

Regional differences complicate the question of Mizzou's conference future

By KENT BABB and RUSTIN DODD

CAPE GIRARDEAU, Mo. | Three men crouch along the waterfront, two of them balancing a level while another chips away old concrete and gravel from the riverwalk stairs. Their supervisor is standing nearby.

These are some of the men building Missouri, and for the better part of the last year, they've worked on a project to upgrade the floodwall that protects Cape Girardeau from the Mississippi River, one of the nation's great transport lanes and crossroads. **On this day, the men chatter about college sports and, as the nation waits for the University of Missouri to choose a conference — staying in the Big 12 or jumping to the Southeastern Conference or even the Big Ten — where their home state fits best.**

"Each section of Missouri is its own little state," says Stacy Langston, 34, the supervisor and a native Missourian. "Southeast Missouri is its complete own state. It's just completely different anywhere you go."

Across the river is Illinois, perhaps the center of the Midwest, and downriver a few dozen miles are the borders of Kentucky, Tennessee and Arkansas — the threshold to the South. To these workers' backs, past the state's western border, are the flatlands and cattle ranches of the Great Plains and the West.

Cape Girardeau is a junction city in a junction state, Missouri fitting partially in each of these regions but perfectly in none. There are contrasting personalities, cultures and ways of life in the state's far reaches. Neighbors here — from the cotton fields of the Bootheel and corn farms in the state's north to the rolling Ozark Mountains and the big cities on Missouri's eastern and western borders — sometimes feel more like strangers.

"That's one of the fun things," Gov. Jay Nixon says, "about governing in the state of Missouri: You have to weave together a very complicated fabric in order to move forward."

When the university decides on a conference, many residents are certain to feel alienated. It won't be the first time this state has been an awkward fit. A century and a half ago, Missouri was a border state in the Civil War, when neighbors battled because the state fit both Union and Confederate philosophies.

“Coming from southern Missouri, it’s incredibly different from northern Missouri,” says Cabool, Mo., native Tymon Bay, 24, a law student at the University of Missouri and the son of a history teacher. “We like things the way we like it; they like it the way they like it. ... We don’t want to be told what to do.”

For now, the university is taking its time deciding which conference feels most like home — and which might offer the best deal. There are, of course, money and politics in play. But it has at least given the state’s residents something to talk about, and reason to debate where Missouri belongs.

As a freight barge glides north on the Mississippi, these four workers talk about this state’s, and therefore their own, identity. Langston, the supervisor, hopes MU jumps to the SEC; his colleague Jason Gobin, 32, would prefer the Tigers remain loyal to the Big 12.

This is sometimes what it’s like to be a Missourian.

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KENNETT, Mo. | Jason Chandler stands in the early afternoon sun, cotton lint clinging to his St. Louis Cardinals hat as he watches two industrial cotton pickers cut paths in a 120-acre field. It’s harvest time in the western corner of Missouri’s Bootheel, where the tea is sweet, the barbecued pork is topped with coleslaw, and the residents speak with a drawl that seems borrowed from the Mississippi Delta.

“We’ve got our own language around here,” says Chandler, 31.

In the southernmost tip of the state, it’s possible to grow cotton, a crop that’s foreign to most of Missouri. Chandler says he hopes to harvest about 6,000 bales this year; each bale can hold more than two tons of unginmed cotton. He said Missouri residents north of here can say what they want about the state being Midwestern or part of the Plains.

This, he says, is the South. There’s a sense of community in Kennett, population 12,000, that places outside the region seem to lack.

“It seems like when you get around there to St. Louis,” he says, “it just changes some.”

A few miles from here, the lunch crowd gathers at Kennett Country Club. The table in the rear corner is packed every Tuesday through Friday. On most afternoons, the conversation turns to sports, and this day is no different. Digging into the Tuesday special, hamburger steak and grilled onions, the friends needle each other about the Cardinals, who reached the playoffs only after a late-season turnaround.

“Well,” says Terry Whitlock, who runs a roofing outfit, “I know somebody who just gave up this year.”

“You’re damn right I did,” lawyer Mark Pelts says. “I was ready to have the funeral.”

They laugh together for a long time.

“We’ll argue about anything,” Pelts says.

One thing here that’s not up for debate is the conference that suits MU best. Many Bootheel residents identify with the SEC; after all, the universities of Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama are closer to Kennett than Mizzou, whose campus is 320 miles from here.

Of the seven voting members of the Missouri Board of Curators who will eventually vote on a conference destination, two — Judith Haggard and Don Downing — are Kennett natives. The men here hope their influence carries and the board votes to send MU to the SEC.

“We’re a long way from Columbia,” says Pelts, who earned an undergraduate degree from MU.

Pelts boasts that Kennett lies south of the Mason-Dixon Line. This is a part of Missouri that, at least based on the representation at this table, remains uncomfortable with the idea of an outside aggressor deciding its destiny.

“If you’re going to let Oklahoma and Texas control you,” says Brandon Rouse, an optometrist, “and if they end up jumping ship in a couple years, then what have you done?”

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CROSS TIMBERS, Mo. | Brent Lower leans over his next patient as the sound of rattling metal and nervous moaning echoes through the dusty barn.

Lower is talking casually, a little country chatter flying as he slides a long plastic glove onto his left arm. In a second, he will plunge his hand into the hindquarters of a 2,000-pound Simmental bull. Drool will leak from the beast’s mouth.

“Ah, you big wuss,” says Lower, a large-animal veterinarian from Humansville.

It’s semen-testing day at the Lucas Cattle Co., a ranching operation in the idyllic hills of southwest Missouri. It’s not quite the plains, but the barbed wire, hay bales and grazing cattle paint a picture of frontier life — more like Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, Big 12 states.

“If you don’t like the people you’re around, it’s a long day,” says Cleo Fields, a herdsman from Cross Timbers.

This is Hickory County, Field says, population 8,000, where young men like Jeff Reed, 31, and Brandon Atkins, 33, wake up early, pull on a dark blue pair of Wranglers and start an 80-hour work week.

As the morning turns into afternoon, the conversation drifts from sports to kids ... and back to sports.

Lower graduated from Mizzou in the early 1990s, and this talk about the SEC is enough for him to pause for a moment.

“It ain’t a done deal yet,” he says, slowly removing the plastic sleeve from his arm.

The SEC is a whole different animal, Lower adds, and it’s not entirely clear if he’s still talking about football.

This is about history, he says. He never missed a game when he was in school. The Mizzou fight song is still designated as his ring tone; his daughter Kaylee used to use it as her lullaby, he says.

When Mizzou lost at Oklahoma last month, it stung Lower. He doesn’t care much for KU either.

Life would be different in towns like Cross Timbers and Humansville if Mizzou couldn’t maintain rivalries with their neighbors to the west: states and people that share a way of life. Lower might need new barbs if the Tigers start playing Florida instead of Texas.

“These bulls are the equivalent of the whole offensive line at one Big 12 school,” Lower says. “By golly, if we could draft these bulls to go to Columbia, we’d have everything set.”

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MARYVILLE, Mo. | If stability is what Missouri is looking for in a conference, it doesn’t have to look far to see what it looks like.

Things in Nodaway County have been done a particular way for generations. The calendar revolves around corn, football and family — sometimes in that order.

At Maryville High School on Friday nights, parents watch their sons, then drive their cars straight toward the Northwest Missouri State campus to claim a coveted parking spot for the Saturday morning tailgate party that will begin just hours later. Townspeople still meet at the grocery store early mornings to drink coffee and talk football.

“This is a football town,” says Paul Snow, the athletic director at Maryville High.

Over 17 years at Northwest Missouri State, Mel Tjeerdsma built a championship program with tough-minded boys who grew up nearby in football-loving communities where farming provided a backdrop for life.

One of them was Adam Dorrel, who grew up in Nodaway County, played football for Maryville High and later, Tjeerdsma. Now he’s the coach, taking over after Scott Bostwick, Tjeerdsma’s replacement, died in June.

Sitting in his office, Dorrel points to the back wall, black-and-white photos decorating the canvas. There are stories in those photos, he says. One shows Northwest’s original football team from 1908.

The fullback is Dorrel's great-grandfather.

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ST. LOUIS | Two men walk quickly from a side door at Busch Stadium, hurrying out after another busy day. Tyrone Armstrong, 32, and Clarence Chaney, 31, are cooks here, and even on a day with no game, there's plenty to do.

The hum of lawn mowers fills the air. The fountains at Kiener Plaza are dyed Cardinal red, and banners have been hung from doorways and poles. Workers scurry on a cloudless day to prepare the stadium for the Cardinals' next game in the National League playoffs, which isn't for another two days. The buzz, though, arrived early.

"The Cardinals in St. Louis," Chaney says as he passes, "it just overshadows everything."

It would seem there's too much going on among the city's three professional sports franchises to spend much time wondering where Mizzou belongs. But some have an opinion.

During the midafternoon, a family walks around Busch Stadium's perimeter, stopping to inspect statues of former players. Andy Toennies, 45, has been following the realignment saga, but the only thing that makes sense to him is for MU to ditch the Big 12 and do what many wanted to happen a year ago: join the Big Ten. This might be the Gateway to the West, but in this banking capital and home to high-dollar universities, there aren't many reminders of frontier life.

"Texas and Oklahoma," Toennies says, heading toward a giant statue of Stan Musial, "they're not really part of our fabric."

St. Louis was, for years, home to its own Border Showdown football game against Illinois. Toennies says interest peaked then, but the game at the Edward Jones Dome was discontinued after last year. In the time since, college sports have become mostly an afterthought. He says he hears how it is on the opposite side of the state. But, he says, it's just different here.

"People talk about it," says Kevin Liese, 41, a bartender at Jack Patrick's, "but it's not a giant deal."

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KANSAS CITY | They still come to the red steakhouse on Genessee Street, hauling the decades-old memories with them.

Some tell of spending a night at the Golden Ox after selling cattle for hours with their fathers. Some tell of days spent around basketball and bitter rivals.

"I wish I had all the stories written somewhere," says Bill Teel, a co-owner of the restaurant, which sits connected to the old Kansas City Livestock Exchange Building in the heart of the West Bottoms.

After 62 years, the Golden Ox is still here in a neighborhood of change. The bottoms were once home to the Kansas City stockyards, millions of cattle herded through each year. They shut down in 1991.

This place was also home to the Big Eight, then Big 12 men's basketball tournament at Kemper Arena, where Missouri and Kansas would do battle just a block from the state line. The tournament is now played up the hill in the Sprint Center. But if Missouri moves to the SEC, it could leave Kansas City for good.

The threat of Mizzou's departure is so potentially damaging to Kansas City that the mayor took time to send MU Chancellor Brady Deaton a personal plea for the Tigers to stay. The tournament is worth an estimated \$14 million to the local economy.

"We believe this region," Sly James wrote, "collectively values University of Missouri athletics — has, does and will — to a degree that won't be replicated elsewhere."

Basketball left the bottoms in 2005, but the conversation at the bar inside the Golden Ox drifts from the economy to college sports on a recent late afternoon. The bartender moves to his right, revealing the image of five small stickers on an aging cash register: two for Mizzou, two for KU and one in support of sheet metal workers.

Teel believes that the Golden Ox can endure, a symbol of Kansas City's heritage in a time when money and progress can uproot institutions.

"It's good that things change," Teel says. "And it's good that there are new things. But it's also good that you have tradition."

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COLUMBIA | Students walk from here to there during lunchtime at the Francis Quadrangle. These are the ones being pulled in all directions by what Missouri is and what it should be.

Not for the first time, this state is involved in a tug-of-war. Students from Missouri's far reaches have grown up in different ways, in different cultures, with different belief systems about what's important. Now they have converged at the state's center, on this campus, with corresponding opinions on the direction that best fits MU.

"We're so deeply rooted in the Big 12, just like history-wise," says Turner Davis, 21, a Lee's Summit native, "and it would just feel like we're betraying our roots."

"I would rather them go to the Big Ten than anything," says Caleb Hartzell, 19, who's from St. Louis.

"There's somebody, some third person saying: 'We're going to tell you guys how to do it,' which is essentially what Texas is," says Bay, the MU law student from southern Missouri. "... The smart thing, I think, right now is definitely to be considering trying to get into the SEC."

They debate MU's direction, the same as they do in their hometowns, at local eateries and offices and classrooms. What's next for MU? It might not be a perfect fit anywhere, but which conference — and region of the country — seems the most natural?

"Mr. Mizzou" sits in his office late in the afternoon, shaking his head at the possibility of another period of uncertainty for his home state. John Kadlec is 82 now, and he has traveled all over Missouri — as an athlete, a broadcaster and now an ambassador for the university. He doesn't see the point of MU leaving the Big 12.

While the state's residents wait for Deaton and the Board of Curators to make a decision, some have begun to lobby school officials to go their way. Kadlec spends some of his hours now trying to talk boosters out of pulling their donations if MU leaves — or doesn't. He says a significant donor of nearly 30 years, a St. Louis resident, called him recently and said that, if the school joins the SEC, he would no longer give.

"It's all about money," Kadlec says, trailing off.

A moment later, he begins telling a story.

"Maybe I'm a traditionalist. Probably I am," Kadlec says. "I like tradition."

The story is about a friend of Kadlec's who lived in Columbia for about 15 years, and through many of those years, he spoke frequently about moving back to Springfield. Sure enough, the man moved there and found that his friendships from 15 years earlier had faded; the image of change was far better than its actuality. Before long, the man moved back to Columbia to resume a life he hadn't appreciated, a kind of comfort he hadn't noticed.

"You go someplace," Kadlec says, shifting the conversation back to MU's decision, "and you realize maybe that's not what you should've done."

The sun is beginning to set in Columbia on the Wednesday of homecoming week. Perhaps this week more than any other, Missouri's diverse representation will visit, and many of them will share opinions on where their school belongs. Luke Arnzen, a 25-year-old manager at Shakespeare's Pizza, hears some of the chatter.

"I just want Mizzou," says Arnzen, who's from Cape Girardeau, "to find a home."



The cost of walking away? It's negotiable

Legal experts say exit fees wouldn't be severe for MU.

By David Briggs

Friday, October 14, 2011

Baylor's threat to sue the Southeastern Conference last month after Texas A&M's exit nudged the Big 12 to the edge of extinction indicated Missouri could face a bitter legal fight if it chooses to switch leagues.

MU officials have privately expressed concerns over how much it would owe the Big 12 in exit fees. A 45-page realignment report obtained by The Associated Press states the school estimates a penalty of up to \$25.9 million if it joins the SEC within the next year.

In reality, sports law experts said Missouri's financial and legal barriers are overstated.

The letter of the law is deceptive. Per Big 12 bylaws, schools must give two year's notice to leave the conference. If Missouri alerts the Big 12 between six months and one year before leaving, 90 percent of its conference television revenue over a two-year period would be withheld. MU expects to earn about \$13 million this year, which would mean a projected \$23.4 million penalty.

But one former sports agent compared the conference contract to the astronomical room prices posted on the inside of hotel doors.

"No one ever pays that amount," said Robert Boland, who teaches sports business at New York University.

The Big 12 established a precedent last summer that could hurt the league in negotiations with Missouri and Texas A&M. Nebraska and Colorado paid only \$9.25 million and \$6.86 million, less than half of the liquidated damages they owed under contract.

Experts say the league likely would demand a slightly higher settlement from Missouri and Texas A&M than it extracted from Nebraska and Colorado because of greater damages associated with the latest defections.

The negotiated penalty probably would drop further if Missouri did not join the SEC until 2013. Big 12 Interim Commissioner Chuck Neinas said he expects MU to be in the Big 12 next season, and Texas A&M President Bowen Loftin told the Austin American-Statesman today that he doesn't "think it's likely to see another team join SEC and move by July 2012." The SEC said it is prepared to play next season as a 13-team league.

Bob Lattinville, a St. Louis attorney who represents colleges and coaches in NCAA and contract matters, said it is in the best interest of the Big 12 to reach a deal with a departing school quickly rather than try to enforce the contract in court.

"If you brought this to trial, there's a strong chance that those obligations would have to be paid," said Lattinville, the chairman of Stinson, Morrison and Hecker's Sports Law Practice Group. "However, time works against the conference. ... You may recognize, 'Are we better off instead of getting \$23 million' " in two years, " 'we take \$8 million now and use that as a way to lure in schools or bolster the stability of my membership?' "

Michael McCann, director of the Sports Law Institute at the University of Vermont, also expects the Big 12 to shy from protracted litigation.

"For a conference that wants to remain competitive, having a litigation over its membership could destabilize the conference and make it less attractive to other schools that might otherwise be interested in joining," he said.

The legal teams at Missouri and the Big 12 instead would fight behind closed doors.

Sports lawyers said the Big 12's strongest argument for exacting significantly higher exit fees from Missouri than it did Nebraska and Colorado is the condition of the league. While there was a semblance of solidarity among the 10 remaining members last summer, further losses of Missouri — the flagship school in a state of 6 million — and Texas A&M could mete out a greater toll.

The latest exodus would hurt the reputation of the league and potentially diminish the value of future and, in theory, current television deals. The Big 12's new 13-year, \$1.1 billion deal with Fox contains a standard composition clause that allows the network to renegotiate the contract if the league undergoes a major change, though multiple sports lawyers said such an outcome was unlikely. The Big 12 added Texas Christian University last week and is expected to add another school if Missouri leaves.

"The real question is, 'What's the state of the conference as we move forward?' " Boland said. "That would affect the liquidated damages."

Missouri's efforts to reduce the revenue withheld, meanwhile, could center on the precedent of the sums paid by Nebraska and Colorado and the instability of the Big 12 when it began to consider leaving.

Last summer, Nebraska Chancellor Harvey Perlman argued that his school should not be required to pay anything because of the shroud of uncertainty that hung over the league when the Cornhuskers bolted for the Big Ten.

“We had a very significant legal argument that would have prevented them from imposing any penalty,” Perlman told reporters, citing the uncertainty of litigation for settling with the Big 12 out of court. “I’m disappointed, as an academic, that my curiosity about the legal claims won’t be resolved.”

Missouri, too, faced the potential dissolution of the conference last month when Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Texas and Texas Tech appeared on the verge of joining the Pac-12. A damages claim by the Big 12 against MU may be undercut by several factors: the wandering eyes of current conference members, Neinas’ recent assertion that the Big 12 is “viable” without Missouri and the poaching of TCU, which was headed to the Big East.

“That’s what lawyers call unclean hands,” Lattinville said.

If history is an indication, there is little moral high ground in the realignment game.

In 2005, when the Atlantic Coast Conference appeared set to pluck Boston College, Miami and Syracuse from the Big East, the raided league fired back in court. Virginia Tech joined the Big East’s remaining football schools in a lawsuit that charged the ACC with conspiring to sabotage its league.

At the same time, Virginia Tech was lobbying to join the ACC. In a last-minute reversal, the ACC replaced Syracuse with Tech in its expansion vote.

“Within a matter of months,” said Warren Zola, a business professor at Boston College, “Virginia Tech was suing itself.”

Mizzou fans come home to SEC chatter

By BLAIR KERKHOFF

COLUMBIA | Among the revelations of Missouri's 52-17 blowout of Iowa State on a sun-splashed day:

- When the ball finds the hands of running back Henry Josey and tight end Michael Egnew the offense hums and the Tigers can overcome the sloppiness of three turnovers.
- Kicker Grant Ressel's leg swing still needs tuning.
- Nobody does homecoming like Mizzou, which celebrated this 100th occasion as tens of thousands lined the parade route downtown in the morning and a sellout crowd of 71,004 packed Memorial Stadium.

But we knew, or at least strongly suspected, all of that.

The discovery quest on Saturday targeted the Southeastern Conference. **It's been nearly a month since The Star's Mike DeArmond first reported an informal offer for Mizzou to join the football-crazed league, and Saturday's visit by the Cyclones was the Tigers' first home game since then.**

Fans came together and talked it out, and, as was expected when surveying Mizzou faithful, responses ran the gamut.

"I don't want to us go," said Russell Stokes of Cherokee Village, Ark. "I think a lot of fans are split on this."

But across the parking lot is ebullient Annie Best of Leawood, who wants the SEC.

"Just don't put us in the East," she said. "We shouldn't have to go to Florida or Georgia."

Uh, about that. Alabama has spoken, and it sounds a lot like Texas. More on that in a moment.

So it went, from tailgate to tailgate, Big 12 here, SEC there in the most unscientific canvassing.

Older fans leaned Big 12, younger trended SEC.

No “SEC-ede” T-shirts that have been popular at Texas A&M were spotted. No “SEC” chanting. I did see a guy wearing an Alabama shirt with a Cardinals hat, but Josh “you don’t need to know last name” from St. Louis said he wasn’t an MU fan and huffed that he had no opinion on the Tigers’ future.

Nothing definitive was revealed from this tailgate hop, nothing as SEC one-sided as the website and social media surveys. But no matter the preference, most fans expressed a sense of inevitability, perhaps because the speculation continues to move steadily toward a breakaway.

The latest development: that division thing. Alabama reportedly would support Missouri’s inclusion in the SEC, but only in the East, because that keeps Auburn and the Tide together in the West. This way, the Tide maintains an annual cross-division game with Tennessee and prevents Auburn from possible recruiting advantages in Florida and Georgia by East Division association.

Silly, it seems. After all, Missouri’s possible move to the SEC is partly based on freeing itself from Texas’ influence. But, now Alabama could be pulling its own power play.

As Birmingham News columnist Jon Solomon put it in a Saturday story, “Memo to Missouri: Get used to this type of pettiness in the SEC, where even the tiniest of potential football recruiting advantages becomes dissected.”

Hey, the SEC doesn’t corner the market on recruiting advantage pettiness. How many times did Gary Pinkel have to blast the conference publicly to get action on high school content on The Longhorn Network?

From a geographic perspective, residence in the SEC East or West doesn’t make much difference. The first- and fourth-closest campuses to Missouri — Arkansas and Mississippi — are in the West. The second and third — Vanderbilt and Kentucky — are in the East. Beyond Fayetteville, Ark., there are no day trips for fans, or easy trips for teams.

If Missouri is not going to have juice in either conference, might as well go with the one they trust will be there for generations.

Passion, tradition and ritual defined the Southeastern Conference before football excellence. Natives say it grabs you and never lets you go. It’s fine dining under a tent in The Grove at Mississippi, the Vol Navy at Tennessee, Georgia’s hedges, Toomer’s Drug Store at Auburn, calling the hogs at Arkansas, cowbells at Mississippi State.

Midnight Yell Practice at Texas A&M fits the bill. How about Missouri?

The tailgaters were asked. The Columns, sure, the traditional symbol. The rock M in the end zone berm, whitewashed every year, is unique. The “M-I-Z, Z-O-U” chant, and Betty Stokes, the wife of Russell, has her own contribution.

Thirty-four stuffed Tigers on display on the Stokes' truck. They've come from all over, one from Israel, one from Sweden. All Tigers.

They'll always be Tigers, she said, but stronger fans if Mizzou stays put.

Report says Alabama would support MU to SEC, but in the East

By Mike DeArmond - Posted on 15 October 2011

If you've been following The Star's coverage of the courtship between Missouri and the Southeastern Conference, there is nothing new in this Jon Solomon column out of the Birmingham News.

But the fact that Solomon is now reporting Alabama is willing to support Missouri's inclusion - as long as Mizzou joins the SEC East rather than the West with Auburn staying in the West - should tell even the most skeptical something.

Solomon and I have talked off and on through this process and he's not been on the MU bandwagon for SEC membership. But Solomon is a reporter/columnist and a respected one. And he doesn't pretend that he will have a vote here, any more than I will.

Anyway, here is a link to his column. It is an insightful read:

[http://www.al.com/sports/index.ssf/2011/10/alabama_would_support_adding ...](http://www.al.com/sports/index.ssf/2011/10/alabama_would_support_adding...)



Grant will fund new models for census analysis

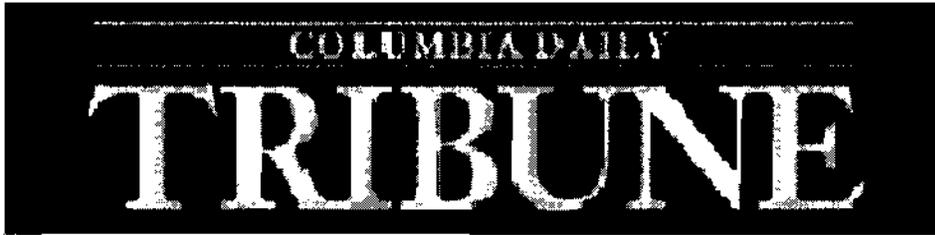
Posted: Oct 17, 2011 5:31 AM CDT Updated: Oct 17, 2011 5:43 AM CDT

COLUMBIA, MO (AP) - **The University of Missouri has received a \$2.85 million grant to help the U.S. Census Bureau better analyze data from its annual American Community Survey.**

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that the grant is the largest ever received by the university's Department of Statistics.

Researchers will use the funds to develop new models for analyzing the surveys, which attempt to collect information about age, race, education and other details of a community's population. The annual survey is separate from the full census, which is conducted every 10 years, and provides an updated snapshot of a community.

The Census Bureau says up-to-date demographic information is important when state and federal agencies distribute funds to cities and towns.



MU gets money to help better census data analysis

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri's statistics department has received a \$2.85 million grant to develop new models to analyze data that will help the U.S. Census Bureau better track populations.

The bureau is now using an annual survey, the American Community Survey, in addition to its constitutionally mandated decennial census. The surveys attempt to collect information such as age, race, gender, income and education within a community.

Not as many people fill out the surveys as those who complete the long-form census reports, though, so the margin of error is greater, said Chris Wikle, professor of statistics.

The team envisions using data from larger regional areas to help the bureau keep up with what's happening in smaller communities where fewer people are completing surveys. For instance, looking at demographic changes in Jefferson City, Columbia and St. Louis might help statisticians understand what's also going on in Mexico and other smaller neighboring towns, said Scott Holan, an associate professor of statistics.

Updated census information can affect the way more than \$400 billion in federal and state funds are distributed annually, the bureau says on its website. That's because agencies look at demographics when doling out money for programs such as free and reduced-price school lunches and highway construction projects.

Communities needing resources to meet current challenges don't want to have to wait 10 years for changing demographics to show up in census reports, Holan said. "Five-year-old data, even, might miss what the true demographics are," he said. "This will provide information on a more timely scale."

Wikle and Holan are managing the grant, the largest in Department of Statistics history.

A large component of the funding is dedicated to education. The grant allows the department to support three graduate students and a postdoctoral student position every year, as well as provide funding for undergraduate opportunities.

“We have plans in this proposal to get students working with data sets for the census from the get-go,” Holan said, noting that research opportunities are rare for undergraduates pursuing statistics degrees.

The team expects those opportunities to increase enrollment in the department.

“That kind of thing really makes a difference, when you have opportunities available to undergraduate students,” Wikle said.



Ag school partners with food bank to boost choices

By Janese Silvey

Friday, October 14, 2011

Those who rely on local food pantries might see more lean beef, fresh sweet corn and healthier meal options in the coming year.

The College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources at the University of Missouri has teamed up with the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri to boost donations of healthy food. The program, Collaborating for a Healthy Future, was expected to be announced at noon today during CAFNR's Homecoming reunion.

College administrators are pledging to do several things over the coming year to help the food bank. First, the college will encourage students to get involved by hosting food drives or coming up with other ways to assist related to their areas of interest, said CAFNR spokesman Randy Mertens.

The college also plans to plant at least 2 acres of sweet corn on the Bradford Research and Extension Center farm for the food bank. That could amount to as many as 28,000 ears of corn.

CAFNR has pledged to donate 500 pounds of lean beef and 500 pounds of pork and other meat through its Mizzou Meat Market program.

Additionally, the college plans to research existing food bank programs to make sure they're effective and to encourage its 20 outstate research centers in Missouri to create similar partnerships with other food pantries. "I am so excited about this partnership," said Peggy Kirkpatrick, executive director of the food bank.

The need has not been greater, at least in the two decades she has been involved, Kirkpatrick said. The food bank is helping more than 100,000 people a month, some 20,000 more than when the recession hit in 2008.

"That's like feeding everybody in Columbia," she said.

And the cost of food, especially the healthy kind, keeps going up. A semi load of potatoes, about 40,000 pounds, cost the food bank nearly \$6,000 in June — more than double the cost of the same order in June 2010.

Kirkpatrick envisions a local farmer someday donating a plot of land that would allow the food bank to grow its own fresh produce. But, she said, “I don’t know the first thing about farming.”

That’s why the partnership with CAFNR makes sense. “Who better to partner with than the premier ag school, not just in the state but, in my opinion, in the Midwest, if not the entire nation,” she said.

CAFNR has been at the forefront of ensuring a plentiful food supply for the country, Dean Tom Payne said in a statement.

“It is critical for us to employ our knowledge and expertise to emphasize the healthy food aspects in our own backyard and serve as an example for other organizations to follow.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU College of Agriculture announces partnership with food bank

By Chantel O'Neal

October 14, 2011 | 4:28 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – MU's College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources has agreed to a yearlong collaboration with the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri to research best practices for healthy food donation and to encourage public donations to the organization.

The project – "Collaborating for a Healthy Future" was announced at noon Friday as part of the college's Homecoming celebration.

The project is a response to MU researchers' previous findings that food pantry clients' risk of obesity is double that of the general population. More than thirty percent of Missouri's population is obese, making it the 10th highest in the nation, according to a 2010 study by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

"We collaborate, and we've been doing it for decades – but we want to do more," Tom Payne, vice chancellor and dean of the college, said. "We're a food college, so why aren't we reaching out more to our community?"

The college plans to use its faculty's expertise, as well as partnerships in areas including agriculture, economics and nutrition, to improve food quality and security.

As part of the partnership, the college has agreed to do the following:

- Coordinate healthy food drives on campus;
- Plant two acres of sweet corn at MU's Bradford Farm to provide 14,000 to 28,000 ears of corn for the Food Bank;
- Donate 500 pounds of lean beef and 500 pounds of pork from the Mizzou Meat Market;
- Encourage students, faculty, staff and alumni to volunteer at the Food Bank;
- Research best practices for obtaining and distributing healthy food, including the Food Pantry Nutrition Project led by Sandy Rikoon;

- Raise awareness for the Food Bank's Buddy Pack Program, which provides food for children from low-income families;
- Sponsor "Float Your Boat for The Food Bank," a cardboard boat regatta fundraiser to be held in April at Stephens Lake; and
- Encourage the college's 20 research centers to partner with their local food banks.

The Food Bank, which began in 1981, now feeds about 100,000 people every month.



NASA declines lab proposal from MU, REDI

Project goes to Florida instead.

By Janese Silvey

NASA has passed on Columbia's proposal to be the home of a new national laboratory, opting instead to locate within the existing Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

The portion of the International Space Station that was up for grabs will be run by a not-for-profit group, the Center for the Advancement of Science in Space, the agency announced last month. It is the same agency that was awarded a similar NASA project in July.

The lab is expected to take space travel and exploration from shuttles to commercial capabilities.

"The station is the centerpiece of our human spaceflight activities for the coming years," NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden said in a statement. "This cooperative agreement allows us to expand the station's use and achieve its fullest potential."

The University of Missouri and Columbia's Regional Economic Development Inc. teamed up earlier this year in hopes of attracting the lab to Columbia. The 10-year award came with an annual \$15 million grant.

Rob Duncan, MU vice chancellor for research and an ex-officio REDI board member, said he wasn't surprised Florida got the nod because of its space center.

He had not had high expectations after NASA notified local leaders a few months ago that Columbia was in the bottom half of a short list. Florida and Ohio were the top choices out of the four proposals, which also included a bid from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he said.

"Certainly it was worth a try," Duncan said. "We brought together top people in the country from politicians to scientists to astronauts to those who would be investing."

The local proposal for a research lab with a venture capitalist bent included some fresh ideas about the future of space flight and some "clever methods" to implement them, Duncan said.

Earlier this year, he said the lab would focus on developing products in space, such as geological mapping systems that could determine where to drill for oil or new technology that could be used by insurance companies to get more accurate images of damage and costs after a natural disaster.

Researchers in the lab proposed here would have mimicked studies on the ground first to minimize investment risks in space.

Duncan isn't ready to show his entire hand, though. Specifics about how all of that could be accomplished are confidential because they could still give Columbia an advantage when new funding opportunities arise, he said.

"I'm still very excited by some of the neat ideas we came up with," Duncan said. "We'll make sure these really neat ideas get incorporated in other proposals we prepare in the future."