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Chicago Tribune

Student angels earn their investing wings

By Steve Rosen, Tribune Media Services Kids & Money
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It takes steady nerves, risk taking and a willingness to cut through the hype when deciding that an unproven company has a product worth investing in. It also takes guts.

Fifteen students in a business school class at the University of Missouri in Columbia displayed all those traits over the past school year while running a venture capital fund with a \$600,000 pot of money. The purpose of the fund, which is completely student-run, is to identify and invest in potential high-growth start-up companies in Missouri.

The Student Angel Capital Program completed its first deal in April, investing \$30,000 in a company called EternoGen. That made the venture fund one of the largest equity investors in the Columbia, Mo., company and gave it a seat on the board.

EternoGen has a product called Dermelle, a human tissue filter used in cosmetic, cardiovascular and orthopedic procedures.

The obligatory oversized check was handed to an EternoGen director last month after more than a year of reviewing funding proposals and interviewing the key players from EternoGen and about a dozen other promising companies with little or no track record.

"It was risky but very exciting," said Katie Chitwood, an accounting major and co-president of the angel fund.

Striking pay dirt can be fun, but one of the goals of the program is to identify companies with products that can make a mark on society.

That's what drew the students to unanimously approve the investment in EternoGen, even though a hoped-for double-digit return could be two to four years away.

Missouri's Student Angel program is among a handful of venture capital funds run by students. Two others are at the University of Michigan and Washington University in St. Louis.

Missouri's venture capital program was launched in late 2010, thanks to a \$50,000 grant from the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation in Kansas City.

Money to seed the program also came from the Shelter Insurance Foundation and from university alumni donations.

Right now, the fund is too small to handle the \$200,000-and-up deals that many new ventures need, said William Allen, the angel program faculty adviser and an assistant professor of finance.

"We'd like to see a couple of million dollars in the fund," said Allen.

Over the school year, the mix of undergraduate and graduate students met twice a week in Allen's classroom, where they learned investment strategies and got familiar with contracts, balance sheets and due diligence procedures.

But much of the learning came outside the classroom in meetings with entrepreneurs pitching ideas and with professional investors, said John Field, a graduate student and the other co-president of the fund.

The students focused on evaluating products and financials, but their formula relied on teamwork.

The team included students from the law school, a couple of master's of business administration candidates, a journalism student, a biology major and even a student from the psychology department.

"We value diverse perspectives," said Field. "That's our secret sauce."

Apigenin, Found In Celery And Parsley, Could Help Fight Breast Cancer

A substance found in celery and parsley could pack a powerful punch against breast cancer, according to a new study in mice.

Researchers from the University of Missouri found that apigenin seems to have an effect on certain kinds of breast cancer tumors associated with the hormone progestin (given along with estrogen to women as part of hormone replacement therapy for menopause, and is known to increase the risk of breast cancer).

"We do know that apigenin slowed the progression of human breast cancer cells in three ways: by inducing cell death, by inhibiting cell proliferation, and by reducing expression of a gene associated with cancer growth," study researcher Salman Hyder, a professor of biomedical sciences at the College of Veterinary Medicine and the Dalton Cardiovascular Research Center at the University of Missouri, said in a statement.

"Blood vessels responsible for feeding cancer cells also had smaller diameters in apigenin-treated mice compared to untreated mice," Hyder added. "Smaller vessels mean restricted nutrient flow to the tumors and may have served to starve the cancer as well as limiting its ability to spread."

The study, published in the journal *Hormones and Cancer*, was conducted in specially bred mice that had breast cancer cells implanted in them. Some of these mice were then given a kind of progestin called medroxyprogesterone acetate (MPA), which is the same as that which is given as part of hormone-replacement therapy.

Then, researchers gave apigenin to some of the mice that were treated with the MPA. They found that tumors grew in the mice not given apigenin, while tumor growth actually decreased and the tumors were smaller in the mice given apigenin.

Researchers published a similar study last year in the journal *Cancer Prevention Research*, also looking at the role of apigenin in progestin-related breast cancer tumors in mice.



MU students criticize plus/minus grading

By JANESE SILVEY

Thursday, May 17, 2012

Some students receiving spring semester grade reports this week are complaining about the University of Missouri's system that lets professors tag a "minus" behind a letter grade.

GRADE CONVERSION

Letter grades and associated grade points used to calculate the grade-point average:

A+ = 4.0

A = 4.0

A- = 3.7

B+ = 3.3

B = 3.0

B- = 2.7

C+ = 2.3

C = 2.0

C- = 1.7

D+ = 1.3

D = 1.0

D- = 0.7

"I HATE Mizzou +/- system!!!!" one student griped on Twitter. Another called the system "completely bogus," and one suggested the grading system "get malaria and die."

In a more formal process, Missouri Students Association leaders have met with faculty members to discuss whether the grading scale makes sense, MSA President Xavier Billingsley said.

The scale works like this: A B-plus is worth 3.3 points toward a grade-point average — better than the 3 points attached to a straight B. A B-minus gets 2.7 points.

But here's where it gets dicey — students earning an A-plus receive a 4.0, the same GPA assigned to an A. For an A-minus, though, a student gets 3.7 points.

"We don't have a problem with the plus/minus system as a whole, but the 'A' is a big problem," Billingsley said.

A student can receive all A's, but if any of those have a "minus" attached, the student won't have a perfect 4.0 GPA.

"That puts them at a disadvantage when they're applying for prestigious academic programs and selective programs," said Craig Roberts, a plant sciences professor and chairman of Faculty Council's student affairs committee. "It could also put them at a disadvantage for grants and scholarships and puts them at a disadvantage in relation to students from other universities that don't have this system."

Faculty members on an ad hoc committee are trying to get a better understanding of why the system was adopted, he said.

One solution would be a weighted GPA, which would assign more than 4 points to students who earn an A-plus, Billingsley said. In the past, though, he said faculty members have shot down proposals to make an A-plus worth 4.2 or 4.3 points.

Billingsley said some students are open to a change that would only affect the "A" grade and still allow pluses and minuses to be used on anything lower.

That would be a start, said Alana Flowers, a communication major, but she would prefer MU to scrap the system altogether. She thinks her GPA would be higher if professors assigned straight letter grades.

The system is pointless, she said in an email. "It offers a sense of inadequacy. While striving for a specific GPA, we as students have to jump through three separate loopholes just to obtain a desirable GPA. ... If I strived for the 90, it should be an A."

The debate has flared up routinely since the system was adopted in the mid-1990s. Archives from the campus newspaper, *The Maneater*, show student groups have discussed it nearly ever year since. Faculty members who have supported the system in the past said it gives professors a more precise way of grading, according to archives and minutes from 1990s Faculty Council meetings.

Roberts said current talks are preliminary. "Faculty should not be alarmed at this because nothing is going to be put before them for consideration until we have a good handle on the history," he said, "and on the pluses and minuses of the plus/minus system."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



Mo. man gets 3 years for sending money to Iraq

Associated Press | Posted: Thursday, May 17, 2012 5:06 pm | [\(0\) comments.](#)

A Columbia business owner and community leader has been sentenced to three years in federal prison for illegal sending more than \$200,000 to friends and family in Iraq while the country faced U.S. sanctions.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports <http://bit.ly/KoV7XH> that Shakir Hamoodi, a Middle Eastern grocer and former University of Missouri nuclear scientist, was sentenced Wednesday in federal court in Jefferson City. A sizable group of Columbia residents attended the hearing in support.

Hamoodi pleaded guilty in December 2009 to violating federal sanctions against Iraq by sending money overseas from 1991 to 2003. He faced up to 71 months in prison, but Judge Nanette Laughrey cited Hamoodi's efforts to increase cultural understanding of Muslims in mid-Missouri in giving him a lesser punishment. He is scheduled to report to federal prison on Aug. 28 after his observance of Ramadan.

"I made a mistake, and I am deeply sorry," Hamoodi told the judge. "All money sent was used by friends and family."

Laughrey noted that while others facing similar charges received lesser penalties, those defendants sent less money and committed fewer transactions. Hamoodi's efforts evolved into what the judge called a nine-year conspiracy.

In September 2006, federal agents searched Hamoodi's Columbia home but found no proof that the Iraqi native and vocal critic of the war in his home country was aiding the Iraqi government through his financial contributions.

U.S. Department of Justice attorney Garrett Heenan suggested that the final destinations of Hamoodi's contributions were difficult to determine. Hamoodi could have obtained a license during the sanctions through the Department of the Treasury, but that would have only allowed

for the transfer of goods, not money. His shipments included money sent by other Columbia residents to help their own families.

"The problem during the (Saddam) Hussein era is that we don't know where the money went," the government lawyer said. "I understand money could go to family and charities, but the money could be taxed by Hussein."

Hamoodi said the search on his home caused his family to be ostracized by some neighbors and hurt sales at his World Harvest market. Charles Atkins was among the more than 20 supporters who gathered after the sentencing to express their support for Hamoodi.

"He really has a heart for helping people," Atkins said. "Now it is our turn."

Hamoodi's case is not related to the federal investigation of the Islamic American Relief Agency, a defunct charity that was based in Columbia but closed in 2004 after the government said it helped finance global terrorism.

A former Michigan congressman and U.S. delegate to the United Nations who lobbied on behalf of that charity was sentenced in January to a year and one day in prison by the same federal judge. The group's former executive director was sentenced to nearly five years in federal prison for sending more than \$1 million to Iraq through the charity in violation of U.S. sanctions. Three others involved in the charity were sentenced to probation.



What caused the mystery of the Dark Day?

MU MENTION PAGE 2

By Tom de Castella BBC News Magazine

Three centuries ago in parts of North America, a strange event turned morning to night. It remains wreathed in mystery - so what caused the Dark Day?

Halfway through the morning the sky turns yellow. Animals run for cover and darkness descends, causing people to light candles and start to pray. By lunchtime night has fallen. Is it the end of the world?

The Dark Day, as it's become known, took place on May 19, 1780 in New England and Canada. For the past 232 years historians and scientists have argued over the origins of this strange event.

Today there are many theories. Was it the result of volcanic eruption, fire, meteor strike - or something more sinister?

When the makers of Doctor Who this week asked fans of the show to send in their suggestions, they received a wide range of theories both plausible and Tardis-related.

With little scientific knowledge amongst the populace in 1780, people would have been afraid. Some lawmakers in Connecticut believed it was the day of judgement. The sense that a decisive moment was afoot would have been bolstered by the fact that during the preceding days, the sun and moon glowed red.

Historian Mike Dash says the north-east corner of the US was a deeply Protestant society with a profound interest in "guilt, sin and redemption". Dash, who wrote about the paranormal in his book *Borderlands*, says that faced with sudden darkness, people would look for biblical precedents.

"There are some verses in Matthew that might have led them to believe that this is the second coming of Christ. At the time, natural events - even birds fighting in the sky - were a sign of God's intentions. The Dark Day would have seemed like a warning to Man."

Deadly portents

So what might explain 1780's Dark Day?

The Met Office points out that **thick cloud** can drop low enough to turn on automatic street lights and require cars to use their lights. But it's unlikely this alone would be enough to cause a Dark Day.

A **solar eclipse** can be ruled out as there is a record of when these occur - and they only last for a matter of minutes.

The eruption of the volcano Eyjafjallajokull in 2010 caused enough ash to enter the atmosphere to ground flights across northern Europe.

Thomas Choularton, professor of atmospheric science at the University of Manchester, says volcanic ash clouds often cause "yellow days". Eruptions at Mount St Helens in Washington State have lowered light levels in recent decades, he adds.

And yet there is no record of volcanic activity in 1780, he says, making a huge ash cloud an unlikely explanation. A **meteorite** is equally unlikely, although "you can't rule it out completely", Prof Choularton says.

The answer to the puzzle can be found in the trees, many scientists believe.

Academics at the University of Missouri's Department of Forestry analysed tree trunks inland from New England, where westerly prevailing winds would originate. They found signs of fire-scarred rings in tree trunks dating back to that period.

It is also known that there was a drought there in 1780 making fire more likely, says Dr Will Blake, associate professor of geography at Plymouth University.

But could a **forest fire** cause such a change in light? "I've witnessed minor fires in Australia where you get a very eerie light. The bigger the fire, the darker it's going to get." Fog is common on the east coast. The mix of fog and soot from the forest fire would combine to make darkness descend, Dr Blake argues.

Eyewitness accounts in New England support the forest fire hypothesis. Soot was spotted in the rivers. And Jeremy Belknap of Boston wrote in a letter that the air had the "smell of a malt-house or a coal-kiln".

William Corliss, the physicist and chronicler of unexplained events, found 46 accounts of dark days around the world between 1091 and 1971.

Nowadays people can call upon scientific knowledge, satellite pictures and the media for reassurance. But Dark Days have continued to unsettle people until surprisingly recently.

A Dark Day in a similar part of North America to 1780's occurred in 1950. It was caused by forest fires in Alberta and prompted alarm and confusion, says David Phillips, senior climatologist at Environment Canada.

"If you'd woken up at noon you'd have believed it was midnight. People thought it was nuclear attack or a solar eclipse."

Whatever the cause in 1780, the geography must have exacerbated the fear, says Dash. Settlements tended to go little more than 200 miles inland. In essence, European settlers were living on the edge of a vast unknown continent.

"When it goes dark for them, there's no guarantee it is ever going to get light again. In those days it would be quite natural to think it was the Second Coming," Dash says. When dawn arrived, it is likely that prayers of thanks were said across the previously benighted land.



OPEN COLUMN

New UM president is refreshingly blunt

Thursday, May 17, 2012

Kudos to Tim Wolfe, president of the University of Missouri System, for telling it like it is.

Attempts by state Sen. Jane Cunningham, R-Chesterfield, to shut down the Sue Shear Institute for Women in Public Life is indeed a "fricking embarrassment" to the people of Missouri and an unmitigated effort to curb academic freedom. According to its mission statement, the institute exists to "help women break down both the external and internal barriers to embracing the rights and responsibilities of a representative democracy." It is partisan only if you think that trying to increase women's participation in public life is partisan.

As a professor at MU, it is refreshing to hear a president defend the university in no uncertain terms. This determination and clarity have been lacking in present and past high-ranking administrators.

But "fricking embarrassment" is not all Wolfe said. The president is objecting to the legislature's attempt to control what is communicated in our classrooms. Where is the tea party when we need it? Sen. Cunningham and her government ilk have been trying to regulate the university so that the only ideas accepted are their own. Good riddance to Cunningham, who would do well to admit she has personally benefited from initiatives such as those promulgated by the Sue Shear Institute.

President Wolfe, please keep this up!

-Michael Ugarte

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Editorial: What's in a name? Just ask the Kangaroos

By the Editorial Board | Posted: Friday, May 18, 2012 12:10 am | (0) comments.

NO MU MENTION

Kansas City, famous for barbecue, blues and -- kangaroos?

Our esteemed brothers and sisters on the editorial page of *The Kansas City Star* have endorsed a proposal to change the name of the University of Missouri-Kansas City back to the University of Kansas City. This could create some problems.

"'University of Missouri-Kansas City' doesn't exactly roll off the tongue,' *The Star* opined this week. "It's clunky, and the 'Kansas City' part comes across as an afterthought.

"The University of Kansas City, on the other hand, has a nice, clean ring. It conveys a sense of place."

The place might be Lawrence, Kan., but never mind.

UMKC's chancellor, Leo Morton, may ask the University of Missouri Board of Curators to allow UMKC to return to its original name, the University of Kansas City. As a private institution, UKC struggled for 30 years before becoming part of the four-campus UM system in 1963.

"We say, go for it," *The Star* wrote.

We say, not so fast.

Yes, Kansas Citians have a right to be proud of UMKC, despite the unfortunate nickname of its athletic teams. "Kangaroos" doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, either.

UMKC has schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and law. It has a conservatory of music and dance and a new business school.

Some of these programs duplicate offerings elsewhere in the UM system, which is an issue the Legislature should address but probably won't. Every public university has its own constituency in Jefferson City.

This is an ego issue, not an educational issue. Administrators and alumni at public universities that aren't the University of Missouri-Columbia fret that they're viewed as mere "branches," not stand-alone institutions.

Thus, the University of Missouri-Rolla became Missouri University of Science and Technology. Schools that have geographic adjectives in their names worry about being "directional" schools. Thus Northeast Missouri State became Truman State and Southwest Missouri State became Missouri State.

This makes local folks feel better, but full-menu universities in every corner of the state are inefficient. And besides, think of the problems that a UMKC name change would cause for the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

"St. Louis University" already has been claimed. "The University of St. Louis" would just be confusing. Are you talking Billikens or Tritons (née Rivermen and Riverwomen)? Some kids at UMSL say they go to "MIT" (Missouri in town), but they're just showing off.

"What's in a name?" asked Juliet of Romeo. More than you'd think.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

School of Health Professions to begin new discussion series

By Teresa Avila

May 17, 2012 | 5:36 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA – The MU School of Health Professions is beginning a new conversation series aiming to promote discussion and interaction between the school and the Columbia community.

MU Brain Imaging Center Director Scott Frey will discuss how increased or decreased amounts of hand stimulation can affect certain areas of the brain, specifically those responsible for hand movements and sensations.

The series will present health research that can change peoples' lives in a real and practical way, said School of Health Professions strategic communications director Megan Gill.

The series, titled the Collaborative Scholarship & Discovery Conversation Series, will have its first installment from noon to 1 p.m. Friday in Room 3 of MU's Lewis Hall.

The event is free and open to the public. For more information go to [the School of Health Profession's blog post](#).

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.