has said the two in-state rivals will remain in the same league whether they decide to stay in the Big 12 or join the Pac-12.

The Big 12 lost Nebraska and Colorado last summer and will lose Texas A&M if that school can resolve legal issues that have put a planned move to the SEC on hold.

Texas officials have said they're not interested in remaining in a Big 12 stripped of those other programs.

If all those schools depart, only five schools — Baylor, Iowa State, Kansas, Kansas State and Missouri — would remain.

Officials from those five schools have been in contact with the remaining members of the Big East about the possibility of merging.

University of Missouri system spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead told the Columbia Tribune the curator's meeting "primarily has nothing to do with athletics." Hollingshead added the

meeting could include an "update" on realignment, but said no formal announcement was expected.

Missouri football coach Gary Pinkel said Monday he was unaware of any developments, telling a reporter, "Really, you know as much as I do."

"I have a lot of opinions," Pinkel added, "but I have absolutely no control."

Late Tuesday night, the Birmingham (Ala.) News issued a contradicting report, saying plans are in place for Missouri to move to the SEC.

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

## Education digest

Posted: Wednesday, September 21, 2011 12:00 am | [No Comments Posted](#)

**UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-COLUMBIA > Russians fund weather research • A University of Missouri-Columbia professor is joining Russian researchers looking at the unusual weather patterns responsible for lengthy bouts of extreme weather.** Tony Lupo, chairman of the Department of Soil, Environmental and Atmospheric Sciences, is working with the A.M. Obukhov Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the \$100,000 project to better understand blocking patterns, the weather phenomenon responsible for this year's heat wave in the Midwest. Atmospheric blocking occurs when a high pressure system becomes stuck in one place, Lupo said.

## **Health groups again push for a tobacco tax increase in Missouri**

By ALAN BAVLEY

Missouri health advocates on Tuesday filed with the secretary of state for a ballot initiative to raise the state's famously low cigarette tax by 80 cents per pack.

The American Cancer Society and its coalition of health, education and business groups will have to collect more than 90,000 petition signatures by May to get their measure on the ballot, most likely for the November 2012 general election. Tobacco opponents have been able to do that before, yet saw proposed tax increases fail at the polls in 2002 and 2006.

Meanwhile, other states have been raising their tobacco taxes, leaving Missouri with the lowest cigarette excise tax in the nation — 17 cents per pack. The average for all states is \$1.46 per pack.

The cancer society estimates the tax increase would raise about \$308 million a year in new revenue, with half going to elementary and secondary education; 30 percent to colleges and universities, mainly to train health care providers; and 20 percent to tobacco use prevention and cessation programs.

"I think the other (initiatives) were done very well. They were narrow losses," said Misty Snodgrass, Missouri legislative and government relations director for the cancer society. "This one has broader appeal. It impacts more people."

**The measure has the backing of the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City and of civic leader Warren Erdman, a curator of the University of Missouri system and an executive of Kansas City Southern.**

Snodgrass said other health, education and business groups also support the ballot initiative.

**The★Star:**  
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

## **The Charlotte Observer**

### **Source says MU has informal offer from SEC**

By MIKE DeARMOND

**COLUMBIA | The Southeastern Conference has an informal offer on the table for Missouri to join its league, an option that may not be needed after the Pac-12 decided Tuesday night that it was not going to expand.**

SEC officials are willing to wait for an answer from Missouri until the future of the Big 12 is decided, but that future looks much better without the Pac-12 as an option for Oklahoma and Texas to join.

Word of the informal agreement came to The Star from a Missouri booster who spoke directly to a Missouri official. Another source told The Star on Tuesday that an Oklahoma official said the SEC is interested in Missouri.

The Birmingham (Ala.) News reported later on Tuesday that the SEC and Missouri have "informally agreed that, barring new developments, the school will join the league and that Auburn University will move to the SEC East Division." The report cited two people familiar with the discussions, adding that, "(a) majority of presidents has endorsed the informal agreement."

The additions of Missouri and Texas A&M, which has already stated its intention to leave for the SEC and been approved by the conference, would bring the number of SEC teams to 14.

The University of Missouri system's board of curators on Tuesday announced an 8:30 a.m. meeting on Thursday in Columbia that is expected to include a closed-door executive session.

MU chancellor Brady Deaton has gone on record numerous times saying that, as chairman of the Big 12's board of directors, he is working on keeping the Big 12 together. If the current members — minus Texas A&M — can work through their differences, any talk of MU's southern migration becomes moot.

Texas' and Oklahoma's boards of regents on Monday authorized their respective school presidents to investigate alternative conference affiliations. But late Tuesday night, the Pac-12's presidents and chancellors voted to stay with its current membership and not expand.

That announcement greatly bolstered the Big 12's survival. Earlier Tuesday, The Oklahoman newspaper, citing sources at Oklahoma, reported that the Big 12 might be saved if Texas agrees to make changes to its Longhorn Network agreement with ESPN and Dan Beebe is removed as Big 12 commissioner.

Either way, it appears Missouri has options.

On Tuesday afternoon, the SEC issued a statement saying the conference has not extended an invitation to any school other than Texas A&M since it extended invitations to Arkansas and South Carolina. SEC associate commissioner Charles Bloom would not comment when asked whether the SEC and Missouri have discussed realignment.

MU officials had a similar response.

"We would echo what the SEC statement said," said Chad Moller, Missouri's assistant athletic director for media relations. "We have not received an offer from any conference."

Considering the threat of legal action Baylor has raised against Texas A&M and the SEC, Missouri and SEC officials would likely prefer to keep any offer to MU under wraps until the Big 12 situation works itself out.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported Tuesday afternoon that a Missouri source with knowledge of the process said there's a "very real possibility" that MU could land in the SEC if the Big 12 continues to lose members. Another Missouri source, according to the Tribune, indicated the report of an actual offer from the SEC was "premature and not entirely accurate."

It is unclear exactly who at Missouri would make the decision on MU joining the SEC or staying in the Big 12. Some believe Deaton may be the decision maker, or that it could be interim University of Missouri system president Steve Owens.

Or, the issue could be brought before the board of curators, perhaps as soon as Thursday.

## **Pac-12's decision not to expand costs Oklahoma some leverage**

By *BLAIR KERKHOFF*

A wild day of conference realignment news ended with an unexpected twist. The Pac-12 announced it was not expanding.

"In light of the widespread speculation about potential scenarios for Conference re-alignment, the Pac-12 Presidents and Chancellors have affirmed their decision to remain a 12-team conference," Pac-12 commissioner Larry Scott said in a statement.

The announcement punctuated a day of conference deals, speculation and threats.

**The Star reported Missouri had an informal offer from the Southeastern Conference to join its league. The SEC already has invited Texas A&M to become its 13th member. The idea was that Mizzou would leave for the football-mad conference if the Big 12 fell apart, which seemed possible if, as widely speculated, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas Tech had been invited to join the Pac-12.**

But the Big 12 exodus to the Pac-12 started to lose traction Tuesday when The Oklahoman reported Oklahoma would consider staying in the Big 12, under certain conditions.

First, commissioner Dan Beebe had to go. Also, the Sooners wanted some amendments to the University of Texas-branded network, according to what the newspaper called "a high-ranking Big 12 source."

"It's going to take major, major reforms for OU, and thus Oklahoma State, to consider remaining in the Big 12," the source told The Oklahoman. "We'd have to have an interim commissioner."

But now what? Oklahoma's leverage was supposedly interest in the Pac-12, believed to be mutual until Tuesday night.

Oklahoma president David Boren said in a statement that the development wasn't unexpected.

"We were not surprised by the Pac-12's decision not to expand at this time," Boren said. "Even though we had decided not to apply for membership this year, we have developed a positive relationship with the leadership of the (Pac-12) and we have kept them informed of the progress

we've been making to gain agreement from the Big 12 for changes which will make the conference more stable for the future.

"Stability has been our first goal and we look forward to achieving that goal through continued membership in the Big 12 Conference."

The Big 12 did not respond to an interview request for Beebe. On Monday, Beebe issued a statement and said the conference was applying "all effort and resources toward assuring our members that maintaining the Big 12 is in the best interest for their institutions."

According to the source, Oklahoma wasn't happy with Beebe's efforts in trying to keep members from leaving. Nebraska and Colorado announced departures last summer, and Texas A&M has stated its intention to leave for the SEC.

Beebe's decisions have been too favorable to Texas, the source said, including aspects of The Longhorn Network. "The perception is, he answers to one school," the source said.

Beebe has served as commissioner since 2007 and has been with the conference since 2003.

Last November, his efforts guiding the conference through realignment were rewarded with a three-year contract extension, through June, 2015.

"Dan Beebe has been an outstanding leader for the Big 12 during very challenging times," Big 12 board of directors chairman and Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton said when the extension was announced. "The board feels he has performed well beyond his job description under extraordinary circumstances."

In 2009, Beebe's salary was raised to \$997,000.

In April, Beebe helped the conference gain a megatelevision contract, a 13-year deal with Fox Sports Net worth about \$1.2 billion for football cable rights. The league is a few years away from renegotiating its contract for network games, a deal with ABC/ESPN that expires after the 2015 season.

Reports persisted that the Pac-12 would be interested in adding Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas Tech. Those schools were pursued by Scott last summer but decided to remain in the Big 12.

But in the last few days, Pac-12 presidents were expressing concerns about expansion, ranging from academic reputation — of the four, only Texas belongs to the Association of American Universities — to scheduling games across two time zones.

One common gripe about Beebe recently is the Big 12's inactivity to move on realignment, an issue that was challenged by a Big 12 source.

“What can he do?” the source said. “He can talk to schools, but he can’t tell them what the conference will look like because nobody knows what’s going to happen with Oklahoma and Texas.”

Now, at least the Pac-12 isn’t an option for Big 12 schools. That’s not to say other conference won’t be interested in expansion. Texas A&M issued a statement Tuesday saying it expects to be participating in the SEC next year.

The suggestion that the Big 12 and Big East combine schools — Big East members Pittsburgh and Syracuse have announced plans to move to the ACC — now seems unlikely.

On Tuesday, presidents of the Big East’s remaining football-playing schools met in New York City to discuss the state of the conference.

The Big East learned on Tuesday that East Carolina had requested an invitation to join its league. There also was a report that the conference was prepared to invite Navy before the Pitt and Syracuse moves. Iowa State has been contacted by the Mountain West Conference, according to the Des Moines Register. The Cyclones would prefer to remain in the Big 12, which is a BCS automatic-qualifier conference. The Mountain West is without a lucrative TV contract and an automatic spot in the BCS.

Also on Tuesday, Missouri announced its Board of Curators would meet in Columbia on Thursday, the same day the Kansas Board of Regents will meet in Topeka. The Kansas regents have stated that issues pertaining to realignment will be discussed in closed session; Missouri curators have been more vague about what they’ll discuss behind closed doors following their open session.

## **Pac-12 officials say the conference won't add teams**

### **MU Mention on Pg. 4**

By The Associated Press

September 20, 2011 | 10:30 p.m. CDT

NEW YORK — Twelve is enough for the Pac-12, putting the Big 12 in position to survive yet another round of conference realignment.

The Pac-12 presidents and chancellors decided late Tuesday night not to expand.

"After careful review we have determined that it is in the best interests of our member institutions, student-athletes and fans to remain a 12-team conference," Commissioner Larry Scott said in a statement. "While we have great respect for all of the institutions that have contacted us, and certain expansion proposals were financially attractive, we have a strong conference structure and culture of equality that we are committed to preserve."

Texas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Texas Tech were considering a potential move from the Big 12 to the Pac-12. After expanding from the Pac-10 with new members Utah and Colorado last year, members of the new Pac-12 decided not to stretch the league farther east.

"We were not surprised by the Pac 12's decision to not expand at this time," Oklahoma President David Boren said. "Even though we had decided not to apply for membership this year, we have developed a positive relationship with the leadership of the conference and we have kept them informed of the progress we've been making to gain agreement from the Big 12 for changes which will make the conference more stable in the future.

"Conference stability has been our first goal and we look forward to achieving that goal through continued membership in the Big 12 Conference."

Meanwhile, across the county in New York, Big East Commissioner John Marinatto emerged from a three-hour meeting with officials from the league's football schools to say his members "pledged to each other that they are committed to move forward together."

The Big East also has been staring at an uncertain future after Pittsburgh and Syracuse announced last weekend they are moving to the Atlantic Coast Conference.

But now it appears the Big East, like the Big 12, stands a good chance to survive, too — for now.

Marinatto said all the league's members — including Notre Dame and the seven other non-football members — are committed to aggressively recruiting replacements for Syracuse and Pittsburgh, though he would not indicate which schools are candidates.

He said the league will enforce the 27-month notice agreement in its bylaws and not allow Syracuse and Pitt to leave until the 2014-15 academic year.

He also said he expects TCU to join the league in 2012 as previously agreed upon.

As for the Big 12, the board of regents at Texas and Oklahoma voted to give their presidents the right to choose a new conference. Oklahoma State's regents have scheduled a special meeting Wednesday about conference realignment.

Oklahoma State was going to follow Oklahoma's lead and Texas Tech planned to do the same with Texas.

Texas and Oklahoma were not acting together. Texas officials had stated several times it wanted to keep the Big 12 alive.

Oklahoma officials said they were looking for stability and equal revenue sharing, which does not occur in the Big 12. Texas has its own cable television network.

Now it appears the Longhorns and Sooners will have to figure out a way to continue to live with each other.

A person familiar with the schools' discussions said Texas and Oklahoma officials are expected to meet in the next few days to negotiate an agreement to keep the universities in the league for at least the next five years. The person requested anonymity because the meeting had not been announced.

Whether other schools would be invited to join that meeting was unclear Tuesday night.

Scott tried to bring Oklahoma and Texas into his conference last summer, but his bid to create a Pac-16 fell short when Texas decided to stay in the Big 12, in part to start its own network.

Nebraska and Colorado did leave the Big 12, but Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe managed to keep the conference together.

When the Longhorn Network became a reality, Texas A&M had had enough.

A&M, which flirted with the Southeastern Conference last year, reached out to the SEC and ended up being invited to join that league earlier this month. That deal has not yet been finalized because some Big 12 members, such as Baylor and Iowa State, have not waived the right to possibly sue Texas A&M and the SEC.

But if the Big 12 and its new 13-year, \$1 billion television deal reached with Fox Sports in April survives, the exit should be clear for Texas A&M. And the rest of the Big 12 can go back to looking for a replacement.

After the Pac-10 grew by two, adding Colorado and Utah from the Mountain West, the league negotiated a landmark 12-year television contract with Fox and ESPN worth about \$3 billion, allowing the conference to quadruple its media rights fees and start its own network.

The university presidents decided they didn't need to share their newfound wealth with more schools.

"We have a very good situation and a bright future," Stanford athletic director Bob Bowlsby said.

It's hard to say for sure if this will put an end to conference realignment for a while. Many thought after last summer's maneuvering, things would settle down and that barely lasted a year.

ACC Commissioner John Swofford has said his league is comfortable with 14 members, which it will have when Pitt and Syracuse join, but is not "philosophically" opposed to expanding to 16.

Despite their latest pledge to work together, the Big East still seems susceptible to another raid by the ACC.

Adding UConn and possibly Rutgers, located in New Jersey, would allow the ACC to further extend its reach into the Northeast and New York City television market.

The SEC will be up to 13 schools when Texas A&M's move is finally official and even though it has said it can stay at the number, it seems logical to go to 14.

**West Virginia and Missouri have both been speculated to be candidates and there were reports earlier Tuesday that the SEC and Missouri had a tentative agreement.**

The SEC shot that down.

"The Southeastern Conference has not agreed formally or informally to accept any institution other than Texas A&M, and there have not been conference discussions regarding changes in divisional alignments," SEC associate commissioner Charles Bloom said.

With Texas and Oklahoma still around, there might not be a reason for the Missouri to relocate.

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## **SEC says Missouri has not been invited to join**

By Andrew Wagaman, Harry Plumer  
September 20, 2011 | 5:27 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — A spokesman for the Southeastern Conference said the conference has not extended an invitation to join the league to Missouri. Earlier Tuesday afternoon, the Kansas City Star reported that Missouri had an invitation from the conference but that it was contingent upon the collapse of the Big 12.

"The SEC has not extended an invitation to any school beyond Texas A&M since it extended invitations to Arkansas and South Carolina," SEC Associate Commissioner Charles Bloom said via email.

**The UM System Board of Curators called a meeting scheduled for Thursday morning, but its spokeswoman, Jennifer Hollingshead, said the meeting was not called because of athletics.**

"The primary purpose of the meeting is not related to athletics. However, since the whole board is meeting anyway, the curators do expect to receive an update on the Big 12 Conference," Hollingshead said. "There will be no action taken (related to athletics) and there is no statement planned at this time."

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton could not be reached, and Athletic Director Mike Alden declined comment to reporters at the MU Green Tennis Center's groundbreaking ceremony and open house Tuesday afternoon. Curator Wayne Goode said by phone Tuesday afternoon that the school will have to assess the situation carefully.

"Whenever we address this issue, I will need to look at all the options available at that time," Goode said. "Right now, there's nothing officially on the table, and that's about all I can say about it."

The Star also reported that the Kansas Board of Regents will meet Thursday with the topic of conference realignment on its agenda. Board chairman Ed McKechnie told the Star that officials from both Kansas and Kansas State are set to attend.

## **Big 12 needs to say ‘bye-bye’ to Beebe**

### **NO MU MENTION**

*By SAM MELLINGER*

This should be it, then. No more. The Big 12 deserves a clean break, so stop the charade and move on.

And this isn't about ending the conference, though that day may be fast approaching.

This is about ending the run of commissioner Dan Beebe.

Beebe is a smart and well-intentioned man stuck in an unmanageable position that's neutered his power and influence enough that the most effective move he has is to walk away. He is not the villain, but he's the poor sucker left holding the bag, the man whose name is at the top of the company directory.

So when “a high-ranking Big 12 official” leaks to The Oklahoman newspaper that Oklahoma will stay in the league only after “major, major reforms” including a new commissioner, Beebe now faces the impossibly awkward reality that if he's truly committed to the league's best future he must quit.

There is no alternative here, not when people who are supposed to respect you are so blatantly insolent, and not when entities you're supposed to manage are so brazenly dismissive.

Oklahoma may be bluffing — the Pac-12 isn't expanding and the Sooners aren't enthralled with the SEC — but the Big 12 is in no position to call it.

Beebe must go, right or wrong, and not just for the league's immediate survival but for its future. Sometimes perception trumps reality. Sometimes a leader must pay for factors out of his control.

History will paint Beebe as the boob who drove the league to the brink or worse, but that's neither fair nor accurate. Beebe's predecessor was run out because he tried to stand up to Texas and implement more revenue sharing and a conference TV network.

Beebe also negotiated a monster contract for football games on cable that put the league in line with the richest in the country, and is due for an even bigger payday when the over-the-air rights are due in a few years.

Any judgments on Beebe's inability to manage Texas' demand for power should take this into account. Conference commissioners can only do what they're allowed to do.

Besides, if the Big 12 indeed dies during this round of national realignment, Beebe will have had plenty of accomplices.

Texas A&M athletic director Bill Byrne ran to the SEC less than a year after pledging support for the Big 12. Oklahoma president David Boren has hypocritically talked about the league's instability while being the source of much of that instability.

And Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds deserves the bulk of blame under the "to whom much is given, much is expected" rule. Texas had enough power to maintain its advantages while still keeping everyone around and it overplayed the hand.

If Beebe won't step down, his removal would require a majority vote from the Big 12 board of directors.

This isn't a fix-all to the league's root problems, but it would be a valuable symbol for a league desperately trying to move forward.

Oklahoma AD Joe Castiglione and former Big East commissioner Mike Tranchese are on a short list of candidates who could step in immediately with the required credibility and respect.

Beebe's other options aren't much better than unemployment. He can wait to see if OU is bluffing after receiving bad vibes from the Pac-12 or if Texas will make concessions on the Longhorn Network or whether — like a year ago — some third party will make an 11th-hour save.

The problem is it's already 11:30.

Stepping down is the only bold move Beebe has left. This is his best play to keep the league breathing, the only thing he can do to change the landscape and possibly convince the key institutions — Oklahoma and Texas — that the Big 12 can be better for everyone.

Because this league still makes the most sense for everyone involved. There is as much or more money, longstanding rivalries, geographic fits and a better student-athlete experience — if anyone still cares about that.

Selfishly, this league can offer as much or more money to schools with the easiest path to a BCS bowl or the national championship.

In that way, the leaders in the Big 12 and especially at Oklahoma and Texas would be guilty of administrative malpractice to let this die over ego. If the human beings involved can put the testosterone aside for a moment they'll see their best deal is with the Big 12.

Despite massive efforts to kill it, this league is still both savable and worth saving. The important elements are all there, and the Pac-12's decision not to expand gives the Big 12 more hope.

They just need a new leader to give the message.



## Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe can breathe, for now

By Steve Wieberg

For the second time in little more than a year, Dan Beebe could exhale.

"I think we're in a very good situation," the Big 12 Conference's beleaguered commissioner said after the Pacific 12 announced late Tuesday that it was standing pat at 12 members, closing the door on Oklahoma's pursuit of a move west along with Oklahoma State and potentially Texas and Texas Tech.

"I hope and think it's a positive sign for us," Beebe said. "I think the vast majority of our institutions feel like the Big 12 is the best place for them to be in -- for their student-athletes, their families, the fans and the fact that college athletics is more than just about the money. It's about the geographic connection of institutions."

Asked he was optimistic about the Big 12's survival, he said, "Yes, but I've been that way the whole time."

Is he sure?

"At the same time I'm optimistic, I'm not going to an extreme," he said.

**Beebe said he would talk with Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton, chairman of the league's board of directors, sometime Wednesday to plot their next step. In a statement, OU President David Boren appeared to recommit to the Big 12. "Stability has been our first goal," he said, "and we look forward to achieving that goal through continued membership in the Big 12 Conference."**

Still to be heard from by early Wednesday morning was Texas, whose officials have insisted in recent weeks that they preferred to keep the Big 12 together even as they explored fallback options in the Pac-12 and Atlantic Coast Conference. Beebe said he hadn't yet talked with anyone there or at OU in the wake of the Pac-12's declaration.

An official within the Big 12 who had been in touch with the Longhorns, but asked to remain anonymous because of the sensitivity of the situation, said there appeared little doubt they'd stay in the fold but nothing could be sure until there were formal commitments.

More uncertain, perhaps, is whether Beebe will continue to oversee a conference that was similarly endangered two summers ago by the departures of Colorado to the Pac-12 and Nebraska to the Big Ten. Texas A&M now is on its way out, headed for the Southeastern Conference, and OU's Boren said Monday "it is not a strong vote of confidence in the conference office that this has happened in such a short period of time."

Beebe, who last November received a contract extension through 2015, said: "If there have been issues about my leadership. ... I trust that the board will raise those with me and give me the consideration to address them."

Asked if he felt his job were in peril, he said, "These are very challenging jobs, and I think I've had one of the most challenging jobs in terms of an effort to try to stabilize a conference that has always had some instability. I think we're all at risk in this business, but it's part of what I signed on for, and I'm certainly willing to accept it. At the end of the day, the main thing is that this conference survives."



## **Speculation heats up about Missouri and the SEC**

By Dave Matter

With the Big 12 Conference on the verge of collapse, speculation about a landing spot for Missouri heated up today with a report in the Kansas City Star that the Southeastern Conference had offered MU an invitation.

Citing an anonymous booster, the Star reported that Missouri had an offer on the table from the SEC. Charles Bloom, associate commissioner of the SEC, refuted that report, reading from a prepared statement: "The SEC has not extended an invitation to any school beyond Texas A&M since it extended invitations to Arkansas and South Carolina." When asked if the SEC and Missouri have had discussions, Bloom would not comment.

The Birmingham News later reported Tuesday that the SEC and Missouri have informally agreed that the school will join the league, barring new developments. The paper cited two anonymous sources who also said that Auburn would move to the SEC East Division, clearing room for Missouri and Texas A&M to join the West Division. A majority of presidents has endorsed the informal agreement, the sources told the paper.

Also on Tuesday, the UM Board of Curators issued a public meeting notice for a Thursday morning meeting at University Hall.

At the meeting, scheduled for 8:30 a.m., the board will go into executive session, and according to the release, will meet for "consideration of certain lease, contract, personnel items and confidential or privileged communications with university counsel, all as authorized by law and upon approval by resolution of the board of curators."

The release stated that all topics listed on the agenda, including those identified as information items, may be the subject of votes as well as discussion.

UM System spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said Thursday's meeting "primarily has nothing to do with athletics." Hollingshead said because board members are expected to attend the meeting there "very well could be an update" on the conference situation, but no formal announcement is expected.

A Missouri source with knowledge of the process told the Tribune today there's a "very real possibility" that MU could land in the Southeastern Conference if the Big 12 continues to lose members. But another Missouri source indicated that the report of an actual offer from the SEC was "premature and not entirely accurate."

The SEC has already approved Texas A&M as its 13th member. Should the Big 12 lose powerhouse schools Oklahoma and Texas to the Pac-12 Conference — along with Oklahoma State and Texas Tech — the Big 12 would be down to five schools.

The Star reported that a booster who had spoken to an MU official said of the SEC: “Apparently they’ve come to us. I’ve been told there is an offer on the table.” The report said the SEC was willing to wait for an answer from Missouri until the future of the Big 12 is decided.

Missouri and West Virginia have been widely discussed as candidates for the Big East. But CBSSports.com’s Brett McMurphy, citing Big East sources, reported Tuesday that West Virginia had been rejected by both the SEC and Atlantic Coast Conference.

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