Embattled Big 12 leader is out

The conference said the move involving Dan Beebe was by "mutual agreement."

Associated Press

Big Twelve commissioner Dan Beebe is out after the conference nearly collapsed for the second time in just over a year.

In a statement, the Big Twelve said its board of directors and Beebe reached a "mutual agreement" for Beebe to leave the job immediately.

Former Big Eight commissioner Chuck Neinas told the Associated Press earlier Thursday that he had been contacted about serving as interim commissioner. Big Twelve school presidents were meeting Thursday by telephone to discuss Beebe and stabilize the fractured league.

Texas A&M announced earlier this month that it would leave in 2012 to seek membership in the Southeastern Conference. And Texas, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, and Texas Tech were considering a potential move from the Big Twelve to the Pac-12 until the latter announced Tuesday that it would not expand.

"I put all my effort into doing what was best for the Big Twelve. With great fondness, I wish the Big Twelve Conference a long and prosperous future," Beebe said in a statement released by the conference.

The 54-year-old Beebe, who was in his fifth year as the leader of the Big Twelve, became an easy target for schools upset about instability in the league.

Critics portrayed him as constantly being outmaneuvered by other league commissioners who were picking off his teams one by one and as someone beholden to Texas, the Big Twelve's biggest and wealthiest member.

Last fall, Beebe was granted a three-year extension on his contract through 2015. When the extension was announced, University of Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton, chairman of the league's board of directors, said Beebe had been "an outstanding leader" during challenging times.
Beebe, a former NCAA enforcement director, was commissioner of the Ohio Valley Conference for 13 years before joining the Big Twelve in 2003 as associate commissioner and chief operating officer. Beebe was named Big Twelve commissioner in 2007.
Picture still vague in Big 12

BY VAHE GREGORIAN | Posted: Friday, September 23, 2011 12:20 am

COLUMBIA, MO. • Before Mizzou chancellor and Big 12 board chairman Brady Deaton added to the ambiguity of MU's future by declining to douse murmurs of a potential move to the Southeastern Conference on Thursday night at Jesse Hall, the disembodied voice of Oklahoma president David Boren interrupted over a phone speaker.

"Our timing is perfect, it looks like," Deaton ad libbed. "He just announced what I announced."

If only it were synchronicity instead of apparently crossed wires of some sort. Because Deaton's next words contradicted what Boren was telling reporters in Norman. According to Boren, conference executives approved a measure involving television rights that would heavily penalize a school that left in the next six years.

But Deaton was less clear on the topic, saying, "This evening our board affirmed its intention to pursue the granting of media rights, that's first- and second-tier media rights, for a period of six years," he said.

Conceivably, Boren and Deaton meant the same thing and just expressed it differently.

More likely, there was a fundamental misunderstanding of what was achieved in a conference call that culminated just before the two leaders met reporters.

About the only thing that was clear is that Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe is out and will be replaced by former Big Eight commissioner Chuck Neinas.

Boren, for instance, went on to say that "the most important actions on the table were taken today" even as Deaton was expressing the tentative, embryonic nature of the talks.

Either way, that was hardly the only haze still hovering over the Big 12 as it set about hitting a reset button after the latest turmoil caused by Oklahoma and Texas flirting openly with the Pac-12 only to have the Pac-12 announce it won't expand.

A day after it was open to interpretation whether MU's silence since that development was strategic or merely a lack of communication, it was evident after Deaton and athletics director Mike Alden spoke briefly that MU wished to project being noncommittal.

"That doesn't make sense," one Big 12 administrator texted.
But how else to interpret Deaton's response when asked if Mizzou had had any discussions or an offer from the Southeastern Conference?

"During (the) last few weeks, it's fair to say that every major institution in the country has had one type of communication or another with essentially every major BCS conference: I think that's a fair statement for most," Deaton said. "Certainly, we've had those contacts as well. I don't want to go into specifics there."

Asked if he were telling the story if he would write that the SEC is not an option, Deaton laughed and said, "That's one of those hypotheticals. I didn't want to go there tonight."

It's uncertain to what extent the SEC and Mizzou have exchanged glances. The SEC clearly has been considering MU as an option to become a symmetrically desirable 14th member with the impending arrival of Texas A&M. But any interest initially had been predicated on the Big 12 crumbling from other poaching so that the SEC couldn't be blamed for the downfall.

That philosophy seemed to shift, though, after the Pac-12's decision, with the SEC apparently at least still considering ways it might be able to usher in MU without incurring culpability for sabotaging the Big 12 or its associated legal ramifications.

Adding another layer of mystery to the idea, as well as to the question of why MU is being coy, one well-placed source within the conference maintained late Tuesday that it should be assumed the MU-SEC "rumor is false," and a second reiterated the point Thursday.

Mizzou athletics director Mike Alden, speaking in a hallway after Deaton, declined to address the SEC question as well, saying, "I can't talk about speculation and hypotheticals, those types of things out there."

Despite his complicated dual role, Deaton insisted that his stewardship of Mizzou was the understood priority among his board peers.

"So the University of Missouri is going to continue to work for what is best for the University of Missouri," he said. "We have seen that aligned with the Big 12 Conference, and we will be continuing to work with the various issues we have in the conference to carry it forward."

If those issues can't be fixed, though, Deaton began to dismiss it as a hypothetical but added: "In a sense, anything is possible."

It's not known with certainty whether Deaton, Alden and MU football coach Gary Pinkel see Mizzou's options the same way. Pinkel has been an outspoken critic of the Big 12, calling its recent behavior "sad" and "embarrassing" as recently as Wednesday on KFNS radio in St. Louis.

Asked if all were on the same page, Alden said, "I would say everybody's focused on trying to work together. I think that Gary's certainly made some comments that I very much support."
Missouri pledges allegiance to conference

By The Associated Press

Friday, September 23, 2011

COLUMBIA (AP) — The University of Missouri will remain a member of the Big 12 as the nine remaining schools move forward after the conference’s future was in doubt.

Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton pledged the school’s commitment to the league at a packed news conference Thursday night in Jesse Hall.

Deaton’s comments came moments after he and other Big 12 chancellors and presidents agreed to accept conference commissioner Dan Beebe’s resignation. Deaton chairs the conference board.

He did not specifically address reports Missouri was considering a move to the Southeastern Conference other than to note many schools, including Missouri, “had one type of communication or another with every BCS conference” in recent weeks.

Deaton also said the Big 12 will consider adding new members, but did not mention any specific targets.
Big 12 seeks reforms to ensure stability as Beebe departs

By Steve Wieberg, USA TODAY

Chuck Neinas will serve as the Big 12's interim commissioner while the conference looks for a permanent replacement.

Dan Beebe, commissioner for a little more than four years, is out, a victim of the dysfunction that cost it Nebraska and Colorado as members a year ago and soon will cost Texas A&M, which is headed for the Southeastern Conference. Former Big Eight commissioner Chuck Neinas will replace him on an interim basis.

University presidents who make up the Big 12's board of directors also moved toward a major concession involving TV rights, granting the league irrevocable control of each institution's first- and second-tier rights - covering the high-dollar football and basketball games most coveted by national and regional networks - for six years.

The grant-of-rights measure is seen as a key, leaving the league in control of a school's TV rights even if the institution moves to another conference and lowering the likelihood that any would.

"That ... really has teeth in it," Oklahoma President David Boren said.

Boren portrayed the move as done. But Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton, who heads the Big 12's board of directors, merely said it is being pursued.

It wouldn't affect Texas' Longhorn Network, which carries third-tier events bypassed by the networks.

The action follows a tumultuous few weeks in which Oklahoma pursued a move to the Pacific 12, along with Oklahoma State. Texas also was weighing options as the Big 12 threatened to crumble. That threat abated when the Pac-12 opted not to expand and, Boren said, when OU almost simultaneously chose not to jump.

insistence that the league find long-term stability. And there was evidence Thursday that that remains a challenge. While Missouri's Deaton talked of working out the Big 12's issues with co-members, when pressed during a press conference about the school's dedication to the league, both he and athletics director Mike Alden repeatedly were noncommittal.
Deaton acknowledged that Missouri, like other schools, has been exploring alternatives, and the Tigers have been linked to the SEC.

Boren was more positive. "We're seeing ... steps taken that convince us that we can achieve stability and we're not going to have annual problems like we've had," he said.

Additionally during its more than one-hour meeting via teleconference, the Big 12 board resumed league efforts to expand - at least back to 10 members, possibly to 12. Texas A&M's departure will pare it to nine.

Beebe's ouster came as no surprise, sought by Oklahoma among others.

Neinas, meanwhile, is a known and respected figure across college athletics and particularly the Big 12. He was assistant executive director of the NCAA for a decade before becoming commissioner of the Big Eight - which later folded into the Big 12 - in 1971. He ran the league for nine years, leaving in 1980 to head the College Football Association, a now-defunct alliance of the nation's top 60-plus football-playing schools. He now operates one of college athletics' top consulting firms from his home in Boulder, Colo., among other things conducting searches for coaches and administrators.

Beebe, 54, exits after a total of eight years with the conference. A former college linebacker at Cal Poly-Pomona, he spent 14 years as commissioner of the lower-division Ohio Valley Conference and, in the '80s, was an NCAA enforcement director.

His departure from the Big 12 - less than a year after Beebe received a contract extension through 2015 - throws a second curve at the committee that oversees the NCAA's Division I men's basketball tournament, on which he sits. Jeff Hathaway, who just took over as chairman of the 10-person panel, recently resigned under pressure as Connecticut's athletics director. The NCAA is weighing "the best approach regarding the balance of his term," it said.
Dan Beebe departs as Big 12 commissioner by 'mutual agreement'

Dan Beebe and the Big 12 have reached a "mutual agreement" for the commissioner to leave his job immediately as the conference seeks to gain stability for the second consecutive year.

The league appears to have survived the latest round of expansion with the Pac-12 staying pat at 12 schools, both Oklahoma and Texas committing to the league and Missouri reportedly resisting overtures from the SEC.

But the Big 12 will be down to nine teams when Texas A&M leaves next summer, one year after both Nebraska and Colorado departed. Those losses are seen as a failure of Beebe leadership.

"We sincerely thank Dan who has always demonstrated a total commitment to what is in the best interest of the Big 12 Conference," Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton, who also serves as the chairman of the Big 12 board of directors, said. "His energy, devotion and skill in negotiating on our behalf have been tremendous assets that have benefited our member institutions, our student-athletes, our athletic programs and all our fans."

Conference officials were discussing plans to move forward on possible revenue sharing and expansion to keep the league together.

"It is satisfying to know the Big 12 Conference will survive, and I congratulate the members for taking strong action to ensure a bright future as a premier intercollegiate athletics conference," Beebe said in a statement released by the Big 12. "I put all my effort into doing what was best for the Big 12. With great fondness, I wish the Big 12 Conference a long and prosperous future."

Beebe was commissioner for four years after working in the league office since 2003. He was Ohio Valley Conference commissioner from 1989-2003.

The league signed a $1 billion television deal with Fox in April that seemed to secure revenue for its remaining 10 schools. However, A&M became dissatisfied with the league and issues related to the Longhorn Network run by Texas and decided to join the SEC.

Chuck Neinas, a former commissioner of the Big 8, will become the league's interim commissioner starting next week while the search for a permanent replacement takes place.
Neinas currently runs a sports consulting company that helps place coaches and athletic administrators. Among his previous clients are Texas men's athletic director DeLoss Dodds and Bill Hancock, the director of the Bowl Championship Series.

He was previously commissioner of the Big 8 from 1971 to 1980 and also was the executive director of the College Football Association from 1980 to 1997.
Mizzou doesn’t commit to Big 12, SEC still an option

By MIKE DeARMOND

COLUMBIA | The fractured Big 12 Conference attempted to join hands and unify Thursday night, but Missouri’s grip may not be as tight.

Not only did MU chancellor Brady Deaton and athletic director Mike Alden decline to confirm the university’s commitment in the long or short term to the Big 12, the Tigers’ interest in the Southeastern Conference is very much alive.

“We either stick in the Big 12 because everything came about the way it needs to, the right way, with all the differences being settled in Missouri’s favor,” a university administrator who asked not to be identified told The Star on Thursday night. “But what are the odds of that happening?

“The other option is to join another conference and I believe that is something that we’re very open to.”

The Star first reported earlier this week that Missouri had an informal offer from the Southeastern Conference to join should the Big 12 not remain a viable home.

In a brief news conference in a first-floor room at Jesse Hall on Thursday night, Deaton said that as chairman of the Big 12 Board of Directors he was intent on making needed changes to the conference. But Deaton stressed he was first responsible to the University of Missouri.

When asked if falling short of those changes that Missouri might exit the Big 12, Deaton said:

“That’s again a hypothetical that could occur. In a sense anything is possible. That’s all recognized and that’s what has led to the discussions that we’ve had over the last several weeks.”

When asked about the SEC, Deaton said that was another hypothetical and he wouldn’t elaborate further.

Asked if the SEC was still in play, the administrator, who contacted The Star, said: “You will not look stupid by insinuating that.”
The mood in Columbia contrasted starkly with a news conference held around the same time by Oklahoma president David Boren, athletic director Joe Castiglione, football coach Bob Stoops and other officials in Norman.

There, Boren detailed the desire to reach agreement on all nine schools granting their first- and second-tier TV rights to the Big 12 for a six-year period and stated there was conference-wide unity in that effort.

Under the plan, each school’s revenue for its games broadcast on ABC/ESPN, the Big 12’s first-tier TV rights holder, and Fox Sports Net, the second-tier rights holder, would go to the Big 12 for equal distribution.

“These are very strong handcuffs,” Boren said. “When you grant your rights it’s very unlikely you would receive an invitation to another conference.”

Deaton also acknowledged the board was pursuing revenue sharing and also said an expansion committee was reactivated, a move that opens the way for what would be a nine-member conference next school year to add members, perhaps up to a restoration of 12 teams.

“As chair,” he said, “I was asked to form a special working group to address a variety of other issues to further strengthen conference stability.”

Deaton was asked why fans should believe the Big 12 could unify after the departures of Nebraska and Colorado last year, Texas A&M next year, and with Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas Tech, Texas and Missouri speculated for possible departure to other conferences.

“We know there’re a number of specific issues to be addressed,” Deaton said, “and I think the public generally is aware of what a number of those are.

“Be assured that there will be a working group immediately set in motion to address that range of issues.”

Deaton would not respond to a question about what concessions the University of Texas may or may not make in the areas of revenue sharing. Texas’ $247 million Longhorn Network venture with ESPN falls under third-tier rights, which are not shared, and has caused concern among coaches because it planned to show high school football games.

Asked again if Deaton was prepared to make a statement that Missouri would remain in the Big 12 for the foreseeable future, Deaton said:

“The University of Missouri is going to continue to work for what is best for the University of Missouri.

“We have seen that aligned with the Big 12 Conference.”
The Missouri administrator who asked not to be identified told The Star that Deaton’s statement should be construed as less than an unconditional commitment to the Big 12 at this time.

As Deaton left the room, Alden took questions in the hall of the school’s administration building for a little over seven minutes.

Hit right away with the question of whether Missouri was committed long term to staying in the Big 12, Alden said he would not attempt to speak for Deaton.

On Wednesday, in an interview on KFNS radio in St. Louis, Missouri football coach Gary Pinkel criticized the Big 12 for not fixing the problems that have thrown the league’s viability into question for the last year and a half.

“In my opinion, it’s going to go on and on and on and it’s not a whole lot of fun to be part of it,” Pinkel said, adding that the situation was “embarrassing.”

“His term was embarrassing, mine was its challenging, it’s troubling,” Alden said. “You don’t want your league out there being talked about the way that the Big 12 had been talked about for the last two weeks, three weeks, year, year and a half.”

Alden also addressed Missouri and other schools in the Big 12 having spoken to other conferences.

“Over the course of the last several months, or month … people were calling people all over the country …,” he said.

“It’s almost like recruiting. If you’re a pretty good student athlete, people kind of know who you are. … For us, like Brady said and probably everybody else in the country, the issue there was just talking to people and getting pulses on things.”
MU reluctant to make long-term Big 12 pledge

By Dave Matter Columbia Daily Tribune

Friday, September 23, 2011

Forty-eight hours before their football teams meet in Norman, Okla., the university leaders from Missouri and Oklahoma engaged in a different kind of duel Thursday night on their respective campuses, a game of simultaneous press conferences that painted remarkably different images of the ever-shrinking, always dysfunctional Big 12 Conference.

In Norman, Oklahoma President David Boren projected an air of unity among the remaining Big 12 members.

In a cramped Jesse Hall meeting room, MU Chancellor Brady Deaton left the door open for Missouri to saunter on out.

Fresh off a conference call in which the Big 12 board of directors agreed on several new measures, including the ouster of Big 12 Commissioner Dan Beebe, Deaton talked a lot about the conference working to solve problems but stopped short of declaring unequivocal long-term commitment to the Big 12.

Asked if Missouri could change conferences if the Big 12’s problems are beyond repair, Deaton said, “That’s a hypothetical that could occur. In a sense, anything is possible.”

Even, perhaps, a move to the Southeastern Conference? Media reports have identified Missouri as a likely SEC expansion target, and though he stressed the Big 12’s desire to work through its differences, Deaton said MU has talked with other conferences.

“During these last few weeks, it’s fair to say every major institution around the country has had one type of communication or another with essentially every major BCS conference,” he said. “I think that’s a fair statement for most. Certainly, we’ve had those contacts as well.”

Later, meeting with reporters in a hallway on the first floor of Jesse Hall, Athletic Director Mike Alden repeated Deaton’s message about working to improve the Big 12 — he said the word “work” 10 times in the six-minute interview — but also declined to pledge total commitment to the Big 12.
In fact, Alden said he supported his football coach’s recent swipes at the Big 12, when Gary Pinkel called the league “sad” and “embarrassing” on a St. Louis radio show Wednesday.

“His term may have been embarrassing,” Alden said. “Mine was ... it’s challenging. It’s troubling. You don’t want your league out there being talked about the way that the Big 12 had been talked about for the last two weeks, three weeks, year, year and a half. That’s really tough.”

As the Big 12 tries to hold itself together with nine members — Colorado and Nebraska left last year and Texas A&M hasn’t backed off its push to become the SEC’s 13th member — it’s still unclear whether Missouri holds an invitation to apply for membership to the SEC or whether MU’s athletic and academic factions would support such a move. Alden said he and Deaton are on the same page in their analysis of Missouri’s position in the Big 12.

“We all know there are issues out there we have to work through,” he said. “They haven’t been resolved yet.”

The Big 12 board addressed some of those issues during last night’s conference call, as Deaton explained:

The league and Beebe negotiated a mutual agreement that he resign his post immediately. He’ll be replaced on an interim basis by Chuck Neinas, a former Big Eight commissioner who for years has worked as a consultant for college athletics.

As the board chairman, Deaton will form a “special working group” tasked with privately addressing problem areas to, Deaton said, “further strengthen conference stability.”

The Big 12 will reactivate its expansion committee, a group of chancellors, presidents and athletic directors who will make recommendations to the board for consideration. A league source said Brigham Young was on the verge of joining the conference earlier this month, until Oklahoma and Texas looked into realigning with the Pac-12, which never happened but still diminished BYU’s interest, the source said. TCU has also been mentioned as a potential expansion target.

The board discussed granting its media rights to the conference for the next six years, meaning any school that leaves the Big 12 during that time would sacrifice its TV rights and revenue from the league’s Tier 1 (network) and Tier 2 (cable) contracts.

Here’s where wires became crossed literally and figuratively. Midway through Deaton’s opening remarks, a voice came crackling out of a speakerphone that was placed on his podium for out-of-town reporters to listen to the news conference.

“That’s Oklahoma. That needs to be off,” he said. “I can recognize David Boren’s voice.”

Sure enough, it was Boren, whose media gathering in Norman was somehow being transmitted through the phone.
That was just the first and less confusing mix-up. Deaton said the Big 12 board had “affirmed its intention to pursue the granting of media rights.” A Missouri source later confirmed Deaton’s statement, that the board had merely agreed to discuss the granting of rights. But in Norman, Boren said each school fully agreed to grant their media rights.

“These are very strong handcuffs,” Boren told reporters. “The grant of rights really does bind the conference together and it shows that we fully intend to stay together.”

It’s unclear which school misinterpreted the board’s decision, but it was appropriate on a night short on clarity and commitment.

Deaton ended his session praising Missouri’s athletic accomplishments as a Big 12 member, a statement that sounded like both a Big 12 endorsement and a sales pitch for other suitors.

“We’re in the best era of intercollegiate athletic in Missouri’s history,” he said. “That says a lot about where we are, where our fan base is and the conference that we’re in as well.”
Changes in the Big 12

• Board of Directors accept resignation of commissioner Dan Beebe and name former Big Eight commissioner Chuck Neinas interim commissioner. Neinas, 79, will not be a candidate for the permanent job.

• Oklahoma president David Boren said the schools agreed to a six-year grant of rights for its top football games to the conference. If a member switches conferences, the rights cannot be transferred. The Big Ten and Pac-12 have this arrangement.

  “These are very strong handcuffs,” Boren said. “When you grant your rights it’s very unlikely you would receive an invitation to another conference.”

  **Boren said schools have agreed to this, although there is some question whether Missouri is part of that agreement.**

• Kansas chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little and athletic director Sheahon Zenger issued a joint statement in support of the Big 12:

  “Tonight, nine members of the Big 12 Conference affirmed their solidarity and agreed to measures that will ensure the stability of the conference moving forward.

  “We want to thank Jayhawks for their patience as we have worked aggressively toward this outcome. We would have liked to have shared details of the various discussions with you, but it better served our common objective to proceed with the utmost discretion.

  “While details remain to be worked out, this agreement points to a bright future for the Big 12 and allows us all to begin to turn our attention back to the accomplishments of our student-athletes in the classroom and on the field of competition.”

• Expansion committee reconvened. It includes Oklahoma athletic director Joe Castiglione, Oklahoma State president Burns Hargis, Kansas State president Kirk Schulz, Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds and Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton, the chairman of the Board of Directors.

• No word on the controversial ESPN-operated Longhorn Network, which has upset rival coaches with its content of high school highlights and its agreement with Fox Sports to move the Kansas game to its network.
• The conference has more work to do on the unity front. Deaton was authorized to create a working group charged with taking more steps to stabilize the league, according to Boren.

• The Big 12 would like for Texas A&M to remain. “But it’s highly likely A&M goes to the SEC,” Boren said.
Big 12 looks to past for help with the future

By BLAIR KERKHOFF

Chuck Neinas made it known where he stood a long time ago.

“For one thing, you have to serve as a unifying agent for the conference,” Neinas said. “Everyone is most interested in his own school. … This is rightly so, but you have to consider what is best for the conference overall.”

Neinas didn’t speak those words Thursday when he was announced as interim commissioner of the Big 12 Conference after Dan Beebe’s resignation was accepted by the league’s board of directors. Neinas said he would speak publicly at a later date.

No, the quote is from 1971, when Neinas was introduced as commissioner of the Big Eight at the Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City.

But 40 years later, the same unifying message is needed, perhaps as much today as at any time this week.

Thursday was expected to be a pledge of solidarity by the conference that almost unraveled earlier this week. When the Pac-12 announced Tuesday night that it would not expand to include Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas Tech, the mood should have been cheerful.

But in Columbia on Thursday night, Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton said that his school was keeping open its conference options. Interest between the Tigers and the Southeastern Conference was first reported by The Star on Tuesday.

While Deaton wouldn’t make any guarantees about Missouri’s future in the Big 12, Oklahoma president David Boren, at a news conference in Norman, Okla., was putting his faith in a man who has worked with the school on at least two occasions.

“The men sitting on either side of me (football coach Bob Stoops and athletic director Joe Castiglione) were recommended by Chuck Neinas,” Boren said.

A former Sooner sounded optimistic that Neinas could get everybody on the same page.

“If anybody can do it, he can,” former Oklahoma football coach Barry Switzer said. “He’s got the ability and the experience to handle this.”
Especially the experience.

Neinas, 79, is a college sports lifer — from the NCAA to the Big Eight to the College Football Association to Neinas Sports Services, a coaching and athletic director search service based in Boulder, Colo.

Neinas has been helping schools hire high-profile athletic personnel since 1997. In addition to Stoops and Castiglione, Neinas recommended football coach Mack Brown to Texas, the school of his good friend and former employee DeLoss Dodds.

Before he was Texas’ athletic director, Dodds, a former Kansas State track coach, worked for Neinas as an assistant Big Eight commissioner.

“Of all the schools in the Big 12,” Boren said, “over half of the sitting athletic directors are there because of a recommendation by Chuck Neinas.”

Neinas’ college sports career started in Kansas City when he joined the NCAA staff in 1961. Ten years later, Big Eight commissioner Wayne Duke took the same job in the Big Ten and Neinas became Big Eight commissioner.

Only months on the job, Big Eight powers Nebraska, Oklahoma and Colorado finished 1-2-3 in the final Associated Press football poll.

Neinas remained Big Eight commissioner throughout the 1970s. Among the notable events of that period were the end of the holiday basketball tournament and the beginning of the postseason tournament, which was an immediate success at Kemper Arena.

In 1980, Neinas left the conference to become the executive director of the College Football Association, an organization created to help schools gain their television rights from the NCAA.

The group succeeded in 1984 when the Supreme Court ruled the NCAA was violating antitrust laws and college football broadcasts would be marketed by the schools.

What schools found was there was greater negotiating strength in numbers. Conferences grew — the SEC to 12, the Big Ten to 11 — and the Big 12 was formed. The CFA was no longer needed and closed its books in 1997.

Ironically, it was the freedom for schools to own their media rights that contributed to the Big 12’s current uncertainty. In August, Texas launched the Longhorn Network, a venture with ESPN that rankled other schools in the Big 12 because it proposed to broadcast high school games. Coaches such as Stoops and Missouri’s Gary Pinkel cried foul, saying Texas would have an unfair recruiting advantage.

Neinas agreed. In an August interview with USA Today, he sounded a warning. If school networks included high school content, “we will not be able to unravel that Rubik’s Cube,” Neinas said.
He made many contacts in his college sports career and parlayed his background into the coaching and athletic director search consulting business. In 2005, he said the list of schools that he'd helped find a coach or athletic director was 51.

"He's been in the game a long time," Duke said. "It's a good move on the Big 12's part. I hope he's able to instill some of the things that ought to be part of any conference, like equal revenue sharing."

The Big 12 is moving toward that, Boren said Thursday. The league is working on equally sharing the vast amount of income from television rights — the $1.2 billion contract with Fox Sports Net that begins next year, and a potentially larger network rights fee when a deal with ABC/ESPN expires after the 2015-16 school year.

Expansion is another agenda item. After a three-week pause while schools flirted with other conferences, the Big 12's five-member committee to explore expansion was reassembled. It includes Deaton and Kansas State president Kirk Schulz.

"That's where he'll be able to use his contacts," Switzer said.

Neinas will be the fifth person to head the conference.

Steve Hatchell, a former Southwest Conference commissioner who also worked for Neinas in the Big Eight, was the Big 12's inaugural commissioner. He stepped down in 1998 and Oklahoma State's Dave Martin served in an interim capacity until the league hired Kevin Weiberg from the Big Ten. Beebe replaced Weiberg in 2007.

Beebe received a three-year extension last November and was widely credited for keeping the conference together after Nebraska left for the Big Ten and Colorado the Pac-12.

But instability returned to the league late this summer when Texas A&M announced it was leaving to join the Southeastern Conference, dropping the Big 12's membership to nine schools for the 2012-13 school year.

Now, on a day when most in the Big 12 talked about unity, Missouri wouldn't go that far.

Boren said Neinas' first order of business is to visit each Big 12 campus. He might want to begin in Columbia.
Deaton, Big 12 pledge commitment to stability

The league unanimously voted to accept Chuck Neinas as interim commissioner and granted six-year media rights deal.

By Pat Iversen

Published Sept. 23, 2011

MU plans to remain a member of the Big 12 Conference amid pledges by the remaining nine members of the league to seek reform for extended stability for the beleaguered conference.

Chancellor Brady Deaton affirmed his school’s loyalty to the Big 12 in a news conference on Thursday, moments after joining fellow league members in accepting the resignation of Big 12 commissioner Dan Beebe in a teleconference. Beebe came under fire for failing to keep the conference together after Nebraska left for the Big Ten and Colorado left for the Pac-12 last summer. Texas A&M plans to leave by next July for the Southeastern Conference.

“Dan has always demonstrated a total commitment to the best interests of the Big 12,” Deaton said. “No one has ever doubted that. His energy and skill in every dimension of what he’s done has been exemplary.”

Deaton also announced the board unanimously voted former Big 8 commissioner Chuck Neinas as Beebe’s replacement in the interim. Neinas, who led the Big 8 from 1971 to 80, will oversee the conference as members work together for stability, but will not be considered as a permanent choice for the job.

The Big 12 Board decided Thursday night to reactivate its expansion committee as the conference looks for candidates to fill the absence of recently departed Texas A&M. Deaton did not specify whether the league wished to return to twelve members.

Although no specific ideas were discussed on Thursday, Deaton was asked by the board to form a "special working group" to tackle the various points of contention between the schools.

“We’re working together to fix some of those issues because we really recognize we’ve got some issues to address,” Deaton said. “We’re committed to examining every single aspect of those issues and we will be working together to find a pathway that will lead to a more stable conference, and one as we look to expansion will be very attractive to other institutions around the country.”
The board also affirmed its intention to pursue the granting of first- and second-tier media rights for a period of six years, essentially meaning all revenue from the top television games would continue to go to the Big 12 even if a school bolts to another league. In a separate press conference Thursday, Oklahoma president David Boren called the agreement "strong handcuffs" for the Big 12 members.

"The grant of rights really does bind the conference together and it shows that we fully intend to stay together," Boren said. "If you wanted to talk about one important action that really does demonstrate that this conference is going to be stable, that we're not going to have year-to-year dramas like we have had, I think that grant of rights is a very essential item."

Numerous reports throughout the last few weeks have indicated the Big 12 was on the brink of dissolution, yet the conference remained intact. Reports that Oklahoma and Texas were on the move to the Pac-12 were nullified when Pac-12 commissioner Larry Scott announced the conference would not expand. The Southeastern Conference also reportedly considered offering Missouri a spot in its conference, but SEC associate director denied such a move.

Deaton declined to comment on talks with the SEC other than to say every school in the BCS has had communications with other conferences, and Missouri was no exception.

"Every institution has to look out for its best interests, I've said that from the beginning," Deaton said. "You saw that exercised by a couple of members of the Big 12 over the last couple of weeks. They've looked at what (are) their best interests, and it's interesting and positive for us that they've found staying here was their best interests."

Missouri athletic director Mike Alden said the past two weeks have hurt the league's image, and it was the responsibility of the members to change it for the better.

"It's challenging," Alden said. "It's troubling. You don't want your league out there being talked about the way the Big 12 has been talked about the last two weeks. And that's really tough, because it's up to you what that image is, and how it's impacted."
Editorial: When it comes to relationships, Big 12 has problems

Published Sept. 23, 2011

So, Big 12, we couldn't help but notice your relationship status on Facebook changed. Again. And this time, we're just a little bit concerned.

This is nothing new for you. In fact, we're not even sure why we're surprised. This time last year, we had to watch you post angry statuses about how much you already missed Colorado and Nebraska. You always have been the clingy type.

Meanwhile, you ignored the fact every other partner of yours was flirting with other conferences behind your back. You should've known you'd be in the same situation a year later.

And so, for the last month we've all been wrapped up in your relationship struggles. You've taken the "it's complicated" status to a whole new level. Let's recap, shall we?

You let Texas buy a shiny new TV deal. You had to have known the Aggies would get jealous, throw a fit and leave you for another stronger, better-looking conference. And why do you seem so surprised schools like Missouri and Oklahoma are thinking of cheating on you?

The fact is, you're not the hottest thing on the market anymore. You just don't have what other schools want most in a relationship. Schools like conferences that they can rely on, that give them the attention and money they deserve. None of this preferential treatment you seem to be giving to Texas and Oklahoma.

And if Kansas just wants to have a quiet night and snuggle up on the couch, you need to be there for it.

Unfortunately, you haven't shown any stability in your relationships. It seems like every year, you and your partners fight to the brink of splitting up. Yet you always kiss and make up, but fail to actually address the issues.

So, now that you've decided to go to relationship counseling, it needs to produce some results. You can't keep doing this every year and expect things to just work out over time. This relationship clearly isn't working for any side, but you have one last chance to talk it over and smooth things out before you'll have to part ways for good. And a split now would be ugly.
Meanwhile, don't get jealous if Missouri starts flirting with someone else again. After all, your trustworthiness is so low, you might as well update your status again. Because this has all the makings of an "open relationship."
Deaton says Big 12 has 'specific issues to be addressed'

MU Chancellor Brady Deaton speaks at a Big 12 press conference Thursday night, Sept. 22, at Jesse Hall. Deaton announced that Dan Beebe has stepped down as Big 12 commissioner, and former Big Eight commissioner Chuck Neinas will take over the role. He also said the league still has a lot of work to do, but didn’t go into detail.

COLUMBIA — Although the Big 12 Conference received new life Tuesday when the Pac-12 decided not to expand, the conference still has a lot of work left to do, said MU Chancellor Brady Deaton.

Deaton, who is also the chairman of the Big 12 board of directors, spoke Thursday at Jesse Hall about the future of MU and the conference, beginning with the fact that
Commissioner Dan Beebe had stepped out of his role, and that former Big Eight Commissioner Chuck Neinas, now a college sports consultant, would take over as interim commissioner.

"He’s a national figure in collegiate athletics," Deaton said. "Engaging Chuck Neinas will enable us to go forward as a conference."

Beyond that, Deaton said that though not much has been resolved yet in terms of keeping the conference together for the long term, the conference has plans in place for how it's going to go forward.

"There are specific issues to be addressed, and I think the public is generally aware of what those are," he said. "Be assured there will be a working group immediately set in motion to address those issues."

The issues Deaton referred to are not exactly new developments. They have been in play since Nebraska and Colorado left the league last year and were part of Texas A&M’s announcement on Aug. 31 that it plans to leave the conference. This, though, is the first time anyone has come out and publicly discussed the fact that the conference is going to try and resolve its problems.

Those issues include equal sharing of conference TV revenue and more regulation of Texas' newly created cable channel, the Longhorn Network. Whether those were the specific issues Deaton was referring to is impossible to say because he declined to comment on them in specific terms.

But even with that positive development on the table, neither Deaton nor MU Athletics Director Mike Alden was ready to stake MU's future with the Big 12 in the long term.

"Every institution has to look out for its best interests; I have said that from the beginning. It's interesting and positive for us that (all schools) found that staying with the Big 12 is in their best interest," Deaton said. "Anything is possible; that's all recognized. That's what led to discussions the last couple of weeks."

Speaking to the rumors that Missouri has been in contact with the Southeastern Conference, Deaton said Missouri was just doing what everyone else was doing.

"It's fair to say every major institution in the country has had one type of communication or another with essentially every major BCS conference," Deaton said.
Alden agreed when asked whether the league was at the beginning of a process rather than the end.

“I think that’s safe to say,” Alden said. “There’s a lot of work to be done.”

Deaton said the board had reactivated its expansion committee, as well as agreeing to pursue the “granting” of schools’ Tier 1 and 2 television money — the overwhelming majority of the conference’s TV revenue — over the next five to six years.

Granting, as explained by Oklahoma President David L. Boren during his Thursday news conference, means that if a school were to leave the Big 12 for another league, all of the money it would make on television contracts in its new league would be sent straight back to the Big 12, creating, as Boren put it, “a pair of very strong handcuffs.”

Even with the creation of the working group and the commitment to the granting of the TV money, Alden called the entire process “challenging” and “troubling.”

“You don’t want your league out there being talked about the way the Big 12 has been talked about,” Alden said.

Neither Deaton nor Alden gave a timetable as to when the working group would be formed, but Boren said it would be by the end of Friday. No timetable was given on expansion either.

Despite being a major factor in working through the “specific issues,” neither Texas President William Powers nor Athletics Director DeLoss Dodds had scheduled a news conference as of Thursday night, though a report in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram said Texas administrators “favor working with Oklahoma to create stability within the league, including adoption of equal revenue-sharing from all leaguewide television contracts.”
History of biggest changes in conference alignment over past 20 years

Thursday, September 22, 2011 | 8:40 p.m. CDT, updated 12:30 a.m. CDT, Friday, September 23, 2011
BY RALPH D. RUSSO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

It's been a dizzying start to the college football season, not so much on the field as in the board room, where conference loyalties have shifted (Syracuse and Pittsburgh to the Atlantic Coast Conference) and trembled (the Big 12).

Perhaps some perspective is in order.

While it's more predatory these days, realignment has happened before. These are the 12 most significant conference additions and subtractions in college football over the past 20 years.

1. Arkansas (Southwest Conference) and South Carolina (independent) to the Southeastern Conference in 1991.
   In many ways, the SEC caused a lot of this mayhem going on today. The SEC became the first conference to break into two six-team divisions, and in 1992 staged the first conference championship game. It turned out so well others decided to copy it.

2. The Big Eight adds Texas, Texas Tech, Baylor and Texas A&M (Southwest Conference) to create the Big 12 in 1996.
   Weakened by scandals and the departure of Arkansas to the SEC, the SWC died after the 1995 season. The Texas schools joined a league that featured Oklahoma and Nebraska and split into two six-team divisions to play a title game. The first sign of problems came early, though, when the Nebraska-Oklahoma series stopped being an annual rivalry.

3. Penn State (independent) to the Big Ten in 1993.
For years, Joe Paterno's Nittany Lions were considered the kings of Northeast football. By becoming the 11th member of the Big Ten — years after being rejected by the Big East when it was still a basketball-only conference — it shifted more power to the Midwest. With Penn State no longer regularly playing teams such as Syracuse and Pittsburgh, Northeast football has never been the same.

4. **Florida State (independent) to the Atlantic Coast Conference in 1991.**
The Seminoles were an emerging superpower under Bobby Bowden. The ACC was a basketball conference trying to bolster its football credibility. The result of the merger helped Florida State more than the ACC. The Seminoles went on to win two national titles and contend for numerous others over the next 10 years, running roughshod over a conference that couldn't keep up.

5. **Miami, Virginia Tech, Rutgers, West Virginia, Temple (all independent) to the Big East in 1991.**
Born as a basketball conference in 1979, the Big East decided to get into the football business 12 years later, adding national power Miami and the other four to Syracuse, Boston College and Pittsburgh. The real significance was the geography of the league. Now the Big East stretched from New England to South Florida, and college sports conferences were no longer bound to traditional borders.

6. **Miami and Virginia Tech (Big East) to the ACC in 2004 and Boston College (Big East) to the ACC in 2005.**
This was the first conference raid of another league. The ACC, trying to gain ground on the SEC in football, wanted to take Syracuse to go with Miami but ended up with Virginia Tech when Virginia politicians stepped in. Maybe most galling to the Big East was the departure of founding member Boston College. The move put the Big East on the brink of extinction and allowed the ACC to expand to 12 teams and hold a championship game.

7. **Louisville, Cincinnati and South Florida (Conference USA) to the Big East in 2005.**
Trying to salvage its league, the Big East raided CUSA and expanded its reach to get back to eight football members. The move stabilized the conference and allowed it to retain its automatic-qualifying status in the Bowl Championship Series. For good measure, the Big East also took basketball schools Marquette and DePaul, creating a 16-team hoops league that has been unwieldy but successful.
8. Nebraska (Big 12) to the Big Ten in 2011.
In December 2009, Big Ten Commissioner Jim Delany announced his league was going to look into expansion, essentially lighting the fuse that set off the fireworks that have not stopped since. Rumors and speculation were rampant for months, but in the summer of 2010 Nebraska took the opportunity to leave the dysfunctional Big 12 behind and give the Big Ten another marquee program to boost its cable television network.

9. Colorado (Big 12) and Utah (Mountain West) to the Pac-10 in 2011.
After a failed attempt by new Pac-10 Commissioner Larry Scott to lure Texas, Oklahoma, Texas Tech, Oklahoma State and Texas A&M to his league and create a superconference called the Pac-16, Scott settled for Colorado and Utah to move his conference east. The conference named itself the Pac-12, added a football championship game and landed a multibillion-dollar TV deal.

10. Rice, Southern Methodist University and Texas Christian University (Southwest Conference), San Jose State and University of Nevada, Las Vegas (Big West), and Tulsa (Missouri Valley) to the Western Athletic Conference in 1996.
The WAC went a bit wild and created the first 16-team conference. It was hardly super, as the new members ended up watering down a league that had been built on the success of Brigham Young University and high-scoring offenses. But it pushed the idea that just because you can't drive to another school's campus, it doesn't mean that school can't be your conference rival.

The strongest teams in the new WAC, mostly the teams from the old WAC, decided things were getting too crowded and formed a new league. With some room to grow, the Mountain West turned into the best of the Bowl Championship Series non-automatic qualifying leagues, with Utah especially flourishing.

12. Texas A&M (Big 12) to the SEC in 2011.
It's not quite a done deal, and dominoes are still falling that could potentially make this move even more significant in a few years. But if nothing else, the Aggies, deciding they had had enough of Texas, brought the Big 12 to the brink again, made the Pac-12
consider another expansion and led to the ACC making a pre-emptive strike by luring Pittsburgh and Syracuse away from the Big East.
When it comes to sports, especially our Tigers, not so. I'm a fan, pure and simple.

It's in that spirit that I've been watching the turmoil surrounding the No Longer Big Some Number Less Than 12 Conference. Nobody seems to know what's going to happen to it and therefore to us.

Now that Texas and Oklahoma, the conference's big dogs, have been rebuffed in their attempt to join the Pac-12, how seriously can we take their pledges of undying loyalty? I seem to recall that Texas A&M signed a similar pledge just before bolting for the SEC.

Joe Castiglione, now the athletics director at Oklahoma, is quoted as saying he's "in full support" of OU President David Boren's new commitment to the conference he was trying to leave 48 hours before. (Irrelevant aside: My favorite memory of Joe's days as Missouri AD was his claim to be unaware that the woman he was living with was stealing a half-million dollars from the university. That's ancient history, of course.)

So where does all that leave our Tigers? While Brady Deaton, an honest man, serves as titular head of the current configuration and insists that it can and will survive, his football coach says that kind of thinking is "naive."

Meanwhile, the newspapers in both St. Louis and Kansas City report that MU has an informal offer to join the SEC if the NLBSNLT12 should collapse.

Thursday's headline on the Kansas City Star's website was "Anxiety, frustration bedevil Big 12 fans." The story below the headline reports, "Fans not only feel left in the dark, but also as though their opinions don't matter."

That feeling is based on fact, unless those fans also happen to control a television network.
I'm neither anxious nor frustrated. I'm just fascinated. Why, I wonder, should any Missouri fan care much about the Formerly Big 12? It is, after all, the bastard offspring of a marriage of convenience 17 years ago that followed the collapse of the old Southwest Conference. Those nuptials were inspired by love — love of recruiting in Texas and love of the added revenue the wealthy Southerners would bring as their dowry.

One of the ironies of the present situation is that the most eager aspirant these days to join our conference is SMU, whose flagrant cheating contributed greatly to the demise of the Southwest Conference.

I'm sure Brady and Mike Alden have sympathy for their colleagues in Norman and Austin. Just a couple of years ago, it was MU being spurned in painful public fashion when the Big Ten chose Nebraska over the obviously more deserving Mizzou. They put the best possible face on that rejection.

But let's be serious and not naive. Under the best of circumstances, the Big 12 seems certain to be left, in the phrase Vahe Gregorian wrote in the Post Dispatch, "a portrait of dysfunction." Who wants to be part of that picture?

To me, the SEC doesn't look bad. A friend who's an athletic booster tells me the MU coaches favor it as a landing place. No question it's a powerhouse conference, especially in the sport that brings in the big television bucks, football.

The scholars among you might complain that academically the SEC is no Big Ten. True enough, but neither is MU. The Wall Street Journal this week published some numbers that provide perspective.

Compared to Big Ten schools, MU would rank above only Nebraska — late of the Big 12 — and Indiana in either the U.S. News ranking or the more prestigious ranking of federal research dollars.

In the SEC, we'd be above average. We're a member of the AAU. So are all the Big Ten schools, except Nebraska. In the current SEC, only Florida and Vanderbilt belong.

So would we rather be a weak sister or a star (in the classroom if not on the football field)? Or are we content with dysfunction? I'm guessing we'll get the answer from ESPN.
COLUMBIA — **MU Chancellor Brady Deaton** was addressing the media Thursday night when a voice interrupted him from a speakerphone on his podium. He paused and frowned.

“That’s Oklahoma,” he said. “I can recognize David Boren’s (voice).”

He might as well have let Boren, the University of Oklahoma president, continue.

Both Big 12 Conference leaders spoke Thursday night about having taken what they hope is a firm step toward conference stability. Deaton spoke briefly — just over 10 minutes — and used vague expressions of optimism. Boren, in a simultaneous conference, spoke for almost an hour with more candor about what the Big 12 board of directors discussed in a teleconference earlier in the day.

After the board accepted the resignation of Commissioner Dan Beebe, it approved Chuck Neinas as the conference’s interim commissioner. Boren said during a news conference broadcast online that there will be a lengthy search for a new permanent commissioner but that Neinas will not be a candidate.

Boren also spoke about the reactivation of the conference’s expansion committee and Deaton’s formation of a new “working group” that will attempt to find ways to further
strengthen the conference and make it more stable. Boren said he expects Deaton to finish staffing the working group by the “end of business” on Friday.

Deaton did not mention a specific timetable, leaving it at they were working “very expeditiously.”

Deaton also did not indicate the number of teams the conference would look to add. Boren, however, said he would like to see the conference return to 12 teams but added that the number is “not a necessity.”

Other slight differences presented themselves. On a six-year deal of granted media rights, Deaton said the board “affirmed its intention to pursue” the granting of such rights. Boren said, simply, that the board had agreed to do so. He also revealed this change means that even if a school were to leave for another conference, all of its television revenues would continue to go to the Big 12, rather than the new conference.

“These are pretty strong handcuffs,” Boren said.

Boren and Deaton both said the equal distribution of revenues would be something addressed by the “working group” and that no specifics were available. The Oklahoma president did say, though, that Oklahoma would be willing to make “a financial sacrifice” for equal distribution between schools.

As for Oklahoma’s recently reported conversations with the Pac-12 Conference, Boren was open about how positive those interactions were. He even mentioned that the Pac-12 was “the area we would most want to consider” had the university left the Big 12 because of instability.

Deaton did not mention the status of Texas A&M, the school that started this year’s round of Big 12 live-or-die questions. Boren, though, said Texas A&M President Bowen Loftin voted for and supported the changes that were made.

Boren said he thought Texas A&M would wind up in the SEC, but he did bring up the possibility that that university would remain in the Big 12.

“We will not give up on trying to convince Texas A&M to stay,” Boren said.

“I think the actions taken today would make it less difficult for Texas A&M to stay.”
Earlier in the week, Missouri football coach Gary Pinkel called the state of the Big 12 "embarrassing." When asked about it, Deaton said he wouldn't use the same term and expressed satisfaction that Oklahoma and the other schools had apparently decided to remain members.

"Here we are back at the place we were when this all started," Deaton said. "It's a very positive statement and affirmation of the Big 12 Conference."
Missouri curators talk Big 12, but no vote likely

COLUMBIA — University of Missouri curators are holding a closed meeting via telephone and will discuss the fate of the Big 12 Conference.

No curators attended Thursday's teleconference in person, nor were Missouri chancellor Brady Deaton or athletic director Mike Alden in the room.

University spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead confirmed that conference realignment was on the agenda but said it was not the primary reason for the meeting.

The meeting was scheduled Tuesday amid reports that Missouri was considering a move to the Southeastern Conference. Later Tuesday, the Pac-12 announced it was not expanding, which would appear to keep the Big 12 intact — at least for now.

Curator chairman Warren Erdman said he didn’t expect any action to be taken on conference realignment.

Hollingshead said Thursday morning she did not expect an announcement from the meeting.

— Missourian reporter Abby Eisenberg contributed to this report.
Potential UM president candidate's status unclear

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune Published September 22, 2011 at 3:30 p.m.

Updated September 22, 2011 at 3:31 p.m.

It was unclear Thursday whether some University of Missouri curators have interviewed a Kansas City businessman for the UM System presidency after Craig van Matre backed away from an earlier statement that the full board had interviewed the candidate.

Van Matre — the on-again, off-again UM System curator — denied telling the Tribune on Wednesday that the full Board of Curators interviewed Thomas Hoenig. But Van Matre would not answer questions about whether Hoenig has been pre-interviewed by some curators, referring a reporter to board Chairman Warren Erdman.

Erdman would not discuss the identities of candidates, saying they have asked for confidentiality.

"We're simply honoring that request," he said.

Van Matre said Hoenig has been recommended by some for the system's top job.

"There are people in Kansas City who think he would be good for the job," he said. "I know people who have talked to him."

Hoenig is retiring from the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City on Oct. 1. The Tribune learned of his possible candidacy for the president's job through a source close to him. Hoenig has said he won't comment about it until after he leaves his current position.

The Tribune contacted Van Matre on Wednesday and asked whether Hoenig was a top candidate. Van Matre said no but indicated that he had been interviewed.

"I was in the middle of something" when the Tribune first called, Van Matre said Thursday. "It's entirely possible only a third of my brain was in our conversation."

Van Matre said he would not or could not answer more questions about Hoenig, such as whether he has been scheduled to interview with the board.
"We're sworn to secrecy," he said. "That's a question I can't answer."

Although appointed to serve on an interim basis after the regular legislative session, Van Matre is not currently on the Board of Curators. That's because Gov. Jay Nixon withdrew his appointment — along with dozens of other gubernatorial nominations — while lawmakers are in special session.

Van Matre was serving as a curator when the board's presidential search committee interviewed candidates in Kansas City and St. Louis last month.
Retiring Fed chief reportedly a candidate for MU system president

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

Despite media reports that Thomas Hoenig, retiring president of the Federal Reserve in Kansas City, is a candidate for University of Missouri System president, his office and curators won't confirm it.

Or deny it.

Warren Erdman, chairman of the University of Missouri Board of Curators and the head of the university’s Presidential Search Committee, said the committee has agreed not to confirm or deny the names of any candidates for the position.

But, he said, there are no finalists yet.

“I can tell you that our interview process remains open,” Erdman said. “We are still taking nominations.”

Hoenig’s office sent this response to The Kansas City Star’s question about whether he is a finalist for the UM System presidency: “Tom is not commenting on post-retirement opportunities.”

Erdman said candidates the committee has talked to have asked to remain anonymous.

Erdman said the university has received more than 100 nominations for the position, talked to about 40 people for the job and to date has whittled that number down significantly. He declined to say how many candidates remain on the list.

The pool of candidates, he said, is “very diverse,” and nominees come from various walks of life — business and academia, male and female.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported Wednesday that its information about Hoenig being a candidate came from Craig Van Matre of Columbia, whose appointment to the board of curators has not yet been confirmed by the Missouri Senate.
But in a telephone interview Thursday, Van Matre denied saying that Hoenig, 65, is a candidate.

"I said just the opposite," Van Matre told The Star. "I don't want to be in the middle of this. I can't say either way."

Tribune reporter Janese Silvey said she stands by the story.

Van Matre is currently off the board, waiting until the end of the legislature's special session for a reappointment and confirmation.
MU alumni group honors Forsee, Kelly

Columbia Daily Tribune Thursday, September 22, 2011

**Former University of Missouri President Gary Forsee and state Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, are this year’s winners of the Mizzou Alumni Association’s Geyer Public Service Award.**

The association gives the award annually to one elected official and one citizen who demonstrate a commitment to education. It’s named for Henry Geyer, a former state representative who introduced a bill to establish the university in 1839.

Forsee of Kansas City served as president of the four-campus system for nearly three years. Kelly, elected to the House in 2008, is a two-time winner. He received the Geyer award as a private citizen in 1998.
The U.S.-China academic building boom continues. This week two Missouri institutions announced that they would be working with a Chinese partner to create a new university in Chengdu, a city of 14 million in Sichuan province. Sichuan Missouri University, as it will be called, is a collaboration among the University of Missouri at St. Louis, the Missouri University of Science and Technology, and Tianfu College. The partnership builds upon a recent agreement between the University of Missouri and Tianfu in which students spend their first two years in China and the last two in Missouri. The new campus follows announcements by Duke University and New York University that they are building campuses in China. After a period of slow activity, the Chinese government has shown renewed interest in the idea of foreign institutions' setting up branch campuses and joint degree programs in China.
Campuses partner to offer courses in China

Associated Press Thursday, September 22, 2011

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Two of the four campuses of the University of Missouri system are preparing to offer courses at a new campus under construction in Sichuan Province, in southwestern China.

The University of Missouri-St. Louis is partnering with Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla to offer courses in business, nursing, social work and engineering.

UMSL Chancellor Thomas George yesterday said all of the courses will be taught in English.

St. Louis, Rolla of UM System to open China campus

Thursday, September 22, 2011 7:44 a.m. CDT; updated 10:17 a.m. CDT, Thursday, September 22, 2011
BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. LOUIS — Two of the four campuses of the University of Missouri System are preparing to offer courses at a new campus in China.

KSDK-TV reported that Thomas George, chancellor of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, announced the undertaking in a speech Wednesday to faculty and staff.

The new campus is under construction in Sichuan Province, in southwestern China. George said it's about half-built, and approval from the Chinese Ministry of Education is expected later this fall.

UMSL is partnering with Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla to offer courses in business, nursing, social work and engineering.

George said all of the courses will be taught in English.
Blame it on the alcohol? Maybe not, study suggests

By Andrew Winner

It's a trap that most of us have fallen into: making a rash or regrettable decision after a few cold Coors Lights. Blame it on the booze, right? A new study out of the University of Missouri College of Arts and Sciences sheds light on how the brain processes mistakes in the presence of alcohol.

In a finding that runs contrary to previous thinking, it turns out we still know we are making mistakes when intoxicated. We just don't care as much.

"I suppose the main implication is that people shouldn't assume 'I was drunk' is a good excuse for doing things one knows he or she shouldn't be doing," wrote the study's author, Dr. Bruce Bartholow of the University of Missouri, in an e-mail. The study will be published in the Journal of Abnormal Psychology.

"It's not as though people do drunken things because they're not aware of their behavior, but rather they seem to be less bothered by the implications or consequences of their behavior than they normally would be," Bartholow added.

Bartholow set out to bring clarity to an area of ambiguity in brain research: Does the strength of the ERN – the error-related negativity "alarm signal" set off in the brain by mistakes – change with the presence of alcohol? Research out of the Netherlands in 2002 had concluded that intoxication reduced the brain's capacity to detect errors.

However, Bartholow's study challenged that assumption by asking if it's possible that the ability to detect errors actually remained the same – but alcohol changed the brain's reaction to those errors.

"I wondered whether alcohol's effects on error processing were less about reducing awareness of errors and more about reducing the distress that normally accompanies errors," Bartholow said.

In the study, a group of 67 people aged 21-35 were split into three groups. While two of the three groups received a placebo or no beverages, the third (lucky?) group received alcoholic beverages. All participants were then tasked with completing a challenging computer task.
Bartholow’s team noted that while all the groups made mistakes, those which had consumed alcohol were less likely to notice their errors. The alcohol drinkers were also less likely to slow down after an error.

However, in addition to monitoring their performance on the computer, participants also measured the subjects’ mood.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the alcohol group reported feeling less negative. (Hilariously, the group which received the placebo had a more negative mood.) Using these measurements, Bartholow’s team was able to demonstrate a correlation between the mood of the participants and the strength of the ERN. A less negative mood equaled a less severe ERN.

For the study author, the findings represent an important step in understanding how alcohol affects the brain – and the mistakes made by people who have had a couple brew-dogs. Further avenues of research could include testing whether drunk people can be sufficiently motivated to care about their mistakes (and if so, would their brain responses be similar to those of sober individuals).

Another possible avenue Bartholow is pursuing is testing whether the error-related brain activity differences observed in the study will produce changes in other parts of the brain as people attempt to correct their mistakes. In what promises to be endless entertainment for the research assistants, Bartholow is pursuing the use of an fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging – or scans that measure brain activity) machine to take measurements of the study participants.
Should Latinos Be Encouraged to Speak Spanish in College?

By John H. TuckerThu., Sep. 22 2011 at 11:00 AM

Earlier this week, a major study published in the *Harvard Educational Review* showed that children of undocumented immigrants have a more difficult time with social development and are at risk for lower educational performance when compared to kids of U.S. citizens.

While that news might be a downer for some immigrant advocacy groups, new research from the University of Missouri suggests that the future of these children -- at least the Mexican-Americans among them -- looks brighter when they reach college age, so long as they don't abandon their ethnic roots and language.

According to the study, which came out of Mizzou's College of Education, Mexican-American students who identify with their heritage and practice speaking their native language have higher grade point averages than their counterparts who are situated in English-only college environments.

"A real educational disparity exists because Mexican-Americans, along with other Latinos, are now the largest minority; yet, they still have the lowest high school and college graduation rates," counseling psychologist David Aguayo told Mizzou's news service. "I understand the reasons behind English-only efforts, but the research shows that if we don't accept the cultural identity of these students in our schools, such as tolerating their native language, Mexican-Americans may not succeed."

The paper was published in the journal *Culture and College Outcomes*.

"It's a simple correlation, but living and learning within your cultural heritage is a benefit," Aguayo said. "It could be speaking the language in school, eating certain foods, or interacting with other people who share your heritage."

Such adjustments might be easier than college students realize, based on new research from the University of Kansas. In a paper just published in the journal *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, researchers found that as college campuses have grown more diverse, social cliques within the student body have grown less so.
In other words, the bigger the college, the more likely Latino students can be found hanging with Latino students, Asian students can be found hanging with Asian students, and so on.

In contrast, smaller college campuses seem to generate social cliques that are much more diverse.

"When you have opportunity to choose your friends, you will tend to choose people who are similar to you," Chris Crandall, a Kansas University psychologist, told Today.com in an article titled "BFFing Yourself."

In the paper, the researchers wrote: "Our findings reveal an irony -- greater human diversity within an environment leads to less personal diversity within dyads. Local social ecologies create their own 'cultures' that affect how human relationships are formed."

Is that phenomenon a bad thing? The jury might still be out.
COLUMBIA — An MU atmospheric scientist continues to explore a weather phenomenon that contributed to some of the harshest weather during the past winter in Missouri.

Anthony Lupo, professor and chairman of the Department of Soil Environmental and Atmospheric Sciences in the School of Natural Resources, has been researching stagnant weather patterns known as "atmospheric blocking" for 20 years. This past winter, the blocking pattern pushed cold air from the Arctic into the mid-latitudes, Lupo said.

"That's what kept our region under cold flow and allowed the jet stream to carry a lot of snowstorms," he said.

Atmospheric blocking occurs when high pressure systems persist over the same area for days or even weeks.

The phenomenon "is not studied very often and is poorly understood," Lupo said, even though the events are large in scale. "They are very difficult to forecast, and when they do occur they can last a long time."

Lupo is partnering with scientists from the A.M. Obukhov Institute of Atmospheric Physics of Russian Academy of Sciences for his latest research with $104,000 from the Russian Federation of Basic Research. "We really don't know all of the mechanisms for why atmospheric blocks develop," Jon Gottschalk, head of forecast operations at the Climate Prediction Center, said in an email. "This is an ongoing research issue."

The phenomenon can lead to extreme weather events such as droughts and floods that have agricultural, social and economic repercussions.
"If they occur in bunches like they did during July 2010 over Russia, the results can be very strong dry conditions," Lupo said. The consequences in Russia were deadly forest fires and air pollution.

Atmospheric blocking is increasing in frequency, Lupo said.

"I don't have a good sense yet as to whether it may be related to climate change or just better observing practices," he said. "I have a feeling that it may be related to our observing practices."

Planning for the research will begin in October when Lupo travels to Russia to meet with his partners. The scientists will focus on atmospheric blocking in the Northern Hemisphere.

Lupo won the Missouri Academy of Science Most Distinguished Scientist Award in April 2009 and in May 2010 received the MU Professor of the Year Award.