Actor, author share wisdom at MU honors ceremony

By Janese Silvey

Sunday, December 18, 2011

In a brief — and somewhat theatrical — commencement speech, actor Robert Loggia ticked off the questions he learned at the University of Missouri some 60 years ago that he’s asked throughout his life.

The 81-year-old recalled taking on a 20-hour course load at the Missouri School of Journalism and penning a column for a campus newspaper. “My days in athletics ended, and ‘Who, what, where, when, why and the how’ became my king,” he said, referring to questions reporters are taught to ask.

Loggia and Columbia author William Trogdon yesterday received honorary degrees at MU’s Honors Ceremony. The morning commencement at Jesse Auditorium also recognized 253 top MU graduates.

Loggia’s love for theatricle took him down a non-journalism career path.

He’s co-starred in numerous movies, including “Big” and “Independence Day” and has had made countless television appearances.

Calling him an “actor’s actor,” Chancellor Brady Deaton bestowed a doctorate of fine arts on Loggia for his “lifetime work and body of achievement in the arts.”

Trogdon yesterday added an honorary doctorate of letters to his bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees in English from MU. Also known as William Least Heat-Moon, Trogdon is best known for his travel writings, including the 1982 “Blue Highways,” which earned him a top spot on The New York Times bestseller list.

Trogdon urged honors graduates to always keep others in mind. Figuring out how to relate to everything and everyone else is the basis for society’s ethical and moral structure, he said.

Trogdon also urged young adults to find solutions for the world’s growing population, blaming his own generation for not addressing global concerns.
Of nearly 2,000 MU graduates this weekend, 1,473 earned bachelor’s degrees. Deaton congratulated those participating in winter commencement ceremonies, joking that they either were ahead of schedule or “successfully completed an expanded and enriched curriculum.”

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Robert Loggia, William Trogdon give advice to MU honors students

By Kile Brewer
December 17, 2011 | 4:47 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Two men who received their honorary doctorates, the highest award given by MU, spoke to more than 200 honors students Saturday.

As the Honors Commencement ceremony began, actor Robert Loggia and writer William Trogdon, both graduates of MU, took their seats beside Chancellor Brady Deaton.

The two honorary degree recipients spoke to the graduates about their dreams, their futures and their responsibilities as a generation.

Loggia, who received his honorary doctor of fine arts, took the lectern first.

"Be true to your heart and true to your dreams, and all the rest will follow," he said.

Loggia studied journalism at MU and graduated in 1951. After serving in the Army, Loggia began his acting career. He has appeared in supporting roles in television series such as "The
Sopranos” and films such as “Scarface” and “Independence Day.” Loggia has been nominated for several Emmy Awards and an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role in the film “Jagged Edge.”

Trogdon received his honorary doctor of letters and literature and then delivered his speech, which he described as having three main points.

First, he told the graduates that the only way to solve their problems was to first solve the problem of population growth, something he felt his generation had failed at.

Next, he suggested the students think about the word “otherness.” He told them to ask themselves, “How do I, the self, the individual, relate to everything else?”

Finally, he explained the need to understand the difference between information and books, because “one is very useful, and the other one is great sustenance.”

Trogdon, who writes under the pen name William Least Heat-Moon, has received four degrees from MU: two bachelor’s degrees, one in photojournalism and one in English, a master’s degree in English and a doctorate in English. Trogdon has written several books that chronicle his travels, one of which, "Blue Highways," was on The New York Times Best Seller list for 34 weeks in 1982-83.

Some students said the speeches inspired them.

“The speakers left me wanting to drive forward,” said Brent Fitzwalter, who graduated magna cum laude in biochemistry. “What I took with me was the part about keeping an eye on your dreams and everything will fall after.”

Following the speakers, students were called to accept their bronze honor medallions. The medal, which is cast with the image of the MU Columns, is one of the highest honors bestowed on MU graduates.
Graduation speaker encourages MU business students to find passion in life

By Jesse Bishop
December 16, 2011 | 6:14 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — As Greg Garrison began his address to MU Trulaske College of Business graduates on Friday, he admitted that other alumni would have been more exciting speakers. But with Jon Hamm and Blaine Gabbert unavailable, he said, they would have to settle for a certified public accountant.

And like any good CPA, the vice chairman of PricewaterhouseCoopers relied on numbers.

Running more than 100 graduates through some quick calculations, Garrison came to a rough estimate of 100,000 hours they could expect to work before retirement — about 40 percent of
their waking hours during the next four decades. To make those hours less daunting, he offered a simple solution: Find something you're passionate about and make that your job.

"If you're passionate about what you do, you'll be excited about getting up in the morning," Garrison said. "If you are passionate about what you do, you'll be in a great mood when you come home to your family. If you're passionate about what you do, you'll have the energy to chase your kids and to get involved in their lives. If you're passionate about what you do, you'll excel at it, and you'll enjoy the ride."

It's a ride best taken with others, Garrison said. In his "simple but effective recipe for success," he encouraged graduates to not only develop their own personal brands but to also build a "personal board of directors" they can turn to for guidance.

"No matter how skilled and self-confident we are, all of us can benefit from the help of people who have traveled the road we are on," Garrison said. "I would not be where I am today without the guidance and assistance provided to me by my mentor. In any aspect of your life, don't be afraid to ask for help, and don't go it alone."

But the future can wait. Garrison encouraged graduates to enjoy their recent accomplishment.

"The journey we've been on is, in fact, the reward," he said.

Lisa Peterson echoed Garrison's sentiments in her senior address, reflecting on the past as a guide for the future.

"The greatest aspect of college is the journey of self-discovery," Peterson said. "College has served as a time for all of us to learn about the people we really are and who we hope to become in the future."

Graduating senior Aaron Chatman agreed. On a day marking a transition into a new chapter, he, too, reflected on how far he'd come.

"It's been a really good journey," Chatman said. "I've made a lot of friends and learned a lot over the four years. They say it's the best four years of your life for a reason. There are so many memories I'll never forget. It's the best experience of your life."
MU nursing graduates sent off with cheers, special messages

By Chantel O'Neal
December 16, 2011 | 5:04 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — As "Pomp and Circumstance" played over the speakers, audience members stood, excitedly searching for their graduate, cameras ready.

It was difficult to hear the music over the clapping and cheering families who gathered Friday afternoon in Jesse Auditorium for the MU Sinclair School of Nursing's commencement ceremony.

Before the faculty and students entered, a young girl ran down a row of seats near the back of the room. "Grandma, mama's on page 13," she said as she smiled and held up one finger on one hand and three on the other. Her mother, Michelle Matteson, received her doctorate at the ceremony and graduated alongside 70 other nursing students.

Of the 71 diplomas presented, seven were master's candidates and two were doctoral candidates. Judith Fitzgerald Miller, the school's dean, commended the graduates seated before her, noting the honor of the nursing profession.

Nurses, she said, get to interact with people during major life events with "privileged intimacy." They get to experience the happiness of a mother holding her newborn, and the pain of illness and death.

"As a result, these nursing graduates have experienced a profound transformation," Miller said. "You've realized that you have the ability to change people's lives." As each name was called, families celebrated in their own ways — some with air horns, others with applause.

When Kathryn Elkin walked across the stage, a surprise message from her father, who's currently serving in the Missouri National Guard, was read aloud. He apologized for not being there, before telling her he loved her.

Other students received their diplomas from mothers or sisters who'd graduated from the nursing school.
Taking the reins comes naturally

New UM System president’s leadership was evident while quarterbacking Rock Bridge to state title in ’75.

By David Briggs

The first political challenge Tim Wolfe encountered in his rise to the top position of the University of Missouri System came not in a boardroom but on a football field.

As the senior quarterback for the 1975 Rock Bridge Bruins, he had the autonomy to call any of the team’s two dozen plays.

A power struggle seemed inevitable. Wolfe could launch the ball downfield to the speedy Todd Drennan — as he did for three long touchdown passes in a 62-26 victory over defending Class 3A champion Boonville. Or he could call upon the deepest backfield in the state with staples like Student Body Right and 31 Dive. Missouri-bound fullback John Massey, Kansas signee Sam Smith and Mark Golden all averaged nearly 10 yards per carry.

“Of course, Sam, me and Golden are all fighting over who gets the next handoff,” Massey said with a laugh. “There’s a lot of big egos there.”

But Wolfe managed the offense with aplomb, helping lead Rock Bridge to a perfect season and a state championship in the school’s third year of existence.

Interviews with his former coaches and teammates this week portrayed Wolfe, who was introduced as the UM president on Tuesday, as the steady voice on a tightly woven veteran team. Although he was not the most polished quarterback — the first-year starter completed 26 passes for 668 yards during the regular season — Wolfe displayed the same leadership that would pilot him to a successful career as a software industry executive and ultimately the presidency of the state’s flagship university system.

“With that much talent on a team, Tim was able to manage it in that there weren’t any egos so strong that it was unpleasant to be around,” former Bruins receiver John Stafford said.

“I just can’t say enough about him,” said Rich Davies, who coached Rock Bridge from 1973-76. “I think the world of him. That was a special part of my life, and it was a privilege that I got to coach him. I know he’ll be a good president for the university.”
For Wolfe, his one season as a starter came with great pressure. The Bruins returned virtually every starter from a team that a year earlier had gone 9-0 but was kept from the playoffs by the state’s convoluted points system.

“It was basically the same team,” said Tim Jamieson, who backed up Wolfe and is now the baseball coach at Missouri. “The one exception was the quarterback spot.”

Wolfe was unproven. A former fourth-string halfback at West Junior High, he wielded an ordinary arm and spent his junior season as the Bruins’ third quarterback. Few expected him to win the starting job in 1975.

“Not many people thought I was that good,” Wolfe told the Tribune that year. “They’d ask me what position I was playing this year, and I’d say, ‘Quarterback.’ They’d say, ‘What string?’ I’d say, ‘First.’ They’d say, ‘You liar.’ ”

But the even-tempered Wolfe proved an ideal fit for a team overloaded with veteran stars.

“You have to pick a leader, and Tim was our leader,” Massey said. “Whatever he said went. There was no real discussion about it. The only way you win a championship is if everybody plays together, and Tim pulled everybody together on a daily basis.”

Among the ways he cultivated that trust was his command of the offense. Even though he rarely threw, Davies said Wolfe’s role was critical. He called his own plays — a rare responsibility even at the time — and had the option to audible on the occasions a coach sent in a suggestion from the sideline. Davies believed all of the plays were effective, and he expressed unwavering faith in Wolfe.

“Tim knew every position on the field. He knew what was going to work and when it was going to work,” Massey said. “He had a tactical mind.”

In a season absent of tension, Rock Bridge outscored opponents 390-52 and won the 3A title with a 10-0 victory over Nevada on Faurot Field. Afterward, Davies called the 1975 Bruins the “greatest high school football team I’ve ever seen.”

Speaking from his home in Nixa 36 years later, that boast still holds true.

For Wolfe, who attended Missouri but did not play football, the lessons from that season transcended the field. As Massey joked, Wolfe’s handling of the Bruins’ three star backs prepared him for the business world.

“You’ve got to figure out how to keep everyone happy,” he said. “So he was a great negotiator at a very young age.”

Reach David Briggs at dbriggs@columbiatribune.com.
Curator foresees Wolfe having long presidency

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, December 17, 2011

The incoming president of the University of Missouri System just might be able to do something that none of his predecessors was able to do — actually stay a spell.

"Assuming" Tim Wolfe "is as good as I believe he will be, he could be here for a decade or more," said Warren Erdman, chairman of the UM Board of Curators. "That's a wonderful thing, to be here long enough to see through an agenda. He's 53 years old, and this is the only place he'd even consider serving" as president. "Assuming future Boards of Curators feel as good about him as we do, he could be here for a really long time."

If Wolfe does last a decade, he'd be the first president to do so within the current four-campus UM System structure. Elmer Ellis served 11 years, but during most of those, he oversaw only MU and the Rolla campus. Ellis expanded the system by taking over a private Kansas City college and creating a campus in St. Louis in 1963, then left three years later.

James Olson stayed eight years — from 1977 to 1984 — the longest tenure for a four-campus UM System president. Wolfe's predecessor, Gary Forsee, left just shy of his three-year anniversary when his wife was diagnosed with cancer.

Wolfe will live in the official university president's home, Providence Point, but his family will stay in Boston so his 16-year-old twin children can finish high school. With relatives in Missouri, Wolfe said earlier this week he expects his family to commute plenty of weekends and during summer months.

An MU dean was responsible for tapping Wolfe. Joan Gabel, dean of the Trulaske College of Business, recommended him to Erdman over the summer.

Gabel said her involvement ended there; she let Erdman place a call to Wolfe. Erdman said he called Wolfe sometime in August. Wolfe then met with Forsee to talk about making the switch from the business world to academia.

The internal nomination didn't keep costs down, though. To date, the process has come with a price tag of $259,000 — $25,000 more than the $234,000 curators originally estimated.
UM spokeswoman Cindy Pollard said the original estimate was based on the UM search four years ago and that this go-round involved more meetings and more travel expenses. The consulting firm Greenwood/Asher & Associates got about $157,500 of that total.

Even though they didn't find the ultimate president, consultants earned their pay, Erdman said, by providing office support and managing a large pool of candidates.
The obvious problem facing the University of Missouri's Board of Curators and Timothy M. Wolfe, its out-of-the-blue choice as the university's new president, was this: How do you explain the selection of a former software executive with no significant academic credentials as the leader of a four-campus university system?

Answer: You take a sow's ear and turn it into a silk purse.

On Wednesday, Mr. Wolfe visited the university's St. Louis campus and said he plans a two-month "journey of enlightenment" to bring himself up to speed on the needs of the various campuses.

This is great. Next time we're lost, we're going to tell our spouse that we're on a journey of enlightenment.

On Wednesday, curators praised Mr. Wolfe's Columbia roots (he grew up there and got a bachelor's degree from Mizzou) and said he understood academia because his parents were professors.

And then there was curator Pam Henrickson's explanation that Mr. Wolfe would bring "fresh eyes. Somebody to come in and say, 'Why do you do this?'

This would not be a good way to hire someone to, say, fix your car. Whatever happened to straight talk?
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

GENE ROBERTSON: Accountability more important than secrecy in hiring UM System president

By GENE ROBERTSON
December 16, 2011 | 1:28 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The faculty, students and taxpayers of MU and the state of Missouri are owed an in-depth explanation of the reason for the secrets surrounding the hiring of the UM System president.

This explanation is owed to all of us by the governor, the curators and our local chancellor, as well as the faculty councils within the UM System. Each of these entities ought to be held accountable for the its participation or lack of participation in this process.

They all are accountable in some way for the lack of transparency surrounding the search process, including the search committee membership and the decisions surrounding transparency.

The search process should not model questionable behavior for students and taxpayers. The curators are endowed with the public's resources and trust. Their behaviors should be transparent.

The search committee's charge and the rationale for that charge ought to be explained. The steps taken to fulfill that charge ought to be explained.

The range and number of potential candidates ought to be shared. The narrowing process to achieve a list of finalists ought to be explained.

The weeding process that led to the selection of the president should be explained. The decision to choose a corporate administrator rather than an academic administrator should be explained.
If this decision was based upon successes achieved by the previous successes of a non-academic administrator, those successes ought to be made known in the spirit of intellectual candor.

Scrutiny of decision making is an inherent element that is prized at universities. That process is assumed to be instrumental to educating future leaders.

Secret behaviors lead to notions of deviousness, which should not be considered at the beginning of new president's tenure.

It is the responsibility of us all to remove this veil of questions by giving the appropriate explanations that will allow the conduct of the university's mission with as much integrity imbued in it as possible.

*William E. "Gene" Robertson is a Columbia resident and a professor emeritus at MU.*
Nixon considers asking 5 Missouri universities to lend money to state

Posted on Fri, Dec. 16, 2011 11:30 PM

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon is asking five state universities to consider lending the state more than $100 million next year to help balance the state's budget, a proposal that is drawing fire from key legislators unhappy with both its secrecy and its impact.

Nixon's proposal, which his budget director termed preliminary, calls for the University of Missouri to chip in $63 million and four other schools to come up with lesser amounts, for a total of $107 million. The money would come from their reserve funds.

The state would roll the money into the $850 million higher education budget that covers operating expenses at Missouri's four-year institutions and community colleges.

The goal: to avoid a cut that could otherwise equal at least 13 percent across the board.

Universities making the loans would look to be repaid over a seven-year period with money diverted from the state's college loan authority, known as the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority. But the legislature would have to sign off on that idea.

House Budget Committee Chairman Ryan Silvey, a Kansas City Republican, called the plan ridiculous.

"The governor is looking for this scheme that avoids making tough decisions on cuts," he said. "Rather than balance the state's budget, he wants to dream up new revenue sources which happen to be interest-free loans from our universities."

Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, a Republican from Columbia, said the universities would have no guarantee that they would get their money back.

"If the proposal is a Bernie Madoff-type Ponzi scheme to make it look like something's being funded that isn't really being funded, that's not acceptable," Schaefer said.

In addition to the loans, Nixon also is floating a proposal to cut state funding for college scholarships in half and tell each university to make up the difference, according to the two budget chairmen.
The governor hasn’t detailed his plans publicly. His budget director, Linda Luebbering, provided basic information about the loan proposal Thursday evening after word began circulating around the Capitol.

The state is facing a $750 million budget hole next fiscal year.
Nixon plan would alter scholarship funding

By Rudi Keller
Columbia Daily Tribune
Friday, December 16, 2011

Gov. Jay Nixon’s plan to borrow from the University of Missouri and other schools includes another idea to save money for the state treasury: make schools pay half the costs of state scholarship programs.

Three big scholarship programs — Access Missouri, Bright Flight and A+ Schools — will provide almost $109 million in financial aid to Missouri college students this year. Nixon wants to cut state awards in half, allowing him to divert revenue dedicated to those programs, lawmakers briefed on the plan said. Public and private colleges and universities would then have to cover the rest of the scholarship funding.

The actions Nixon is proposing for basic higher education funding — borrowing about $106 million from five universities, including $63 million from the UM System — also would have an impact on scholarship funding. He wants the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority, or MOHELA, to fund the state’s repayment of the loan.

In each of the past two years, Nixon has obtained $30 million from MOHELA to support the Access Missouri program, which provides need-based financial aid. If that support ends and Nixon’s plan takes effect, the state effort for that program could be cut by as much as 75 percent.

Access Missouri is need-based. Bright Flight is based on high school academic achievement and test scores. The A+ program rewards students from certified high schools who attend community colleges.

A recent report to the MOHELA Board of Directors showed that covering the state’s scholarship needs already is causing a cash crunch at the agency. “To be sure, these distributions have exhausted virtually all currently available liquidity,” Executive Director Ray Bayer wrote in his report to the board for its Dec. 9 meeting.

Since June 2010, the agency’s unrestricted assets have fallen to $50 million from $84 million, an amount that is beginning to threaten MOHELA’s ability to borrow for day-to-day operations. If
unrestricted assets dip below $35 million, Bank of America will cut the agency’s line of credit in half, the financial report presented at the Dec. 9 meeting said.

“We are carefully managing liquidity on a daily basis and are reasonably comfortable in our current liquidity situation,” Bayer wrote. “However, there is not much room for error or unexpected events.”

Bayer did not return a call seeking comment today.

Nixon is asking the schools for the loan as part of an effort to plug a hole in the state budget, estimated variously at $400 million to $750 million. State general revenue is about $7.1 billion annually.

If schools do not agree, they face a 20 percent cut in their state funding, Rep. Stephen Webber, D-Columbia, said yesterday after being briefed on the plan. He said he is open-minded but questioned why Nixon’s office had not consulted lawmakers.

“It is obviously creative,” Webber said. “My priority is looking out for Columbia and the funding for the university.”

MOHELA owes the state $105 million to complete the Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative, a building program begun under Gov. Matt Blunt. The board has not made a scheduled payment to that program while it has been supporting the scholarship programs.

MOHELA’s financial situation — it had only $1.7 million cash on hand as of Oct. 30 — “shows clearly that the proposal is not a realistic funding mechanism,” Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, said. Schaefer also was briefed on the governor’s plan for the first time yesterday.

House Budget Committee Chairman Ryan Silvey, R-Kansas City, said he has yet to be briefed on the plan. He said Nixon should come to lawmakers and work out budget issues through negotiation. “This is not the time to be petty and partisan and cut secret deals and go lone gunman on this.”
Colleges asked to tap reserves

Governor wants schools to loan $107 million to help cover budget gap.

11:00 PM, Dec. 16, 2011 |

Written by Josh Nelson

Several Springfield-area lawmakers panned a proposal from Gov. Jay Nixon's office asking Missouri State University and four other public schools to lend $107 million to help cover a shortfall in next year's budget.

Missouri State would be asked to kick in $13.7 million from its reserves to the state higher education budget for the next fiscal year beginning July 1. The University of Missouri system would give up $62.3 million. Truman State, Central Missouri and Southeast Missouri would all contribute a total of $30 million. The higher-education budget covers the operating costs for Missouri's four-year public institutions and community colleges.

The money would be used to offset an expected double-digit cut to higher-education funding and would be used in fiscal year 2013 to cover classroom expenses. Money taken from the reserves would be repaid through the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority, known as MOHELA, over the next seven years, said Linda Luebbering, the state budget director.

Scott Holste, a spokesman for Nixon, directed questions to Luebbering's office.

Luebbering said the plan is a stab at providing stable funding levels for higher education and cautioned it was part of a preliminary budget. A final draft of that budget will be presented to lawmakers in January.

"It is just one concept put out there," Luebbering said.

The state is facing a shortfall of $750 million caused by the expiration of federal stimulus funding and a different federal contribution to the state's Medicaid program, Luebbering said.

Local lawmakers voiced doubt over the plan and compared it to the types of financial schemes that precipitated the banking collapse and recession.
"On its face, to me, it appears to be creative financing at its best and a shell game at its worst," said state Sen. Bob Dixon, R-Springfield.

Dixon said he was concerned by the secrecy that surrounded the proposal. Several other lawmakers in the area said they hadn't heard of the plan.

State Rep. Eric Burlison, R-Springfield, sits on the House Budget Committee. He said the plan only delays any painful decisions the lawmakers and Nixon may have to make.

"This is more of a political move, because at the end of the day, you're making a cut. You just aren't doing it now," Burlison said.

Lawmakers said they didn't like the idea of using loans from MOHELA to backfill the schools' reserves.

"I think that money needs to stay where it's at," said Rep. Lyle Rowland, R-Cedar creek, a member of the House Education Appropriations Committee.

Dixon also said he was worried that drawing down from the MOHELA account may risk its credit, because lenders said the authority must keep its reserve accounts up. Former Gov. Matt Blunt used MOHELA to fund building projects on campuses. That ended when Nixon came into office because of concerns over MOHELA's solvency.

Rep. Shane Schoeller, R-Willard, questions what has changed regarding those worries about MOHELA's funds.

"What has changed in the bottom line?" Schoeller said.

Clif Smart, MSU's interim president, said he learned about the proposal at the end of last week. MSU's board of governors has not discussed it.

"It's extremely premature," Smart said.

With large higher-education cuts looming, Smart said university officials are open to discussion.

MSU is planning on a reduction of up to 5 percent, or $3.6 million, in its fiscal 2013 budget. A double-digit cut would make it necessary for the school to tap its reserves, Smart said.

Nixon's proposal would keep funding stable, Smart said.

"We will get the money back, but all is predicated on the idea that in 2014 we will recover to the point there will be increase rather than decrease (in revenue)," he said.

MSU has a reserve of about $59 million, including nearly $30 million in the central reserve fund. That fund grew by more than $3 million in 2010-11.
"We've done an outstanding job in saving," Smart said at a regular board of governors meeting Friday. "It may shrink when the rainy day is here."

Hal Higdon, chancellor of Ozarks Technical Community College, said it is too early to tell what the discussion regarding funding cuts will yield. He added that lawmakers will have to weigh in on the matter also.

"The bottom line, we hear all types of cuts in December. It never turns out to be the same," Higdon said. "Don't panic until we are further into the legislative session."

Higdon added that he has heard reports of up to an 18 percent cut.

"It won't shock me if it's 10 percent," Higdon said.
The Tribune's View

Son of MOHELA

Nixon too creative by half

By Henry J. Waters III

Saturday, December 17, 2011

Give the governor of Missouri credit for innovative ways to fund higher education.

In past years, Jay Nixon has traded immunity from harsher budget cuts for institutional restraint in raising tuition. Even so, state funding has steadily declined.

Facing another shortfall, this year Nixon has a deal for five selected schools he hopes they can’t refuse. He wants the University of Missouri, the University of Central Missouri, Southeast Missouri State University, Missouri State University and Truman State University to lend the state $107 million to be repaid over seven years at no interest. Otherwise he promises a 15 percent cut for higher education in the budget beginning July 1.

Although Nixon should not be accused of nefarious dealing, this one has a smell about it. It might be regarded as equal parts bribery, threat and intimidation. University officials are being told in so many words, “Either do this deal, or you will lose 15 percent in state funding next year.” So far, those very officials are hunkered down, pondering their range of unpleasant choices.

Others, including local lawmakers Sen. Kurt Schaefer and Rep. Chris Kelly, are less restrained. Schaefer says it’s a Bernie Madoff-type Ponzi scheme. Kelly says the governor once again is proposing a complicated deal that would require lots of legislative cooperation without bothering to meet with lawmakers. “They have talked to no one,” he said.

To top it all, the repayment funds would come from MOHELA’s fabled pool of superfluous state employees’ retirement revenue supposedly ripe for the picking. Son of MOHELA it is, and perhaps an illegitimate offspring, at that.

Nixon’s latest concoction is frightfully creative, but let’s give him this much credit. Finding none in projected state tax revenue, he looks hither and yon for any possible pool of loose cash to help higher education. Back during Gov. Matt Blunt’s administration, he and his economic
development minions seized on a risky scheme to tap surplus MOHELA funds for capital projects coveted by many interests around the state. After only a small percentage of projected funding actually came forth, the elder MOHELA fell flat, but apparently Nixon's budget gurus see enough loose cash to repay his latest plan over the promised seven years.

Under anything resembling normal conditions, school officials would scoff at the very idea of obligating reserve money in this way. The only way this is a good plan is to assume the state won't provide the money by any other means. It amounts to laundering MOHELA funds to pay for current higher education operations with an interim trip through the washer for university reserve money. From university officials' viewpoint, its only merit is the promise that MOHELA money would be thus converted.

It's a chancy scheme requiring a seven-year return at no interest and, to boot, regurgitating MOHELA questions all over again. Requiring schools to share in the loan raises questions of parity among the five, and can we be sure MOHELA repayments will arrive on schedule for the next seven years? Can the legislature and the governor obligate MOHELA funds in this way?

Why not have the state borrow directly from MOHELA rather than university reserves? Let the governor and the General Assembly explain why that more straightforward plan is not better.
MU offers career assessment tools

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, December 17, 2011

University of Missouri students hoping to get an edge in a competitive job market now have a way to better assess and tout their personal strengths.

MU’s Career Center is offering personal assessment surveys that help young adults home in on their natural abilities.

“What we’re trying to do is help students understand themselves a little better,” said Craig Benson, director of career exploration in the Career Center.

In the past, certain programs have taken advantage of the assessment tool, and last year the center made the assessment available to all students.

During the 2010-11 school year, 4,080 students and faculty members took advantage of the survey.

The Career Center uses StrengthsQuest, a survey offered through Gallup, which takes about 35 minutes to complete and costs $15. Some 150 organizations and classes have required members and students to take it, and in some cases, departments pick up the tab.

The survey focuses on positive qualities rather than highlighting weaknesses. It shows participants their top five strengths out of a possible 34.

“It’s about what makes you strong, unique and capable of doing great things,” Benson said. “It’s more designed to tell you who you are and what you do well, what you are energized by.”

Joseph Stephens, director of the Master of Business Administration program at the Trulaske College of Business, said the survey is a change from previous thinking that asked individuals to identify and fix areas in which they lack.

“All through life, we’re told to work on our weaknesses,” he said. “Gallup and StrengthsQuest turns that on its head a little bit.”
Incoming MBA students have been required to take the assessment as part of orientation for the past three years. They’re asked to bring the results to campus, where they spend more than an hour reviewing them with Benson.

“‘It helps them identify what they’re really good at and helps them focus,’” Stephens said. “‘And when you’re focused, you do better work.’”

Learning how to match their strengths with the strengths in other people also will help students who go on to become managers, he said.

“All of us have unique combinations. Used the right way, that can make highly effective teams.”
JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri legislature has returned to the 1920s. It's a flash to the past that is due largely to term limits.

A recent report by an MU professor found that the average tenure of state House and Senate members in the current era of term limits is similar to that of lawmakers who served in 1920s, when state government was much smaller and lawmakers weren't limited in how many times they could seek re-election.

But the historical twist is not a good thing, concluded David Valentine, associate director of public service at MU's Truman School of Public Affairs.

Valentine equated legislative tenure with knowledge, meaning today's lawmakers are less informed about the intricate details of state government despite the fact that it is much more complex than it was during the Roaring '20s.

He concluded that term limits have negatively affected the ability of lawmakers to tackle tough policy decisions, increased their propensity to view their current office as a stepping stone and weakened the power of the General Assembly, among other things.

Term limits have "elevated politics and depressed the value of subject matter knowledge," Valentine said. He added: "I think the results are we do not solve our problems."

The public need look no further than this fall for anecdotal evidence of Valentine's assertion.

Though House and Senate leaders had claimed to have an agreement on an overhaul of Missouri's business incentives and tax breaks, the proposal ultimately floundered and failed to win passage during a special legislative session.

The primary reason is that the House and Senate couldn't agree on the specifics and refused to keep negotiating.
Valentine noted that some lawmakers felt uncomfortable trying to sift through the complex
details of the proposal in a compressed time span. He said the animosity between House and
Senate leaders also was indicative of a term-limits era in which lawmakers lack the trust and
familiarity that develops among long-time colleagues.

Missouri is one of 15 states with legislative term limits.

Voters in 1992 approved caps of about eight years each in the Missouri House of
Representatives and Senate. The clock started ticking with the 1994 elections, meaning it
wasn't until 2002 that most veteran House members and some senators were barred from
seeking re-election. The deadline hit in 2004 for the remaining senators.

That means Missouri has now cycled through an entire class of term-limited lawmakers — as
those elected in 2002 or 2004 have either used up their allotted time or are entering their
final year in their chambers.

According to Valentine's research, the average tenure for a senator in 2011 was 2.7 years,
which was several times shorter than the nine-year average that existed in 2001 before term
limits forced out longtime lawmakers. The average length of service for a House member in
2011 was two years — less than half the 5.4-year average that existed in 2001.

Those figures were comparable to the average length of service for lawmakers during the
period of 1921 to 1931.

As Valentine noted, the state budgets in the 1920s were but a fraction of today's $23 billion
budget, and the state at that time had little responsibility for infrastructure, almost no role in
social service programs and left economic development entirely to the private sector.

Today, "our society is more complex, our issues are more complex and our government is
more complex," said Valentine, who worked in the Senate research office from 1977 until
2001. "You just can't come in off the street and become an effective legislator — and you could
in the 19th century."

One of the chief advocates for Missouri's term limits contends Valentine's assessment is
wrong because his underlying assumption is flawed.

To equate tenure with knowledge is an insult to the intelligence of many people who win
election, said Greg Upchurch, a St. Louis attorney who was chairman of the Missouri Term
Limits group that backed the 1992 initiative.
Upchurch acknowledged there is a learning curve to the legislature. But he said it can be sufficiently addressed within a year or two of service.

"How many times do you have to take fifth grade math before you know your multiplication tables? Do you learn more the second time? Yeah, but do you learn twice as much? No. In fact, at some point, you don't learn anything more," Upchurch said.

Whereas Valentine values the expertise that chamber leaders and committee chairmen can develop through years of legislative service, Upchurch considers it an invitation for political coziness and corruption and a recipe for an expanded government to reach into the lives of its citizens.

"I still believe in the Jeffersonian ideal that people can govern themselves, and if you let specialists do it, it's a bad thing," Upchurch said.

Term limits have remained sufficiently popular among the public that lawmakers have been reluctant to embrace measures calling for their repeal.

Valentine said a repeal of term limits is necessary but is not in itself a solution to the legislature's problems. Voters are more cynical and ideological than in the past, he said, and as a result they are less willing to compromise and more likely to view lawmakers with different opinions as controlled by special interests.

So if lawmakers are failing to solve major policy challenges, it is perhaps because they are representative of the people who elected them.

David A. Lieb has covered state government and politics for The Associated Press since 1995.
JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP)- The Missouri Legislature has returned to the 1920s. The chief cause is term limits.

A recent report by a professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia found the average tenure of state House and Senate members during the past decade is similar to that of lawmakers who served in 1920s.

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Missouri farmers need big winter to make up for drought

Monday, December 19, 2011
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS -- Missouri cropland is so dry from last summer's extreme heat and lack of rainfall that University of Missouri researchers said the state would need 13 feet of snow this winter to make up for it.

That's probably not going to happen, though, and The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported Sunday that the lack of moisture could soon have an impact on consumers.

"If we don't get enough input over the next few months, we could go into the next season without enough moisture," said Randy Miles, a soil scientist at the university. "Even though it might not be that amenable to some, and it may create some slushy driving hazards and so on, from a soil moisture viewpoint, more snow and rain may be more valuable long term."

Missouri corn farmers lost about 24 million bushels of yield last summer, and soybean producers lost about 20 million bushels. Last month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designated 101 Missouri counties as natural disaster areas, with one estimate putting the loss to the state's grain farmers at nearly $350 million.

"In mid-Missouri and particularly as you go southwest, [the soil] was pretty well depleted four to six feet down. There's not much left there for plant growth," Miles said. "We need to recharge the piggy bank, so to speak."

Record drought conditions got the most attention in parts of Texas and Oklahoma, but Missouri was hit hard, too. In addition to crop farmers, the state's dairy and cattle industries also are scrambling to deal with the drought's impact.

Missouri is the nation's third-largest producer of hay, but the summer conditions scorched pasture and forage lands, causing a shortage of the now-precious commodity.
That has caused farmers from neighboring states shipping what they can from Missouri to get through the winter.

"I had to drive 100 miles north, to get it from a guy in Green Ridge," said Darrel Franson, a cattle farmer who heads the Missouri Forage and Grassland Council. "In the half an hour I'm talking to him, his phone rings three times, with producers from Texas willing to buy anything he's got, at any price."

Cattle ranchers and dairy farmers typically grow much of the hay they feed their animals, but this year they were forced to feed hay months earlier than they normally would have because pasture land was burnt up.

Some farmers are worried that producers won't have enough to feed their animals by midwinter.

"In January or February, the farmer is going to take a walk out into his pasture and see his cows are thin. He's going to run in and say, 'Ma, the cows are awful thin.' Then they're going to look at the ground and see there's no grass there," Franson said. "They're going to get on the phone to get some hay, and they won't find any."

Dairy farmers are facing not just a shortage in hay, but lower quality, as well. Dairy cows need better-quality hay to produce better milk, but hay that survives harsh summer conditions isn't the most nutritious, meaning cows need more of it.

Because of that, producers are paying as much as $300 a ton for higher-quality hay, far higher than normal.

"This is going to be one of the toughest challenges I've seen in my lifetime, seeing these cows through the winter," said Larry Purdom, head of the Missouri Dairy Association. "A lot of times in the past when hay prices were up, we could use corn, but that's been at record highs, and that's expensive now, too."

Purdom said the state's dairy herd has shrunk from 100,000 cows in recent years to about 90,000, and that could go even smaller as aging dairy farmers sell their cows and get out of the business instead of paying the higher feeds prices.

"This is serious," Purdom said. "We have eight or nine processing plants in the state, and if we don't have milk for them, we're worried they'll take their operations somewhere else, and that means jobs."
Plant immune system offers disease insight

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, December 17, 2011

Researchers at the University of Missouri have found a key process in a plant’s immune system response that could help crops someday fight off diseases.

Walter Gassmann is a professor of plant sciences and a researcher in the Bond Life Sciences Center.

His team studied how a common weed related to the mustard plant, Arabidopsis, wards off infectious agents. Researchers discovered a protein within the plant that plays a key role in recognizing and fighting diseases.

“Arabidopsis has a widely known genetic structure, and its bacterial pathogens share many tactics with other pathogens such as fungal rusts and mildews,” Gassmann said in a statement. “So, if we can translate Arabidopsis’ immune response to other plants, we could eventually help crops, such as soybeans, resist devastating infections.”

Further study of the disease-fighting protein could determine how to add the alarm response to plants missing that protein or boost that response system in plants that do have it.

“Farmers know that deploying plants with single sentinels, which commonly only detect a single specific attack strategy, only leads to a boom-and-bust cycle for disease-resistant crop plants,” Gassmann said.

He believes assisting plants with natural disease resistance is better than using fungicides.

“We’re still a long way from application in the field,” Gassmann said, “however, this addition could ultimately produce more food.”

His study, funded by the National Science Foundation, has been accepted by the journal Science. Co-authors included MU post-doctoral researchers and an undergraduate.
Recession Hurt Parent-Child Ties, Survey Finds

Seattle families reported less connectedness, social generosity, researchers say

December 16, 2011

HealthDay

By Jenifer Goodwin
HealthDay Reporter

THURSDAY, Dec. 15 (HealthDay News) -- The recent recession took a toll on parent-child ties, with parents who were under financial strain reporting that they felt less connected to their kids and saying they were less likely to act with generosity, a new study finds.

Researchers from University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Brigham Young University analyzed data from a survey done in 2009 and then again a year later of about 500 families in the Seattle area about their feelings of depression, economic stress and family relationships.

The families were mostly white, middle- to upper-middle-class and college educated. The children were young adolescents, aged 10 to 14.

From one year to the next, parents who reported increasing financial pressure were also more likely to report symptoms of depression, according to the study. In turn, depressed parents were more likely to report feeling less connected and less close with their child.

Likewise, parental financial strain and depression also affected the children. Children whose parents were struggling were less likely to say they volunteered, helped their friends or their families, found enjoyment in doing small favors for others, or tried to cheer up people who were feeling blue -- a group of positive behaviors researchers call "pro-social behaviors."

"The effects of the economic strain are present and having an impact on families that we consider middle-class and upper-middle-class," said lead study author Gustavo Carlo,
Currently a professor of human development and family studies at the University of Missouri, "These are families you'd think maybe aren't feeling the effects of the economic crisis in the way that other communities are, or that might have access to resources that other families might not have easy access to."

And the families interviewed were from the Seattle area, which wasn't even as hard hit during the downturn as other regions of the country, Carlo added. "One can only imagine how these effects are being felt by families in areas where the communities have really suffered tremendously from the economic situation," he said.

The study appears online and in the December print issue of the Journal of Research on Adolescence.

To be sure, not every parent experiencing economic strain will become anxious and depressed, said Velma McBride Murry, a professor of human and organizational development at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

"If you enter this situation having an increased vulnerability to depression and anxiety, economic strain elevates it, or sets it off to where you are more likely to experience greater devastation than people who are much more mentally stable," Murry said.

But the current study adds to a large body of evidence that cuts across income levels and racial and ethnic groups and shows that economic stress can have a "cascading effect" on the whole family, Murry said. When under financial stress, parents who are used to being able to give their children a cellphone or new clothes suffer mentally when they can no longer do so. As money worries mount -- they're not sure they can pay the mortgage, or the utility bill, or a medical expense that comes in -- parents can become overwhelmed, irritable, short-tempered, depressed and withdrawn.

"Then it erodes communication in the family, and reduces the connectedness that parents have with their children," Murry said.

The kids feel it, too, and their attitudes and behavior can also suffer. Prior research has shown that the kids aren't bothered by the loss of the material goods -- the new cellphone or the clothes -- but by the impact it's having on their family, she added.

"Prior studies have found that kids will say, 'it's not the stuff that I miss. I miss my relationship with my parents. That has shifted and the environment in my family has shifted,'" Murry said.

Parents who are feeling economically strained and depressed should seek out emotional support, whether it's from family and friends, their church or from a mental health professional, Carlo urged.

"They may have to pay some extra attention to work on the quality of the relationship with their child," he said.
Startup funding helps to create jobs

By Jake Halliday

Jake Halliday is CEO of the Missouri Innovation Center, operator of the MU Life Science Business Incubator at Monsanto Place.

Saturday, December 17, 2011

Opinions vary on the value of government-funded programs, but thank goodness for the Small Business Innovation Research program.

The Small Business Innovation Research, or SBIR, program was created in 1982 to provide support to small high-tech firms that play a role in technological advancement and to increase private-sector commercialization of innovation derived from federal research and development.

Federal agencies with outside research-and-development budgets of more than $100 million are required by Congress to administer SBIR programs using an annual set-aside of 2.5 percent for small companies to conduct innovative research or R&D that has potential for commercialization and public benefit.

SBIR grants are awarded only to for-profit companies — not to universities. Some might challenge why public funds are being awarded to private companies, but there is a clear public benefit: jobs.

Virtually all job growth over the past two decades has been by innovative small businesses. Large corporations have given us shrinking employment over the same period.

Overall, Missouri businesses lag behind many states in tapping these grant funding resources.

But here at the incubator in Columbia, we are doing fairly well.

One of our companies recently received a $671,000 SBIR award from the National Institute of Mental Health. Another has completed a $250,000 Phase I grant from the National Cancer Institute and is in line for a $1.6 million Phase II award.

The significance of SBIR funding for high-tech startups cannot be overemphasized.

Venture capital firms do not fund startups. They come into the picture later, after the companies emerge from their period of highest risk.
Startups are funded mainly by angel investors --- brave souls with extra cash and an above-average tolerance for risk.

Actually, angel investment across the country totals about $25 billion annually — on a par with the total investment by professionally managed venture capital firms.

There is a problem with angel capital, however.

It is very, very expensive for the entrepreneur. An entrepreneur can expect to give up, on average, a 25 percent to 30 percent ownership stake in his or her startup for a $300,000 angel investment.

That is where the SBIR funding comes into its own.

No equity ownership is surrendered; there is no debt to be paid back. Angel investors really like to see their companies secure SBIR grants. A grant benefits the company without diluting the investors' ownership. Also, the scientific review conducted by the granting agency is rigorous and equivalent to a "seal of approval" by world experts in the field.

Funding strategies for startups usually are a combination of angel investment and SBIR grants. One of our incubator companies took its technology from the lab to the marketplace with $300,000 in angel investment and $700,000 in grants. Long may this continue.
Visit to MU sports complex wows kids in Parkade running club

August Kryger | Students from the Parkade Elementary School running club tour the University of Missouri athletic training complex Friday.

By Catherine Martin

Saturday, December 17, 2011

About two dozen gleeful youngsters from the Parkade Elementary School running club gasped and giggled as they prepared to explore the University of Missouri's athletic training complex.

The students were amazed by the size of the facility, and many delighted in an interactive life-size image of a tiger that greeted them from a large touch screen. In front of the group stood MU sophomore Jeremy Lampley, who seemed just as excited to be there as the kids.

Lampley, an MU track-and-field athlete, serves as a role model for Parkade students through the running club. The club helps kids burn off energy and encourages healthy choices, Lampley said, but his favorite part is how much fun the group has when members get together.

“The kids enjoy it. They don’t mind getting up at 8 a.m. to run. They want to get up and run and be active,” he said.
Lampley said he was “beyond nervous” his first day with the club and feared the kids wouldn’t like him. But he quickly learned that wouldn’t be the case. “They immediately love you,” he said.

Some teachers said the club has helped students behave better in class, and Lampley said he enjoys watching the kids grow and developing relationships with them.

Organizing a trip to the MU practice facility, he said, was one of the coolest things he thought he could do for them. He gave the group a tour with stops in the weight room and sports medicine room. The kids also had a chance to rub elbows with MU athletes such as basketball star Ricardo Ratliffe, who shared a few words with the kids about what’s expected of the school’s athletes.

“Mizzou athletes have to make sure they take care of school first,” Ratliffe said.

“That’s the No. 1 lesson of the day,” Lampley told the kids. “You need to stay on top of your schoolwork.”

The kids listened intently, in awe of seeing the basketball star in person. To many, yesterday’s field trip was a dream come true. “It’s totally awesome. I’m a huge fan of Mizzou,” said Emelia Knarr, 11.

Emelia said she joined the running club because she thought it would be good for her and her friends. She said she has really liked being part of the club and spending time with Lampley.

“He tells us we need to have a good education,” she said. “Like, if you’re going to play football, you need a good education to think of game plays. Physics would be a good class.”

The running club at Parkade is one of three in district elementary schools — others are at Blue Ridge and Russell Boulevard. Funds donated by ESPN anchor John Anderson helped start the clubs at Parkade and Russell Boulevard this year, and Blue Ridge has had a running club for five years, Principal Tim Majerus said.

“Students get the opportunity to get some exercise before school starts, and it encourages them to be fit,” Majerus said.

Blue Ridge holds an annual 5K run with a shorter “fun run” alternative for kids who want to run a shorter distance. All three running clubs will wrap up in April with a 5K.
Fake chicken with MU link to hit market soon

By Jacob Barker

Columbia Daily Tribune

Friday, December 16, 2011

A company using University of Missouri research is close to launching a new food product that doesn’t just taste like chicken, it feels like chicken, too. But it’s not.

Savage River Farms is a Maryland-based company that entered into an intellectual property licensing agreement with the university late last year.

Savage River plans to begin producing and selling a soy-based chicken substitute in the first quarter of 2012, said Ethan Brown, the company’s founder and president. The chicken alternative uses soy protein and mimics the taste, feel and appearance of chicken.

“You can basically put this product head-to-head with an Oscar Mayer chicken strip,” Brown said. “It’s very difficult ... to tell the difference between the two.”

The company is using research that MU biological engineering Professor Fu-Hung Hsieh has spent more than 20 years developing.

The intellectual property licensing agreement with the university stipulates that Savage River Farms must establish a physical presence in Missouri within five years, a relatively new tactic for the university and a trend nationwide, said Rob Duncan, MU vice chancellor for research.

“If we can, we’ll always try to negotiate that because that brings jobs,” Duncan said.

The university also owns a small stake in the company as well as the intellectual property. Negotiating licensing agreements that require a physical presence in the state “is certainly a leadership strategy I’m pursuing,” Duncan said.

Of course, Savage River Farms could set up shop anywhere in the state, but Duncan sounded optimistic it would want to be near the university.

“You can’t really transfer the technology without transferring the technologists,” he said.
Savage River Farms received an investment from a noted venture capital firm earlier this year, Brown said, and it plans to first tackle the wholesale market when it launches production and distribution early next year.

The company will look to distribute the chicken substitute in markets across the country through food service companies, hospitals, universities and corporate dining operations. Over the course of the year, Brown said, it will brand the product for sale in the retail market.

Brown’s background is in alternative energy, and he realized that rather than putting money into, for instance, a lithium-ion battery, greenhouse emissions could be cut by changing consumer behavior with a plant product indistinguishable from meat.

“If you look at it from a resource and emissions perspective, you really see the benefit of disentangling ourselves from a model that produces protein through animals rather than producing protein through plants,” he said.

For Hsieh, it has been a thrill to watch his research on soy proteins turn into a viable product.

“I’m pretty excited,” he said. “This is a dream for lots of researchers. They want what they have done in the laboratory to become a commercial entity.”

Eventually, he hopes to develop a method to mimic other types of meats using different protein sources.

“We’ve found out it’s not limited to the chicken type,” Hsieh said. “We may be able to mimic beef, pork or even fish.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU research helps create chicken substitute

By The Associated Press
December 17, 2011 | 5:42 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — A Maryland-based company using MU research plans to launch a new soy-based chicken substitute that tastes just like, well, chicken.

Savage River Farms plans to produce and sell the product in markets across the country through food service companies, hospitals, universities and corporate dining operations.

The company entered into an intellectual property licensing agreement late last year with the university that requires Savage River to establish a presence in Missouri within five years.

The Columbia Tribune reported the chicken substitute uses research that MU biological engineering professor Fu-Hung Hsieh has spent more than 20 years developing.

Rob Duncan, the university's vice chancellor for research, said the physical presence stipulation is a fairly new tactic that has become a trend nationwide.

"If we can, we'll always try to negotiate that because that brings jobs," Duncan said.

Savage River founder and president Ethan Brown said it's tough to tell the difference between the substitute and name brand chicken products. It uses soy protein to mimic the taste, feel and appearance of chicken.

"You can basically put this product head-to-head with an Oscar Mayer chicken strip," Brown said. "It's very difficult ... to tell the difference between the two."

Brown says his company will start selling the product in the first quarter of 2012.

The university owns a small stake in the company. While Savage River Farms could establish a presence anywhere in the state, under the licensing agreement, Duncan said he is optimistic the company would want to locate near the university.
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Mizzou research helps create chicken substitute

Sunday, December 18, 2011
The Associated Press

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MU faculty hope to establish digital storytelling degree program

By Melissa Gilstrap
December 16, 2011 | 4:29 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — A proposal to establish a digital storytelling degree program at MU is in the works by several faculty members, and they are seeking student support.

"It (digital storytelling) is using ancient practices of storytelling in a multimedia environment," Patricia Okker, an English professor, wrote in an email. "The major we are proposing develops a hybrid set of skills — in writing, visual communication and design, and production."

Okker wants to get the proposal approved on a campus level, she said. After going through this process, she said she hopes they can bring the proposal before the UM System Board of Curators as early as summer 2012.

Any proposal for a new degree program requires the UM System's Board of Curators vote of approval. With their nod, it would then go to Missouri's Coordinating Board for Higher Education.

Since initially talking to faculty from the School of Journalism and the Department of Communication about digital storytelling almost a year ago, Okker said involvement from faculty has now reached approximately 10 departments campuswide.

Those faculty members are hoping to garner student support and feedback through their Facebook page.

Okker said prospects for graduates with digital storytelling degrees are good within Missouri.

"We have consulted with industry leaders in the state, and based on these conversations, we're optimistic that students with this hybrid set of skills will be quite marketable," Okker said.
More than 10 universities across the country feature digital storytelling workshops, classes or degrees, including Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of California-Berkley.

If the program is put in place, MU would be the first university in the state to offer a digital storytelling degree. Missouri State University's digital storytelling institute "What is Digital Storytelling?" was held this past summer. At this time, the digital storytelling institute is the only event of its kind in Missouri.

Charles Davis, an associate professor of journalism at MU, is involved with the digital storytelling summit, which will be held on March 5 and 6, 2012, in Columbia, following the True/False Film Festival..

A digital storytelling major at MU would fill in the educational gaps that majors like English, journalism and film studies don't, Davis said.

"There are kids coming in who want to do this, but they fall between the cracks," Davis said. "We're trying to build a bigger platform — something multimedia-based that combines elements of film making, information technology and narrative."
MU Health Care backs off flu shot mask rule

By Janese Silvey

Columbia Daily Tribune

Friday, December 16, 2011

University of Missouri Health Care has backed away from asking employees to wear face masks if they’re exempted from a new flu shot policy.

“We changed that procedure recently to not require mask-wearing,” spokeswoman Mary Jenkins said. “We reviewed national guidelines and determined it wasn’t clear if this procedure would actually improve patient or staff safety.”

Hospital administrators enacted a new flu vaccination requirement in September, and some employees have been grumbling since. A few sent anonymous complaints to the Tribune, citing various reasons for not wanting to get the vaccination, such as fears about unknown side effects and questions about the legality of such a mandate.

Those with legitimate health or religious conflicts are exempted, Jenkins said.

Until the recent change, those who were exempt from the vaccination were asked to wear surgical masks, which one employee compared to a scarlet letter singling out a small group of employees.

That requirement was in place for a brief time; Jenkins estimated it was a few days.

She declined to say whether any employees were disciplined for not wearing a mask during that time. She said administrators received several questions about the mask procedure from staff but did not provide a specific number of complaints.

“The mask-wearing was intended for patient and staff safety,” she said. “But we also wanted to be responsive to employees.”

The flu vaccine requirement affects only MU Health employees, meaning it doesn’t apply to doctors who are technically employed by MU’s School of Medicine. The health care system has roughly 5,400 employees, most of whom are complying with the new rule, Jenkins said. About 99 percent of MU Health employees have received flu shots, she said; about 80 people have been exempted. The deadline to get the vaccine is Wednesday.
Requiring hospital employees to get influenza vaccines isn't unusual. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention considers it important for health care employees to be vaccinated, and the American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a policy urging that those vaccinations be required.

Boone Hospital Center implemented its flu shot requirement in 2008, spokesman Jacob Luecke said.

"It wasn't a very difficult transition for staff overall," he said. "A high percentage of staff members were getting the flu shot or mist before it was mandatory."

About 30 of the roughly 2,000 Boone Hospital employees are exempted from the requirement because of medical or religious reasons, he said. Those individuals are "strongly encouraged" to wear masks when they're in a patient care unit, Luecke said, and "mostly, they do."
Mighty Moe finds a home after benefactors bankroll dog’s surgery

MU MENTION PAGE 2

By ERIC ADLER

At the kennel they dubbed him Mighty Moe, given everything the buoyant but hobbled Newfoundland faced.

But perhaps equally mighty have been the humans who came to the ailing dog’s aid and, in this holiday season, changed his fate.

“I am just so grateful for all the people involved ... oh my gosh, everybody,” said Ashlee Parker, spokeswoman for the Wayside Waifs animal shelter.

It started in March with Moe’s original family, which surrendered the 10-month-old black and white Landseer — already weighing close to 100 pounds — to their veterinarian rather than take him to a kennel to be euthanized.

Other owners might not have kept a disabled dog alive.

Moe, at a rare young age, had developed what is commonly known as wobbler’s syndrome.

The medical name is caudal cervical spondylomyelopathy. It appears to be genetic in certain large breeds, such as Great Danes, mastiffs and Doberman pinschers, and occurs most often in older dogs.

Dogs with the condition wobble with an uneven gait and fall. Eventually, if the syndrome goes untreated, they can become paralyzed because of pressure on a misshapen and narrow spinal column.

Treatments can be lengthy, burdensome and costly: steroids, neck braces, MRIs and other diagnostics, spine surgeries and weeks of physical therapy.

“I think his original family just couldn’t afford the surgical procedure and care. It is like $5,000 and more,” Parker said.
The veterinarian turned Moe over to a rescue group.

"The rescue group contacted us and said, 'We have this great dog. He needs help,' " Parker said. "So basically we took him in."

Wayside Waifs — a no-kill shelter that this year will place a record 5,300 cats, dogs and other pets into adoption — doesn’t typically have the facilities or ability to care for animals with such significant special needs.

The shelter tried to find an adoptive family for Moe, posting what Parker described as the “darling, precocious, wiggly, awesome” dog and his photo on Wayside Waifs’ website and noting that he would need expensive surgery.

Some people expressed interest, but economic times are rough.

Then in May, Moe was shown at Wayside Waifs’ annual fundraiser, the Fur Ball.

“He is big and striking, stunningly gorgeous. Some of our guests just fell in love with him,” Parker said.

Three families stepped up. Together, they would pay for Moe’s surgery.

At the University of Missouri Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Columbia, Fred Wininger, an assistant professor of neurology and neurosurgery, worked three to four hours, cutting into Moe’s back, “decompressing” his spine and widening his spinal canal in three prime locations. The staff at Wayside Waifs waited and worried.

“It’s challenging,” Wininger said. “The surgery is difficult, and the aftercare is difficult as well.”

There is no guarantee of a cure. Some dogs are fine for years. Others, saved from crippling paralysis, can remain unstable on their feet.

Shortly before his surgery, and for three months after, Moe was placed with a foster family, Alex Pirnie and his wife, Jen, of Pleasant Hill. Pirnie, 33, a locomotive mechanic for BNSF Railway, owns a five-acre farm and had other dogs.

But Moe was hardly running around. Thin before his surgery, Moe had dropped weight, down to about 95 pounds. His muscles had shrunk from lack of use.

“When I got him home, I had to help him walk — two or three steps at a time,” Pirnie said. “I don’t think it was painful for him. I think it was frustrating. He has a pretty deep bark. At the bottom of the stairs it was more of a yelp. I would have to get behind him and help his rear legs. They worked, but he didn’t know how to use them.”

Back at Wayside Waifs, the staff continued to search for an adoptive family. Calls came from as far away as Chicago and New Mexico. People would see Moe’s picture. Once they learned of his
needs, they backed off, and the Wayside Waifs staff began to wonder whether Moe would be shuttled from one foster home to another.

Just before Thanksgiving, Parker wrote a story for the nonprofit’s newsletter. “Saving Mighty Moe” told the dog’s tale and appealed for an owner.

An employee at the Henry Wurst Inc. printing house was getting the newsletter ready to be printed when she saw the story. She called over Allison Wurst, who took it to her husband, Mike Wurst, the company’s chief executive officer.

“He said, ‘Let’s call,’ ” said Allison Wurst.

The newsletter hadn’t even gone out to its 20,000 subscribers.

What Wayside Waifs didn’t know is that the Wursts, who live outside Parkville in unincorporated Platte County, have owned three Newfoundlands in the past. The last died two years ago.

“It was time to get another dog,” Allison Wurst said. “We went and met him, fell in love and came home with him.”

Moe is hardly 100 percent. When he walks, his hind legs will sometimes just give out on him. Sometimes his front feet buckle at the knuckles when he tires.

“We don’t ever expect him to be normal or perfect, but we’ll do what we can,” Allison Wurst said. “We’re taking him to physical therapy right after Christmas.”

So should any readers of the “Scratching Post” newsletter happen to notice the Newfoundland on Page 4, they should know that Mighty Moe has found a home.

“We do see him as a real blessing,” Allison Wurst said, “and hope he feels like we’re a blessing to him.”