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Conference Call

A Conversation With University of Missouri Chancellor Brady Deaton

BY MARK SLAVIT • PHOTO BY L.G. PATTERSON



► KRCG-TV's Columbia Bureau Chief Mark Slavit recently sat down with University of Missouri Chancellor **Brady Deaton** to talk about some of the headline-grabbing issues the Columbia campus has faced in the past year.

Why is the Southeastern Conference better than the Big 12 for the University of Missouri?

The SEC provides longer term, stable relationships and financial revenues at a level that the University of Missouri will be effectively utilizing in its athletic program. We looked at the potential instability when the Big 12 was facing the loss of more members. We realized that there was significant risk there that we did not want to take at this time.

What role did the state budget cuts play in the switch to the SEC?

Not any direct role at all. I pressed on that in a previous setting. Knowing that

we have to make hard financial decisions in all areas, and knowing that our board had insisted on us being self-sufficient in our athletic budget, those press on you in a way that is part of your thinking about the overall state of the university. If we had ample budgets, that would have shaped our thinking a little differently. That did not take away from the principal drivers and reasons, which were the issue of relative stability. Only in an indirect way did the state budget play a role.

What is the most positive aspect of joining the SEC?

I think it's the competitiveness of one of the absolute top athletic conferences in the nation. The SEC has a tremendous reputation, particularly in football. We've continued to improve in our athletic programs over the last decade in a very significant way. It presents a bit of a competitive stretch for us. We feel we are very competitive.

We'll garner additional national presence as a result of being in the SEC.

Do you see any negatives with the SEC?

I don't see any major negatives. There will be an adjustment process as we seek to ensure that we have the kind of facilities that we think accommodate larger crowds. We hear that the fans in the SEC travel very aggressively. We think that's a good thing. Our student athletes have to travel a bit farther than they did in the Big 12. That's a modest concern.

Are you concerned about the loss of the University of Kansas rivalry?

I am concerned about it. A number of Missourians, our fans and alums value that very much. We are very sensitive to that.

Brady Deaton has been the chief executive officer of the University of Missouri's Columbia campus since 2004. <

That is one reason why we have been very aggressive in seeking to ensure that we have continued competition in the Kansas City area. We thoroughly discussed this issue with our Board of Curators as we made this decision to go to the SEC.

We are trying to develop an invitational basketball tournament in the Kansas City area on one hand, and on the other hand, we want to ensure that we have a competitive football game, either with a traditional rival or with some other institution that would be attractive in the Kansas City area.

How has football coach Gary Pinkel's DWI arrest impacted your fight against alcohol abuse on campus?

It accentuated issues. The day before this unfortunate incident, I spent time in our Faculty Council meeting going over the issues of alcohol abuse with our students. I tried to instill in our faculty a deep concern about this. We want our faculty to help modify student behavior in this regard. This unfortunate incident added fuel to the fire.

We hope Coach Pinkel's once-in-a-career mistake will wake up our students and our faculty more to the importance of this concern. I hope it saves lives.

Members of the Greek system recently voted to allow alcohol back in fraternity houses. Do you agree with that policy?

That's a decision I have left with the Greek community and their alums. I had several discussions with their national directors. They feel this is an important way to control the use of alcohol. I'm willing to give them a chance. They have taken on new responsibilities themselves to be good citizens and do the most effective job possible controlling and containing alcohol abuse. I'm hoping that it's a step in the right direction.

I'm cautious. I'm concerned.

Why do you think Tim Wolfe was the best choice for the job of the new University of Missouri system president?

Tim Wolfe has a very fresh perspective. He has very important leadership skills. He's very articulate about the issues in the role of the university in the state and nation. He has a tremendous international understanding of education and economic development.

He will bring that perspective and strengthen our ability to interpret those

issues to the Legislature and the public. He has a wonderful family. I'm really looking forward to working with him.

During his opening remarks after his introduction as the new university president, Tim Wolfe mentioned the university system's student population growth. Wolfe said that over the last decade, the University of Missouri has been the most rapidly growing student body among members of the American Association of Universities. Is it a good thing to have such a large number of students on your campus?

Some universities have curbed their student growth. Student growth is not necessarily a good thing. It does help more students gain access and get the kind of education that we offer here at our university. We've viewed that as a good thing historically, and continue to. Our pledge is that we will continue to provide these educational opportunities to more and more students, as long as it does not in any way impair the quality of learning in our educational community.

With the switch to the SEC and the new president, how optimistic are you about the future of the University of Missouri?

The SEC and Tim Wolfe are both positive steps for the university. Our real challenge is funding and the willingness of the people of Missouri to step up and work with the governor and the Legislature to provide more public funding to the university. We're caught between increases in state funding or tuition and fee increases. We're doing everything we can to raise private funds to help offset some of this.

Private donors are not looking to offset what the state is not doing. They are looking to build a margin of excellence. We have to look at our development campaigns along those lines. That has to be based on a solid foundation of a state support.

The citizens of Missouri need to recognize that powerful role of economic development in the long term that the University of Missouri provides. We continue to be extremely optimistic about our role among the nation's great universities. ■

This series of one-on-one interviews with compelling local newsmakers is a cooperative effort of Inside Columbia magazine and our media partner, KRCG-TV13.

Wolfe Is A Good Choice For MU And Columbia

Last month, the University of Missouri Board of Curators named Timothy Wolfe as the 23rd president of the University of Missouri system. To the credit of the curators, they made an intelligent move in once again selecting a candidate with a strong background in business, technology and innovation. With more than 30 years of experience with companies such as IBM and Novell,



Wolfe is poised to lead the university through some very challenging times.

At present, the university system's most pressing issues are tied to the reduced level of funding from the state.

It's not likely that the state is going to increase its support for higher education and, to the contrary, some speculate that Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon

will follow through on his threat to cut university funding by another 15 percent. Given the weak support from the state, Wolfe will have to rely on his business acumen to develop alternative sources of funding. To do this, he'll have to identify and exploit the university's strengths in a competitive marketplace.

Fortunately, Wolfe's professional background gives him the resources to forge critical relationships with industries that share a mutual interest in the university's core competencies of agriculture, medicine, communications, energy and transformational technologies. Leveraging academic research into real world business opportunities may be the university's only hope for generating the type of financial resources it needs to be a world-class institution. Based on early impressions, Wolfe will be an excellent bridge to the "outside world."

Insurmountable Challenges

If you rely on his track record, Jay Nixon's actions have clearly demonstrated that the University of Missouri does not have an ally in the Governor's Mansion. His previous broken promise to maintain state support for its flagship university in exchange for tuition freezes was more than disappointing to officials who assumed they were negotiating in good faith with the governor.

The governor's most recent scheme to borrow more than \$100 million from five state universities to cover shortfalls in Missouri's budget adds insult to injury. The move might be considered comical if not for the sad, pathetic nature of Nixon's heavy-handed threat to further cut funding if the loans are not made.

In addition to assuming a defensive posture for state funding, Wolfe will have to convince Missourians that a college education is something that should still be important to our core offerings. Several widely publicized studies recently have questioned the value of a college education in our new economy. A scarcity of opportunity for new college graduates has called into question the value proposition of the college diploma. It will be up to Wolfe to convince state lawmakers and others that a college degree is something the citizens of the Show-Me State can still bank on today.

Hometown Roots

In addition to all of the other attributes and qualifications that Wolfe brings to University Hall, I am excited about his connections to Columbia. A former paperboy for the *Columbia Daily Tribune*, a 1973 state champion quarterback at Rock Bridge High School, and the son of a Mizzou professor, Wolfe is a true son of our community. I think that bodes well for our city and its largest employer — the principal driver in our economic engine. Because Columbia is his hometown, I have high hopes that Wolfe will invest himself in relationships in the local community that will enhance the overall economic impact of the university. I also hope that good old-fashioned nostalgia will in some way help Wolfe resist the temptations from powerful interests in St. Louis and Kansas City to lure pieces of the university to the major metropolitan areas of the state.

In the final analysis, we should all feel hopeful in anticipating Tim Wolfe's arrival at the University of Missouri. Columbians could not have asked for a better fit when looking for someone who will protect our community's most valuable asset.

Let us give him a warm welcome and wish him well.

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A dream takes flight



Matthew Cavanah/Tribune | [Buy this photo](#)

By MATTHEW CAVANAH

Ruth Payton, 82, of Macon, in red, watches Watson, a 5-year-old American bald eagle, take flight yesterday in Long Branch State Park. Payton, who is terminally ill with hemolytic anemia — a disease that prematurely destroys red blood cells — said she had always wanted to see a bald eagle. Her hospice worker, Randi Petre, contacted the University of Missouri's Raptor Rehabilitation Project, which arranged for Payton to come see Watson be released back into the wild. The eagle was brought to MU's Raptor Rehabilitation Project last month after being found in Randolph County with severe lead poisoning, likely the result of ingesting contaminated fish or deer.

Campus Chatter



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A look back on higher ed in 2011

By [Janese Silvey](#)

On Sunday, the Tribune's Perspectives page will give a run-down of Columbia's top 10 stories of 2011.

Whittling down a year's worth of news into a handful of headlines is not an easy feat. Reporters started with a list of more than 30 big news stories then through a democratic process voted for our favorites and tallied which got the most votes as the top.

Unfortunately, that means some really important University of Missouri and higher education stories didn't make the list.

Of course, the announcement of Tim Wolfe as the next UM System president tops university news in 2011 ... although we had to wait nearly the entire year for that.

Here are other major university stories that didn't make Sunday's top 10 cut (spoiler: you won't see the MIZ-SEC story here).

In no particular order...

SAVING MO THEATRE

MU emerged as a sort of community hero this fall when administrators announced [they'd be taking over operations of the Missouri Theatre.](#)

At the risk of annoying editors who hate this phrase, I think by most standards, the partnership would be considered a "win-win." MU needed another performance venue — Jesse Auditorium pretty much stays booked solid — and the theatre needed some experienced management.

The university and theater reached an agreement in August that has MU paying \$12,000 a month during a three year lease. At the end of the lease, MU will have the option to buy the theater.

Although purchasing the Missouri Theatre wouldn't replace MU's need for a new School of Music facility — the school needs a building for classrooms and a small recital hall — the price of a new building will drop substantially if the university doesn't have to include a large concert hall.

RADIL SOLD

A Maine-based company ended years of speculation about the future of MU's Research Animal Diagnostic Laboratory when it purchased the facility in November. IDEXX Laboratories paid MU \$43 million for the lab that serves companies using animals for biomedical research. A large portion of that money will be used to set up an endowment, which ensures a steady flow of interest earnings.

IDEXX is a \$1 billion company that says it will keep the RADIL operation in Columbia, hiring the 43 staff members and eight faculty members previously working in the lab as university employees.

RACIST REPEAT

Another year, another racist incident topping the list of university stories. In February, former freshman Ben Elliott apparently thought it would be funny to spray paint the word "nigger" on a campus statue. Not so much. He's now facing second-degree felony charges for property damage motivated by discrimination and is due in court next month.

It was the second year MU had to deal with public racism. Last year, two students lined cotton balls in front of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center and were later charged with littering.

Elliott's stunt prompted students and administrators to rally around a "One Mizzou" campaign that aims to ensure every student is part of the Tiger community.

But the call for diversity took a hit earlier in the year when faculty voted down a proposal that would have required all students to take a diversity intensive course.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE...A CURATOR

Craig Van Matre was a curator early this year. Then he wasn't. Then he was again. Then he wasn't again. And now he is again, at least through next month.

The on-again-off-again political appointment was enough to give anyone paying attention a serious case of mental whiplash.

Nixon appointed Van Matre to the UM Board of Curators early in the year along with two other curators whose nominations sailed through Senate confirmation. For some reason, Van Matre

became a political bargaining chip. Nixon pulled his nomination just before the session ended when it became clear senators weren't going to confirm him, then reappointed him shortly after the session ended.

But when lawmakers returned in September for a special session, Nixon had to withdraw the appointment again until that session ended before re-reappointing him.

Van Matre still needs the OK from senators at the start of this coming session and then we can all get off the Van Matre not-so-merry go-round.

TUITION TALK

First curators argued over whether to increase tuition by more than inflation. Then, after they came to a compromise, the university went through proper channels to make sure they had the OK from the state to do so. Higher Education Commissioner David Russell granted permission, freeing UM from a funding penalty over the tuition increase, and all was well.

Nixon apparently didn't think so. After lawmakers were done penning a budget that reduced Nixon's original proposed cuts to higher education, the governor restored those cuts and chopped UM's funding by another 1.1 percent through a withholding.

Auditor Tom Schweich questioned whether Nixon had the constitutional authority to withhold funds that are technically available to be spent and filed a lawsuit against the governor over it in August.

BIG NAME SPEAKERS

MU had a slew of big name speakers this year. Joseph Gordon-Levitt (who's adorable, by the way) entertained a full house at Jesse Auditorium in October with his variety show antics and dimples (so adorable). Earlier that month, Mary Jo Connery — formerly Mary Jo Buttafuoco — got to dish about her infamous ex Joey and his former teen lover Amy Fisher. In September, we were all cringing as Aron Ralston vividly described cutting off his arm to free himself from a boulder, an ordeal captured in the 2010 film "127 Hours." And in May, Sheryl Crow spoke to graduates at Honors Commencement, where she was given an honorary degree.

Perhaps the biggest name of the year to address an MU audience, though, was Maya Angelou who packed Jesse Auditorium in April.

Some on campus were hoping Michelle Obama would top next year's list of top university speakers, but, alas, the first lady declined an invite to speak at an upcoming symposium on food and nutrition.

FAREWELL TO CARNEY

John Carney III stepped down from his role as chancellor at Rolla's Missouri University of Science & Technology after successfully changing its name from University of Missouri-Rolla.

Carney left a pretty significant legacy behind, but perhaps will be most missed at least by this reporter for his entertaining curator presentations that always included mention of Brad Pitt. Pitt, of course, was temporarily a Mizzou student. I'm really not sure how Carney's Pitt-themed presentations came about but during two-day curators meetings, anything slightly resembling entertainment was much appreciated.

... AND MY STORIES

"All My Children" went off the air this September after a more than four decade run. OK, this isn't exactly higher education news, as there really was nothing higher or educational about the ABC soap. But it sure did impact this higher education reporter's routine. I've yet to find a replacement for that daily, hour-long mental vacation.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Mizzou's Homecoming turned 100 this year but the celebration doesn't look a day over 75. For years, the weeks-long event has included a plethora of activities, including the parade, official tailgate, blood drive and, of course, home football game.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE IS...CC

Columbia College got a new, trendier logo this year. The looped C's replace the more traditional logo of Rogers Hall. The college also announced a new tuition deal that ensures freshmen their bills won't go up during their four (five?) year college careers.

TWO SCOOPS & A TRIM TUMMY

It was another year full of fun research nuggets. A graduate student invented an ice cream that changes flavors as it melts in your mouth, and researchers came up with a healthy frozen treat. In February, Carol Ward, a researcher in the Department of Pathology and Anatomical Sciences, released a study detailing how new fossil findings prove that Lucy — the 3.2 million year old species thought to be somewhere between ape and human — actually had arches in her feet, meaning she didn't climb trees as previously suspected.

And an associate professor in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, James Perfield, discovered that oil from the seeds of a tropical tree could be the ticket to a trim tummy — anything anyone can do to speed the commercialization of that invention up a little would be much appreciated.

PERFORMANCE PLAN

Nixon successfully got performance funding incorporated in the process that will now be used by the Department of Higher Education to request funds for universities. The plan took heat from faculty members but university administrators stayed publicly supportive of the process.

As a result, starting in 2014 or whenever the state actually has money to increase funding to higher education, schools will get those increases based on graduation, retention and other performance measures.

BROACHING BENEFITS ISSUE

Domestic partner benefits still aren't offered by the UM System but there was a slight breakthrough for proponents when the chairman of the Board of Curators at least acknowledged the issue this year. Former UM President Gary Forsee had pretty much successfully ignored the topic during his nearly three-year term. In October, Curator Warren Erdman said he'd ask the board's Compensation and Human Resources Committee to review benefits for same-sex couples. The order came after MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, the Council of Deans and other top administrators sent letters to University Hall in support of domestic partner benefits. Heck, even Mike Alden, MU's athletic director, weighed in with support.

Employee benefits did change, though. Starting Oct. 1, new hires will have to contribute part of their pay into retirement plans rather than simply being given a guaranteed benefit. The change came after a curator discussion that spanned nearly two years.

WHAT'S NEXT?

What will 2012 bring?

That's the best part of this job — who knows? More funding woes, tuition increases and research findings are sure to make headlines over the next 12 months, but I suspect as always we'll see some surprising stories in the coming year ... and I expect to be around to report them.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Editorial: New study offers room to negotiate on valuing good teachers

By the Editorial Board | Posted: Tuesday, January 10, 2012 12:15 am

No MU mention

Good teachers make a difference.

That hardly qualifies as news. But combined with a serious statistical analysis of how much difference the best teachers can make in the future earnings capacity of their students, that simple declarative sentence gains a certain gravitas.

The New York Times on Friday reported on such a study, conducted by Harvard economics professors Raj Chetty and John N. Friedman and Columbia University's Jonah E. Rockoff. The scientists tracked 2.5 million elementary and middle-school students over 20 years and found convincing statistical evidence that replacing just one poor teacher with an average one could raise an entire classroom's earnings capacity by \$266,000 over their lifetimes.

The study went so far as to suggest that other risk factors facing teenagers, such as pregnancy, also were reduced by the presence of good teachers.

The report reinforces the incredibly important that role teachers play in our children's future.

It simultaneously boosts the public school reform movement, which seeks to tie teacher performance to student test scores. The researchers tracked the effectiveness of teachers based on test scores, and, significantly, controlled for such variables as poverty, student motivation and other outside factors.

They found that the higher test scores made a difference and, over time, were a strong predictor of the quality of teaching.

The study probably will put wind behind the sails of a reform movement that places increased emphasis on rating teachers based on the test scores of their students.

Such ratings should not be the only way to measure teacher quality, but data clearly indicate that test scores do matter.

Legislators all over the country, including in Missouri and Illinois, have grappled with this dilemma for years. How do you value the complex job of raising test scores of children often unprepared to learn? How do you pay for more comprehensive assessments of teachers when school funding is facing a sharp budget ax?

Existing teacher assessment programs too often consist primarily of a peer teacher or principal making observations in a classroom once a year. A 2009 report from an advocacy group called The New Teacher Project found that in 14 large American school districts traditional assessments had found about 98 percent of the teachers to be satisfactory.

To say the least, that's not likely.

If public schools are going to get more highly qualified teachers in front of students, more rigorous assessments are essential. There is room in this debate to value the job teachers do while recognizing that helping them to improve has a real, tangible effect on the quality of life their students will have after their formal education ends.

Richard Barth, the CEO of the nationally acclaimed nonprofit KIPP charter schools, says that the key to turning around underperforming urban school districts is to "flood them with human capital."

That means finding good principals and teachers and putting them in an environment in which they can succeed.

Having one top teacher for one year can raise a student's lifetime earnings by \$9,000, the Harvard study concluded. Do the math and think what top teachers every year could mean.

As our city, state and nation continue to discuss ways to improve our public schools, let's put the numbers to work. Hire good teachers. Value them, and work to make them better.

It's a formula for success.