

Big 12

Maddening

By Henry J. Waters III

After another week of pushing and pulling and more questions than answers regarding the future of the Big 12 Conference, the whole thing has become increasingly maddening to many people, not least University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton.

I can surmise without fear of contradiction that most people associated with higher education are reacting to the whole mess in fear, sadness and anger, the majority working in classrooms and labs trying their best to perform the most important functions of higher education amid the ever-increasing distractions of big-time college athletics.

Late last week Deaton showed increasing signs of frustration and anger over the Big 12 situation. I know his instincts well enough to bet in his heart Deaton bemoans the role thrust upon him by bully football schools like Texas and Oklahoma. The sunny days of former college sports rivalries are disappearing in the gloom of high-dollar television contracts. All universities were formed to foster academic pursuits, a focus now blurred as many seek Top 10 television money.

You have to be an old fart to remember the glory days of the admittedly more boring Big 8 and fledgling Big 12. To see MU football, you had to go to Memorial Stadium or follow the team out of town. Nobody envisioned the cash that soon was to swell athletic department budgets while public appropriations for higher education languish.

This reflects the attitude of the general public. Fans won't buy tickets or watch telecasts leveraging multimillion-dollar salaries and state-of-the-art facilities for history or chemistry departments. But so what? Sports money would not be spent in classrooms instead. Some even argue popular sports programs should help colleges and universities support academics.

Maybe so in a few cases, but conference hassles generating all the news are about sports money, not learning. I'll give you 8 to 5 Deaton would rather be talking about sociology and physics.

Meanwhile, if we have the chance, I vote for joining the Big Ten, an association that would have an academic component.

HJW III

5 reader comments

The opinions expressed below are those of the readers who submitted them. Readers are solely responsible for the content of their comments.

lgetit (anonymous) says...

I bet this is just kicking the can down the road. The money, which drives college sports programs, is not going away. Continued realignment will likely be question of when, not if.

Texas and, to a lesser degree Oklahoma, generate millions and the possibility of more millions is nothing any AD is going to pass up.

September 26, 2011 at 3:17 p.m. ([permalink](#) | [suggest removal](#))

1crossfire (anonymous) says...

Put me in the "old fart" group and let me agree completely with you. When my beloved Big 8 merged with the Southwest Conference it broke my heart. If the Big Ten comes calling, I would say good riddance to arrogant Mack Brown, his Horns, and his television contract. Wave goodbye in the rear view mirror. Would love to be in the Big Ten.

September 26, 2011 at 3:58 p.m. ([permalink](#) | [suggest removal](#))

jerele36 (anonymous) says...

Deaton should be talking about education and resign from the thankless administrative post with the Big 12. He is an honorable person being USED. Everyone should remember that Mizzou sports has been self funding in recent years. Also it is university administrators who tout the positive results of the athletic teams on increasing enrollment. Just as the Tribune can't go back to typewriters, and cigarettes in the news room we cannot go back to the Big 8.

rgreencolm (anonymous) says...

Power [Mizzou.com](#) says MU will be a member of the Big Ten before the end of the football season. I hope so. I agree with 1crossfire, let TX and Brown do their own thing and fight with themselves or some one else.

September 26, 2011 at 4:55 p.m. ([permalink](#) | [suggest removal](#))

Travelnman (anonymous) says...

colm(anonymous) says...

Power [Mizzou.com](#) says MU will be a member of the Big Ten before the end of the football season. I hope so. I agree with 1crossfire, let TX and Brown do their own thing and fight with

themselves or some one else.

Powermizzou says that not at all. In fact what they are saying it's much more likely that we will go to the SEC if we do leave the Big XII and the sentiment is that we will.

There is a possibility of the Big 10 but it seems much less likely than the SEC. I don't know what you read but you read it wrong.

September 26, 2011 at 5:55 p.m. ([permalink](#) | [suggest removal](#))

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Curators hold power in possible Mizzou switch

BY STU DURANDO • sdurando@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8232 | Posted: Tuesday, September 27, 2011 12:25 am

While the signals from sources have remained mixed in regard to Missouri's athletic future, the answer ultimately will come from six men and one woman appointed to their posts by the governor.

The seven-member Board of Curators is charged, along with the university president, with approving any proposal to switch athletic conferences, according to the university's bylaws.

How the curators feel about the Big 12 and the Southeastern Conference remains unknown. However, Big 12 interim commissioner Chuck Neinas indicated last week after speaking with chancellor Brady Deaton that Mizzou's status is still uncertain.

"What the chancellor told me is that he has some curators who are new and interested in talking about things," Neinas said. "But I do believe in the end it will be resolved."

The most recently appointed curators are David Steward, the chairman of World Wide Technology in St. Louis, and Donald Cupps, the city attorney in Cassville, Mo. Both joined the board this year. Each declined to be interviewed Monday.

While it appeared last week that the Big 12 had pulled together to save itself from annihilation, Deaton said nothing that would indicate a long-term commitment from Mizzou. Thus, reports regarding the SEC have persisted.

In the last two months, the board of regents at Texas A&M, Texas and Oklahoma have been in the spotlight for giving their presidents the power to seek a new home. Texas A&M's move to the SEC became official Monday, giving the conference 13 members as of July 2012.

In all of these talks about conference shifts the last two years, university presidents and regents have often taken center stage in the decision-making process. Texas athletic director DeLoss Dodds told the Austin American-Statesman last week that sometimes regents don't always understand all that goes into realignment and conference affiliation because they don't spend as much time on it.

"We need to keep (the decision-making) between the ADs, the presidents and the coaches," Dodds said. "... You look around nationally and see people on different boards getting involved,

and the collegiality (between schools) sometimes stops. We've got to empower the athletic people. The athletic people can do that."

Neinas said last week he planned to visit each campus president as one of his first priorities. However, he doesn't officially start with the conference until Oct. 3 and does not have a schedule for those visits, according to a Big 12 spokesman.

Neinas has been in Boulder, Colo., where he operates a consulting business that aids colleges in the hiring of coaches and athletic directors. He will be in Dallas today and Wednesday for the Big 12 athletic director meetings. He didn't have a chance to visit Texas A&M before Monday's announcement.

Meanwhile, Mizzou coach Gary Pinkel, who has dropped a few realignment bombshells in recent weeks, claimed ignorance on the subject of realignment during Monday's Big 12 conference call.

"I'm completely out of the loop," said Pinkel, who at Big 12 media days in July suggested Texas should just go independent and in recent radio interviews made it known where he thought the league's problems started. "I've been honest with my comments the last few weeks, so I'll stick with the comments I've made. The Big 12 has the potential to be a great league and hopefully things will get fixed."

Neinas said he expects Missouri to remain in the Big 12. Yet, he expressed concern about a possible defection, seemingly based on conversations with Deaton. He went so far as to state his belief that the conference could remain viable if Mizzou were to leave.

He further acknowledged the power of the Missouri curators last week by noting that the much-discussed grant of media rights was not a done deal, in part, because they haven't given their approval.

Here is a look at the seven members of the board, who could hold Mizzou's conference future in their hands if the SEC comes calling:

- **Warren Erdman** was appointed in 2007 by Gov. Matt Blunt. He attended Westminster College and is executive vice president of administration and corporate affairs for Kansas City Southern.
- **David Bradley** was appointed in 2009 by Gov. Jay Nixon. He attended Syracuse and is president of the News-Press & Gazette in St. Joseph.
- **Cupps** was appointed in 2011 by Nixon. He attended Missouri and is the city attorney for the city of Cassville and the Barry County Industrial Development Authority.
- **Don Downing** was appointed in 2009 by Nixon. He attended Missouri and is an officer and shareholder with the firm of Gray, Ritter and Graham in St. Louis.

• **Wayne Goode** was appointed in 2009 by Nixon. He attended Missouri, and after serving in the Missouri House of Representatives and Senate, he is the chairman of the Second State Capitol Commission.

• **Judith Haggard** was appointed in 2007 by Blunt. She attended Missouri and is a family nurse practitioner at the SEMO Health Network in Kennett.

• **Steward** was appointed in 2011 by Nixon. He attended Central Missouri and founded World Wide Technologies.

Pinkel stands by comments that put pressure on MU administration

By MIKE DeARMOND

Gary Pinkel passed on an opportunity Monday to add fuel to the smoldering fire of Missouri's possible exit from the Big 12, but his previous criticisms of the conference have gained traction.

Pinkel was asked on the Big 12 football coaches' teleconference how confident he was that MU chancellor Brady Deaton could, with help from other Big 12 members, implement changes that would keep Missouri from leaving the conference.

"I don't know. You'd have to ask them," Pinkel said. "I'm completely out of the loop.

"I've been honest with comments I've made the last few weeks. I still stand by and stick with the comments I made.

"The Big 12 has the potential to be a great league. Hopefully, things will be fixed so it will be."

If certain changes — equal revenue sharing for Big 12 football broadcasts and limitations on content for Texas' Longhorn Network — cannot be made to Missouri's satisfaction, then Pinkel has intimated that Mizzou should leave for the Southeastern Conference or another BCS league. That contention was reinforced Monday to The Star by sources in and out of the MU administration.

"Gary put a lot of pressure on the administration by making it plain that we can't make the same mistake over and over and over again," one source said, "like we did last year."

Pinkel passionately decried last week that:

"We have problems in our league, and we all know what most of them are. But we don't solve them."

Those comments drew no argument from Deaton and athletic director Mike Alden on Thursday evening when other Big 12 officials were contending all looked well for conference stability.

Each refused to say MU was committed to a proposal discussed by league chancellors and presidents to implement a six-year agreement for equal sharing of first- and second-tier TV revenues and to sign those rights over to the Big 12.

Schools can keep all revenue generated by their own, or third-tier, media-rights contracts. But a bigger concern is the perceived recruiting advantage that Texas could gain from the Longhorn Network showing high school football highlights.

“That third-level TV deal (the Longhorn Network),” another source told The Star on Monday, “is a deal-breaker for Gary.”

MU officials, including the curators, on Monday received copies of an Austin American-Statesman blog about the Longhorn Network moving forward with plans to carry highlights of high school games.

As much input as Pinkel will have into the question of whether Missouri stays in the Big 12 or jumps to another conference, he will not make that decision.

Nor will it be solely up to Alden, who today and Wednesday will be in Dallas attending meetings with the Big 12 athletic directors as well as separate meetings with athletic-department leaders from the major Division I football schools.

Missouri’s current and future conference affiliation is likely to come down to a majority opinion of the University of Missouri system Board of Curators. The curators could meet later this week — possibly Friday — to take the next step in that process.

The curators are being heavily lobbied by fans. Before going into closed executive session Thursday, one of the curators linked by telephone to the gathering asked whether all the curators had received as many emails as he had.

There was an awkward pause as that curator was reminded there was a full room of reporters listening in.

Interim MU legal counsel Phil Hoskins then announced that there was to be no action that day on either the MU system president’s search or upon conference realignment.

“My belief is that Missouri would like to stay in the Big 12, but I also know that this is a question that they must work through with their Board of Curators,” interim Big 12 commissioner Chuck Neinas said last weekend. “They may have a different idea.”

MU planning to offer more online degrees, courses

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri is ramping up efforts to provide more courses and degrees online — and to rebrand itself as a university with a strong online presence.

DISTANCE LEARNING

Online degrees offered by MU and schools in neighboring states	Bachelor's	Master's	Specialist	Doctorate	Certificate	Total*
Oklahoma	47	25	4	3	2	81
Missouri	5	31	2	3	16	57
Kansas State	8	21	0	1	17	47
Iowa State	1	21	1	1	19	43
Illinois	0	15	0	0	22	37
Nebraska	1	13	1	2	12	29
Oklahoma State	1	11	0	0	3	15
Kansas	1	4	0	3	6	14
Iowa	5	3	0	0	3	11

*Degrees accredited by Higher Learning Commission

A faculty committee is in the process of developing policies for how courses will be approved and delivered through Mizzou Online. Once that work is done, Jim Spain, interim vice provost for e-learning, plans to ask departments to determine what the needs are in their respective industries and to come up with courses to meet those needs online. Those are the first steps of a broader plan to offer more traditional classes and degrees through Mizzou Online.

The efforts come after administrators pulled the Center for Distance and Independent Studies and MU Direct out of MU Extension and repackaged them to become one entity. Now, Mizzou Online is the one-stop shop for students at a distance who want to take classes from MU.

Although Mizzou Online is separate from e-learning on campus that lets faculty offer hybrid online and face-to-face courses, traditional students can opt to take Mizzou Online courses from their hometowns in the summer, while studying abroad or with approval from advisers.

MU doesn't have a reputation for strong online programs, but it does offer more degrees online than peer institutions. MU has more certified programs online than any school in the Big Ten, and in the Big 12, MU offers more online degrees than all but the University of Oklahoma.

MU offers 554 online courses compared to about 875 online courses offered by Columbia College. CC is known for its online program, in part, because it was one of the first institutions to start offering them roughly a decade ago.

Most of MU's online programs are at the graduate level, and administrators are in the process of adding an online master's of business administration. MU also offers five bachelor's degrees, mostly in health-related fields.

Spain has been making presentations on campus and around town to better showcase what's already being offered. There's also a TV commercial running that features a woman balancing online coursework with a job and family — all to a 1930s-era tune about attractive college co-eds.

In an address earlier this month, CC President Gerald Brouder suggested public universities are upping their online programs as a way to generate new revenue.

But that's not the case, Spain said. "It's not a cash cow, and it's not cheap" to create, he said. The main goal is to use technology to better align with MU's mission as a land grant university to serve the entire state. "It empowers us to be more accessible than we've ever been before," Spain said.

It also is part of the UM System's focus on e-learning. The system last year helped the four campuses fund 180 new online courses, and this year is funding one or two new online degrees at each campus, said Zac March, director of distance education and e-learning for the system.

There has been some confusion about the UM System's role in e-learning, but the goal was never to operate online programs from University Hall, said Steve Graham, vice president of academic affairs.

"Always from the beginning, from my involvement and" former UM President Gary "Forsee's, too, we did not intend to offer degree programs and hire faculty and run that effort from the system," he said. "We tried to open the door to clear a path and make it better for students and for faculty providing the services. Campuses offer degrees and handle curriculum — none of that changes."

A UM System portal slated to launch later this year reflects that. The portal lets each campus have its own branded website where students can search for and enroll in online courses, even if they search for a class on a sister campus. For instance, a MU student using the site would see MU's logo and colors, even if browsing courses from UM-St. Louis. The portal also lets students who are enrolled manage their accounts, keep track of assignments and schedule activities.

Although aimed to be user-friendly, creating the portal has been a complex job months in the making. Student focus groups will vet it later this year, and March hopes to have it up and running by January.

The main goal, Graham said, is to help more Missourians get degrees. "We're advocating for online programs to make things available to people in the state who don't — because of time or distance or circumstances — have access to traditional programs."

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.

High school offerings in the pipeline

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri's College of Education plans to launch a virtual school later this year that will provide online courses aimed to supplement what students take in their traditional high schools.

Eventually, the virtual school is expected to provide online courses to all K-12 students — although that's likely years in the making.

In its infancy, the school will offer semester-based classes to help traditional students recover course credits, take advanced courses not offered in some districts or provide more options for homebound kids with special needs, said Director Monica Beglau.

It's unclear how the program will be funded. Beglau is in the process of applying for federal grants and soliciting foundational support to get the school up and running. Then, she envisions funding for operations to come from a variety of sources.

School districts that don't have the resources to offer Advanced Placement courses, for instance, might contract with the virtual school to provide them. Or, parents who want their children to take a foreign language not offered by their home districts might pay the virtual school to provide them.

The Missouri School Boards Association is in the process of surveying school districts to get a better idea of what courses they need the most. Beglau hopes to have a few of the most in-demand classes ready by January.

The virtual school is not intended to replace or compete with MU High School, which was moved under the helm of the College of Education this summer after the university repackaged two programs previously in MU Extension. The former MU Direct and Center for Distance and Independent Studies previously operated MU's online and distance programs, including MU High School.

That shift to the College of Education made sense because graduate students from the college were already designing MU High School courses and grading homework, Beglau said. Plus, it has a separate function than Mizzou Online, which is now the hub for higher education courses.

About 3,500 students take roughly 7,000 courses through MU High School, although the number changes often because students can enroll and complete the program at any time. Mostly, that

program caters to young actors or athletes who need to work at their own pace. Olympic medalists Mary Lou Retton and Lindsey Kildow Vonn have taken classes from MU High School in the past, and Kyle Massey, the Disney actor who performed on "Dancing with the Stars," graduated from MU High School last year.

In an email to the Tribune earlier this year, Massey's mom, Angel, said the program allowed him to "zoom right through" subjects he was good at and take his time in more challenging courses.

"The MU program was perfect for our shooting and travel schedule," she said. "Kyle was able to pace himself and be good at everything he was doing at the time equally. It was a great system for him."

MU's new virtual school also is separate from a state program. The Missouri Virtual Instruction Program, offered through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, provides K-12 courses online using outside vendors. In the past, the state funded that program and contracted with MU to operate it, but funding was withheld in 2009. Now, classes through MoVIP cost families an average of about \$325 a semester.

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Economist Ed Robb was state's first tax credit expert

BY VIRGINIA YOUNG • vyoung@post-dispatch.com > 573-635-6178 | Posted: Monday, September 26, 2011 1:39 pm

JEFFERSON CITY • Gathering dust on my office bookshelf is a stack of annual reports entitled the "Tax Expenditure Report," going back as far as 1991.

I thought of this today, not because those reports were the first attempt to catalogue the growing cost of Missouri's tax credits, but because they were authored primarily by Ed Robb.

Robb, 69, collapsed and died on Saturday after leaving a son's birthday celebration in downtown Columbia. A Republican, he was serving as presiding commissioner of Boone County. He also served two terms in the Missouri House, from 2005 to 2009.

His claim to fame was tax policy.

Long before many legislators understood how state tax credits worked, Robb was studying their impact as an economist at the University of Missouri-Columbia, which had a state contract to analyze tax data and produce the annual report.

"He always struck me as one who tried to get beneath the surface of information and find out what it really meant and what impact it had on the state economically as a whole," said Mike Downing, deputy director of the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

Here's an example from Robb's 1991 tax expenditure report: "The problem with creating a tax expenditure, even for what is considered a persuasive economic rationale, is that once created they tend to become permanent, even if the original economic basis is no longer applicable."

Missouri senators are finding truth in those words today as they go to the mat with the House in the special legislative session. Senators are holding out for expiration dates on all 61 tax credit programs, fighting powerful constituencies that benefit from the subsidies.

Robb retired from the State and Regional Fiscal Studies Unit at MU in 2003, but he kept studying tax policy. I wrote a story that fall about his proposal for a flat state income tax, one that he said would be so simple that taxpayers could fit their entire state return on a postcard.

Later, as a House member, Robb championed a controversial bill to eliminate state individual and corporate income taxes and replace them with a higher sales tax on a greatly broadened base.

Some supporters refer to that plan as the FairTax, using the name for a federal consumption tax proposal, while others refer to it by the name of its most visible supporter, retired investment banker Rex Sinquefeld.

The last time I interviewed Robb at length, I visited him in his Columbia home. He spent several hours in his well-appointed basement office laying out his case for how eliminating income taxes would help Missouri grow in production of goods and services.

A lot of people disagree with the FairTax. But few disagree that Ed Robb was a man of ideas and an enthusiastic teacher who loved explaining numbers to the uninitiated.

Services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at Parker Funeral Service in Columbia. Visitation will be from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the funeral home.

San Francisco Chronicle

Putting adults with autism to work

The statistics are startling.

In California alone, an estimated 84% of all regional center consumers with autism are under 22, the age when services from their local school districts end.

What will the job picture look like for this burgeoning population? According to Dr. Scott Standifer, author of Adult Autism & Employment: A guide for vocational rehabilitation professionals, the future of employment for adults with autism is more hopeful than you would think:

Since I first created the Autism Works conference in 2008, three other groups have “adopted” the same name. Who they are and what we are each doing to advance autism employment is a nice sampling of the different, vibrant approaches to this important field. (And we all get along).

The office for which I work at the University of Missouri provides training and consultation to State Vocational Rehabilitation (voc rehab) agencies in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, & Kansas. Across the US, state voc rehab agencies help people with disabilities find career-based jobs in their communities. A few years ago I became aware of a profound lack of information about autism in the voc rehab community, and about voc rehab in the autism community. I ended up writing a reference guide and starting my Autism Works National Conference.

The Autism Works National Conference is focused on two goals: 1) building better relationships between these two groups and 2) acting as a clearinghouse for all the inspiring, innovative, and energizing things that are happening around autism employment.

About 6 months after I started the conference, I got a call – from Autism Works.

This one was in San Mateo, California. It was a project of Community Gatepath, a “Community Rehabilitation Provider” (CRP). CRPs are independent businesses which voc rehab agencies hire to provide specific, hands-on training, job hunting, and job coaching services for voc rehab clients. Tracey Fecher of this Autism Works explained that the California Department of Rehabilitation had given them a grant to launch this special program tailored to serving adults with autism. In the last few years, more and more established CRPs have begun such programs. Tracey and I had a very nice chat and she ended up hiring my colleague Chris Simler to help train her staff.

Another 6 months later I found another Autism Works online – this time in Minneapolis, MN.

The mission of this non-profit group extends beyond employment to include supports for life planning and independent living. It was founded by Melissa King-Davis, who is the parent of a young adult with autism. This puts her in the vanguard of the growing parent advocate movement in autism employment. She is in great company here. Two exciting new autism employment outreach projects from corporate America were started by such parent advocates – Randy Lewis at Walgreens and Heather Davis at TIAA-CREF. In Kansas City, parent advocate Kate Duffy is running job-seeking courses for young adults with autism and has co-written a book on employment with Temple Grandin. I have heard from many others exploring interesting strategies across the country. I was delighted to have Heather Davis, Kate Duffy, and Melissa King-Davis at our Autism Works conference last March.

A few months after I found the second, I found a THIRD one – Autism Works UK.

This group is part of a business movement spearheaded in the U.S. by Aspiritech in Chicago. These businesses hire adults with Asperger's to do software testing. It turns out that when creative, innovative software programmers get done creating the Next Big Thing, they usually don't feel like going through the drudgery of checking every function, exploring every input possibility, to check for mistakes. So they hire software testers. For us neurotypicals, software testing is boring – endless lists, documentation, repetition, etc. But for Aspies, routinized work like this is often appealing and easy. Aspiritech and Autism UK don't market their services saying "Please help these poor young people." They say "Our unique workers do a better job than anyone else". WOW!

Peter MacDonald is the director of Autism Works UK. He and the folks from Aspiritech in Chicago, Specialisterne in Denmark, and Passwerk in Belgium are the leaders of this autism-equals-quality-testing model. They have all agreed to be on a panel at our conference next March.

So even though each of our projects picked the same name, we are doing different and complementary things. And discovering each one has taught me interesting new things about what is possible in building better career options for autism.

Lately I've had the feeling that somewhere, someone else is getting ready to "steal" the Autism Works name again and use it for some new kind of autism employment project.

I can hardly wait.

Dr. Scott Standifer is an adjunct assistant professor for the Disability Policy & Studies office (DPS) at the University of Missouri. He is the author of Adult Autism & Employment: A guide for vocational rehabilitation professionals, and the organizer of the Autism Works National Conference, March 6 & 7, 2012 in St. Louis, MO. He can be reached at standifers@missouri.edu.



Decadal Plan for Plant Science Begins to Take Shape

by Elizabeth Pennisi on 26 September 2011, 11:48 AM | [1 Comments](#)

U.S. plant scientists have taken the first steps toward a 10-year plan to help improve global food supplies using sustainable practices and to make progress in understanding how plants work.

There is both a great need and great potential right now, says Gary Stacey, a plant scientist at the University of Missouri, Columbia, who chaired a closed meeting last week in Bethesda, Maryland, that was organized by the American Society of Plant Biologists. The meeting attracted 75 plant scientists from institutions around the country, as well as additional representatives from government, industry, and other professional societies.

Food prices and the demand for food are rising, says Stacey, climate change is affecting natural habitats as well as cropland, and there're increasing efforts to use plants for energy. But plant scientists have largely been on the sidelines in tackling these escalating problems. "They are not recognized for their potential [contributions], maybe not even within the plant community and certainly not outside of it," says Keith Yamamoto, a molecular biologist at University of California, San Francisco. In 2009, he led a panel from the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council whose report emphasized the potential role of plant science in meeting societal needs.

Workshop participants flagged food security and a need for a second, greener Green Revolution as critical issues. Progress will require new model systems, intensively studied species that provide insights useful both in basic and applied research. There should be more emphasis on describing genetic diversity, wherein genes for useful traits are tracked down in a wide range of species for potential transfer into economically useful plants. Toward that end, some participants called for expansion of transgenic technologies, such that value-added genes could be joined to a broad range of fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

Other scientists stressed that plants, whose environments can be tightly controlled because they don't move, might be better models than animals for understanding the relationship between genotype, phenotype and environment. "One of the major goals is to model and infer how plants really work, based on genomic information, in different environments," says Jim Carrington,

president of the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, Missouri. Major questions on the table include how genes dictate an individual's range of traits and how the environment affects the manifestation of those traits. New sensing technologies of scales from cells to ecosystems will be needed to explore these questions, the participants pointed out.

Learning how plants tolerate drought, heat, and flooding is useful not just for agriculture but also for predicting how wild species might cope with climate change, says Edward Buckler, a geneticist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Ithaca, New York. He would like to see the creation of long-term monitoring sites for agricultural environments along the lines of what the National Ecological Observatory Network, a project funded by the National Science Foundation, is hoping to do for natural habitats.

Cheaper, faster genome sequencing is already revolutionizing all aspects of plant science, including the characterization of genetic diversity. Many more plant genomes should and will be sequenced, says Stacey. But sequencing will also be a boon for describing the microbiomes of plants to understand the full impact of the microbial world on plant function, particularly those that interact with roots.

Yamamoto would like to see the field move beyond plant breeding as the chief means of generating new varieties because current methods can take too long. Instead, he envisions using systems biology and synthetic biology to create designer plants that can withstand, say, extreme drought or improve a food's nutrition quality. But he's not sure that ambitious goal will make the report's final cut. "I didn't hear anything that rises to the level of a 10-year challenge," he said. "It's a steep hill to climb to get people to think 10 years [ahead] and really be bold about things, especially when they feel so uneasy about what's gong to happen tomorrow."

Yamamoto 's also not sure that a 10-year plan will lead to new funding, given the current tight budget situation. An 8-year-old estimate pegs annual federal funding for competitive plant science research at \$350 million, and participants said that tripling that amount, to \$1 billion, would not be unreasonable. "We can easily spend that on one telescope, so isn't feeding the world worth as much?" asks Tom Brutnell, a plant biologist at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research in Ithaca, New York.

Organizers hope to circulate a draft report of the meeting for outside comments, with the ultimate goal of issuing a final report by March 2012 with the field's priorities. "If we can show that we made an effort to prioritize things," Stacey explains, "I would hope that would have more influence that just [being seen] as a clamor for funding."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU student starts Autism Speaks group on campus

MU Mention on Pg. 2

By Kevin Dubouis

September 26, 2011 | 12:13 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Alyssa Weeks, 18, has grown up with a little brother who doesn't speak.

That boy, Brennen Bailey Jr., was originally misdiagnosed with a degenerative brain disease. Doctors said he would die before he was 12. His parents sought other opinions and were soon presented with a diagnosis of autism.

Today, Bailey is almost 14.

Weeks has matter-of-factly accepted that her brother is different. It took some time, but she has learned how to behave with him.

"When you first meet Brennen, if you've got watches or bracelets or anything, he automatically wants to play with them," Weeks said. "He's got his own little game. He takes it off, he puts it on himself and then, takes it off and puts it back on you, and he just goes back and forth."

Ray Bailey has been amazed by the evolution of his son.

"Even with all of his challenges, he is the most caring young man one could hope to meet," Bailey said via email. "His unique perspective is unfettered by the typical challenges of a 13-year-old. He might not be able to talk, but through his actions and thought, he shows us a glimpse into a wider world of which we only scratch the surface."

Since Brennen's diagnosis, the entire family has become involved in the charity Autism Speaks in St. Louis.

Autism Speaks' volunteers raise money that benefits other organizations that do medical and diagnostic assessments as well as research, such as the Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders at MU.

Last year, the family, who live in South County St. Louis, ran its own events that included two Warmachine tournaments, a silent auction, a bake sale and a garage sale. "We raised over \$2,200 for the cause," Bailey said.

But now that Weeks is a freshman at MU, she wants to start a chapter of Autism Speaks U, an awareness, advocacy and fundraising organization for students who want to hold autism-related events.

According to Ashley Todd, the vice chair of administration of the Organization Resource Group, MU doesn't have any groups oriented around autism.

Weeks is more than motivated.

"I would start an organization that did the same work that my family and I did in St. Louis," she said.

Weeks has created a Facebook event page, Autism Speaks at Mizzou, to get the word out about what she's doing. She is waiting for official MU recognition.

"Some examples of events I want to do include a bake sale and a Blue Day," she said. "I would like to get more ideas from other volunteers who are passionate about this too."

The first meeting of Autism Speaks will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Gumby's, 1201 E. Broadway.

THE MANEATER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF MU SINCE 1953

Multicultural Issues Committee, Office of Student Conduct work toward non-discrimination policy for UM System

The Office of Student Conduct and MSA hope to add this non-discrimination policy to MU's M-book.

By Molly Duffy Published Sept. 27, 2011

In response to hate crimes that occurred at MU in recent years, Missouri Students Association's Multicultural Issues Committee and the Office of Student Conduct are working to add a clause to the student conduct code that would target discrimination.

"The code of conduct is system-wide, and all four campuses have to be on the same page, so there's a lengthy process that we must go through," said Donell Young, senior coordinator of the Office of Student Conduct.

Young said he has been working with his counterparts at other UM System campuses, and they will be putting the finishing touches on the new clause soon. Their changes have not yet been approved.

"Our next step is we want our university general council to make sure (the policy) complies with law, and they need to approve it as well," Young said. "We have a meeting coming up within the next couple weeks."

MSA President Eric Woods said because the conduct code applies to all MU schools, changing it is a daunting task.

"The problem with the conduct code is that to revise it, it has to be approved on a system level, so the board of curators has to approve it, which is why it's such a catastrophe to get anything done," he said.

Young said he hopes the addition will be informative for students.

"We want transparency because we hope that (when) students are aware of the rules and understand what they can get in trouble for, that will prevent students from breaking the rules," he said.

The code of conduct does not address discrimination.

The M-book, which is specific to MU, does include a notice of non-discrimination, but MCI Chairwoman Lakeisha Williams said she believes it needs improving.

“It doesn’t present (specific) information,” she said.

Young and Williams are working on fixing that as well.

“As of right now, it doesn’t say anything about discrimination due to sexual orientation or if you’re transgender or disabled in any way,” Williams said. “The M-book hasn’t been revised since 1989, so it’s really just the act of updating things to reflect the way society is now.”

Young said revising the M-book will be much easier than revising the conduct code.

“I don’t think there will be roadblocks,” he said. “It’s just an initial paragraph, honestly, is what I want to add. It’s nothing earth-shattering or anything of that nature.”

Young said the racist graffiti message at Hatch Hall and the cotton ball incident outside of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center in 2010 jumpstarted the policy change.

“The students have been very adamant about the incidences that have (happened) in the past few years,” he said.

Woods said though he does not believe discrimination is a problem on campus, the policy changes are very important in that they demonstrate that the university does not tolerate discrimination.

“I don’t see it as a means to address a current problem, more as a means to deal with problems that may arise in the future,” he said.

THE MANEATER

THE STUDENT VOICE OF MU SINCE 1955

Editorial: Missing anti-discrimination policy is embarrassing

Update the M-book already.

Published Sept. 27, 2011

There is no anti-discrimination clause in the UM system-wide code of conduct.

The MU-Columbia exclusive M-book does address discrimination, but it hasn't been revised since 1989 — wait, what? Yes, that's right. We haven't updated our rule book or non-discrimination policy in 22 years. Maybe no huge movements have happened in the last 20 years, but as a population, our views on discrimination and inclusion have changed.

As the flagship university of Missouri, MU has an obligation to the state and to its student and to its staff to be more progressive.

The lack of a statement is embarrassing. Rather than being progressive, we're moving through an unfortunate time warp to catch up with modern-day sensibility.

Part of what's behind the time is the exclusions of certain aspects of discrimination, such as sexual orientation or identifying as transgender or disabled in any way. As the issue of discrimination has expanded beyond race, MU has not followed policies.

Updating the M-book to cover discrimination of any kind against the rest of these groups may be what seems easier as Donell Young, senior coordinator of the Office of Student Conduct, said, but the leading groups and offices of our campus should be pushing for all governing documents of the UM System to be up-to-date when it comes to policy changes such as these.

These policies that are still missing from our rules and regulations are concepts that should be implied and go right along with stealing and cheating. It's alarming and disappointing for people who call themselves students of this university to have to identify with others who will repeatedly go unpunished by the university for their hate crimes. Being held accountable by the police department is a start, but no one wants to be that person's lab partner or sit next to them in lecture.

Being clear with these policies is another way to be sure we are accomplishing an anti-discrimination clause. There are obviously different opinions of what "discrimination" is if even our own student body president doesn't believe we have an issue on this campus. Missouri

Students Association President Eric Woods said this is not a means to address a current problem, but to deal with future problems.

Unfortunately, there are more actions that can be considered discrimination aside from full-fledged hate crimes, especially in the eyes of the victim. Just because obscenities aren't spray painted on the sides of residence halls every day doesn't mean there aren't hurtful things said and done to these groups that often.

This issue of discrimination is nothing new, and it seems as though there is still no clear understanding of what is unacceptable on this campus. These groups have just as much of a right on this campus as the others and also deserve to be treated fairly, which this policy would only support.