

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Curators go home, criticism of UM continues

BY JANE HENDERSON > Post-Dispatch Book Editor • jhenderson@post-dispatch.com |

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The University of Missouri curators ended their meeting Wednesday, going home after approving a system-wide budget that kills a subsidy for the 54-year-old University of Missouri Press.

The Board of Curators did not address its unusually large audience, supporters of the embattled press. The board's director later offered a slim olive branch, telling the school newspaper the curators would be open to "holding a forum" to hear comments from the public.

The system's budget will reallocate millions of dollars to projects that its leaders think can bring in more bucks than a few lousy books about Missouri history and other topics.

But can one put a price on how much the university's reputation has suffered in just a few weeks?

The critics are not going away, and the university system would be well-advised to stop acting as if it's no big deal to kill the press without anything ready to replace it.

Apparently university system is making a last-minute effort to come up with a cheap way to sustain nonprofit, academic publishing. At this point it might be hard for any master of "strategic communication" to repair the damage.

Just a few points to try to keep up with this story:

The Save the University of Missouri Press petition continues to grow, with more than 4,000 signatures.

The Kansas City Star, like the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, has condemned the university's priorities. Its editorial Wednesday said:

The University of Missouri system can barely afford to pay its faculty competitive salaries. It lacks a good plan to pay for upkeep of buildings. Tuition at its campuses is high enough to force middle-income families to either take out loans or seek other educational options.

But there is always a way to finance big-time college sports, even though the connection between athletic programs and the educational missions of their universities is broken.

My former colleague Jerry Berger (who spent plenty of time in the PR trenches) even blogged about how "Mizzou's public relations debacle continues."

An Associated Press story about the press closure is on the national CBS and CNBC websites. It says in part:

The Board of Curators didn't seem swayed after dozens of supports of the University of Missouri Press attended the campus governing board's meeting a day earlier in Columbia. Few of those supporters showed up for Wednesday's meeting since the board generally doesn't carve out time for public comment.

Curators did not publicly discuss the recent decision by new University System President Tim Wolfe to shutter the press, though Wolfe and the board's chairman, David Bradley, said the university hopes to soon unveil a new model for the publishing house.

"We are looking for a new model for the press that takes into account the latest and greatest technologies, perpetuates what's good about the press relative to the assets that we have in our library, and leveraging those as best possible," Wolfe said. "We look forward to a press that brings vibrancy and affordability to the publishing of scholarly work."

The university plans to honor its publishing agreements with authors who are under contract, Wolfe added. He declined to specify the timing of the shift. The press' official last day is Saturday, the end of the university's current fiscal year.

The move has generated significant criticism from faculty authors, scholars and literature lovers across the country — particularly as Missouri simultaneously announced a \$200 million long-term plan to expand its 71,004-seat football stadium and boost its spending on athletics as part of a move to the Southeastern Conference.

Those are the facts, and even though the university system considers its building projects great news, a lot of people will continue to see its decisions in a different way.

(Disclosure: I learned a lot from the University of Missouri-Columbia three decades ago. It awarded me degrees in both journalism and English.)



Curators chairman open to public input in future

By Janese Silvey

The chairman of the University of Missouri's Board of Curators said he would be open to allowing public input at future meetings as long as the system had some advance notice.

David Bradley, who also is publisher of the St. Joseph News-Press Gazette in St. Joseph, said he had not known that supporters of the UM Press were going to attend this week's meeting in Columbia until he read it in Sunday's Tribune.

The press "was not on the agenda, and I didn't feel I could change the agenda," he said. "We didn't know early enough that they were coming."

Dozens of authors, professors and friends and relatives of UM Press employees showed up during the board's academic affairs committee meeting Tuesday afternoon. Some stayed for the post-meeting announcement of an athletics gift and lingered in the hallway at the Reynolds Alumni Center afterward but never got a chance to talk to UM President Tim Wolfe or curators. The board immediately went into a closed session after the public meeting.

Board of Curators meetings do not allot time for public input. Asked whether the board might consider allowing public comments at future meetings, Bradley said he could envision hosting a public forum on a specific topic of interest either as part of or outside of regular meetings.

Wolfe announced in late May that the UM Press would be phased out starting Sunday, the beginning of the 2013 fiscal year, to save \$400,000. He told curators closing the press was not an easy decision but that the UM System could not justify operating it in its current form.

He also said he is optimistic that the Columbia campus will come up with a new, more sustainable model for a university press.

"We are looking for a new model for the press that takes into account the latest and greatest technologies, perpetuates what's good about the press relative to the assets that we have in our library, and leveraging those as best possible," he said. "We look forward to a press that brings vibrancy and affordability to the publishing of scholarly work."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Letters to the editor, June 29

Upgrades and shutdowns

The University of Missouri—Columbia is going to spend \$200 million to upgrade Faurot Field now that Mizzou is in the Southeastern Conference. Yet just a couple of weeks ago, the very same university announced the shutdown of its prestigious University of Missouri Press for lack of less than \$650,000. This is less than one-third of 1 percent of the cost of the Faurot Field upgrade.

Are the priorities of the university board and administrators — and our Legislature, which funds the university from our tax dollars — in the right place?

Terry Meek • St. Louis

Dumb and dumber

Many people will agree with editorial the "Restart the presses" (June 25). Surely, the University of Missouri Press, with its proud record of publishing significant books, is more deserving of support than the vastly well-funded sports program of that school. After all, scholarship is more important than football, isn't it?

But is the Post-Dispatch, which takes University President Timothy Wolfe to task for failing the press, any better than he is?

One only has to compare the ever-diminishing Opinion section to the robust, many-paged Sports section to see that the once wonderful, thought-provoking newspaper has its priorities as badly inverted as Mr. Wolfe. And, as if to prove my point, Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman was deleted from the paper's columnist lineup, making the Post-Dispatch significantly poorer by his absence.

Lamentably, the Post-Dispatch blithely has participated, along with the University of Missouri, in a most unfortunate phenomenon: the widespread dumbing of America.

Allan R. Shickman • University City

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RULING REACTIONS

Thursday, June 28, 2012

GOV. JAY NIXON

"We're just now beginning to review this ruling so that we can understand exactly what it means for Missouri. This ruling has significant complexities and implications for families, health care providers and insurers in our state. Here in Missouri, I'm committed to working collaboratively with citizens, businesses, medical providers and the legislature to move forward in a way that works best for families in our state."

STEVEN LIPSTEIN

President/CEO, BJC HealthCare

"Today's U.S. Supreme Court ruling helps to ensure that more people in our country will receive health insurance to assist with their medical needs. BJC HealthCare will continue our focus on making medicine better for the patients and families we serve. As BJC employees, we work every day to improve quality and safety and have long advocated for affordable health care that expands access to needed medical services. We continue to believe that all people living in the United States need the financial protection and security that comes with having health insurance."

HAROLD WILLIAMSON

Vice chancellor, University of Missouri Health System

"We welcome the clarity that the ruling provides and believe health care already has changed in significant ways as hospitals, physicians and other health care providers are working together more closely to improve the coordination of care. At MU Health System we will continue to work on ways to provide care more efficiently and ensure patient quality and safety. We believe we are well positioned for a more inclusive health care system, providing both preventive care for a larger number of patients and managing chronic disease often associated with an aging population."

U.S. REP. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER

"Today I join the more than 70 percent of Missourians that voted down this mandate at the polls in August 2010 in expressing sincere disappointment in the Supreme Court's decision upholding

as constitutional a law that was forced upon hard-working Americans by President Barack Obama and his liberal allies in Congress. While all American families deserve access to high-quality, affordable health coverage, like many Missourians, I believe this law does nothing to better achieve these goals. Countless nonpartisan studies have suggested that, in fact, the law will leave many Americans still uninsured. A trillion dollars is a lot of money to spend to leave many people still struggling to buy basic health care. This law already has raised families' premiums – and will continue to suffocate economic growth and jobs; make damaging cuts to Medicare, affecting seniors' access to care; and will pave the way for federally funded abortions. One of the most contested parts of the law – the individual mandate – was upheld by the Supreme Court as a tax. Regardless of how the mandate is framed, I still believe this flawed law greatly expands the power of the federal government over its citizens and I will continue to work to repeal it in its entirety.”

STATE REP. MARY STILL

“Earlier today the United States Supreme Court upheld the Affordable Care Act of 2010. This is a great victory for Missouri and its citizens. This decision means that college students and other young adults across the state have the option of remaining on their parent’s health insurance while they transition into their first job. It also means transparent, more affordable health care options for all Missourians through a statewide health insurance exchange.”



Low-income patients among beneficiaries

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Thursday, June 28, 2012

Today's U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholding the bulk of the Affordable Care Act paves the way for reforming the nation's health care system, but local health care officials said the law is only the first step.

"We still have much work to do on controlling costs in the health care system," said Karen Edison, director of the Center for Health Policy and chairwoman of the department of dermatology at the University of Missouri School of Medicine. "We still have much work to do on improving quality."

But by upholding all of the ACA except a provision that would have penalized states for not expanding their Medicaid programs, the high court left in place many of the more popular provisions of the law that have already gone into effect. That includes a regulation that allows children to stay on their parents' health plans until age 26.

"If you have a pre-existing condition and have trouble affording health insurance right now, the law is upheld that in 2014, insurance companies will be forbidden from denying you insurance," Edison said. "That will affect many Americans."

Even though many private insurers had already put the extended dependent insurance provision in place and were covering preventive services at no cost, health policy analysts doubted private insurers would adopt the prohibition against excluding people with pre-existing conditions unless the law required coverage.

Low-income residents also got affirmation with this morning's ruling that if they are not eligible for Medicaid, federal subsidies will be made available to help pay for health insurance.

"We were holding our breath," said Gloria Crull, executive director of the Family Health Center of Boone County. "We're very pleased."

Crull manages a health clinic with a multicounty reach that emphasizes providing access for medical, mental and dental health services to low-income residents. The Affordable Care Act already has provided two grants designed to improve access.

“From a practical standpoint, very few providers are able to provide a discount” for medical services “unless they receive a federal grant, which is our case,” Crull said.

The ACA’s requirement that government insurance programs pay the full cost of preventive care is a feature that Crull especially likes.

When someone puts off regular check-ups and a health condition doesn’t surface until it’s chronic or life-threatening, “that’s more expensive in the long run,” she said.

“All of us as community members pick up that tab.”

Crull wasn’t sure this morning how the court’s ruling that allows states to opt out of the Medicaid expansion will affect her clientele and the overall population.

“I don’t think I have the answer yet,” she said. “I don’t know what that’s going to mean.”

The court’s upholding of the individual mandate provision that all Americans who can afford to must buy health insurance was the “linchpin” of the health care law, Edison said. Without the requirement that the broader population must buy insurance, people could have waited until they got sick to buy insurance, something insurance officials call “the death spiral.”

The Urban Institute, however, estimates only about 6 percent of the population will actually be required to buy health insurance or face a tax under the mandate, as most people already have coverage or will get it through Medicare.

Steven Lipstein, president and CEO of BJC HealthCare, which operates Boone Hospital Center, said today’s ruling “helps to ensure that more people in our country will receive health insurance to assist with their medical need” and that the BJC system has long advocated for “affordable health care that expands access to needed medical services.”

As Democrats breathe a sigh of relief, GOP breathes fire

By STEVE KRASKE

MU mention on page 2

President Barack Obama won big Thursday when the U.S. Supreme Court backed his health care reform plan — but you wouldn't know it by how each party reacted.

Given the still-tepid public support for the new law, Democrats offered only a muted response, with many leading party officials saying nothing at all.

Republicans, meantime, were jazzed, shooting off press release after press release, all insisting they would carry the fight into the fall elections as their last chance to repeal the law — and use it to elect more of their own.

So while Democrats breathed a sign of relief, Republicans were breathing fire.

“I think it'll be Mitt Romney's biggest fund-raising day of the year,” said Kansas City Republican operative Jeff Roe. “You can feel it pulsing through the veins of Republicans all around the country. It's now moved from the lawsuit to the ballot box.”

Democratic Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, who represents much of Kansas City, called the day historic, “but not a day to deepen our divisions or throw up our hands and say our work is done.”

Still, many leading analysts cautioned that the import of the health care ruling may soon fade. The economy, after all, remains the nation's most pressing problem, and it is that issue that will almost certainly decide the fall election.

“I don't see this (ruling) being the issue by which the presidential contest will be determined,” said Kansas State University political scientist Joe Aistrup. “If the economy gets rolling over the next month or two, then I think you'll see Obama probably squeak by. If the economy doesn't pick up, it doesn't matter. He's in trouble.”

In the age of the 24-hour news cycle, big wins — and big setbacks — don't have the shelf life of 20 years ago, he said.

In May 2011, after the death of Osama bin Laden, the president enjoyed a modest bump in his poll numbers. But the lift faded after about a month, and his numbers drifted back to where they had been before the raid.

“Things move on very quickly,” Aistrup said.

But it could have been a lot worse for Obama.

Outright rejection of the new health care law Thursday could have been devastating for the president, given how much of his administration has been wrapped around the idea of passing the controversial law and then implementing it. The court’s ruling Thursday bestowed a sense of legitimacy on the administration’s centerpiece initiative.

“Now he doesn’t have to contend with the question of what he accomplished during his first several years in office,” said University of Missouri political scientist Peverill Squire. “That takes that whole line of attack off the table.”

The presidential candidates clashed quickly on the ruling’s significance.

Obama acknowledged the new law’s dim standing with the American people when he spoke to the nation shortly after the ruling came down Thursday morning.

“It should be pretty clear by now that I didn’t do this because it was good politics,” he said. “I did it because I believe it was good for the country. I did it because I believed it was good for the American people.”

For his part, presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney said he would keep the heat on Obama.

“As you might imagine, I disagree with the Supreme Court decision, and I agree with the dissent,” he said at a Washington news conference Thursday. “Obamacare was bad policy yesterday. It’s bad policy today.

“If we want to replace Obamacare, we have to replace Obama.”

But Romney’s support for a similar law in Massachusetts when he served as governor there suggests he may not be the most effective critic of the law.

Still, even though the court sided with the president, it did offer a new supply of ammunition for Republicans looking to use health care as a way to fire up supporters.

In his ruling, Chief Justice John Roberts said the law could pass constitutional muster because he viewed it as an exercise of Congress’ power to levy taxes on anyone refusing to purchase coverage. That notion — that the new health care law can be viewed as a tax increase, and a massive one at that — swooped into Republican talking points within minutes of the ruling.

“Supreme Court Upholds Claire McCaskill’s Massive Tax Increase” blared a headline from a National Republican Senatorial Committee news release about the Missouri senator who backed the plan.

Said McCaskill’s Senate spokesman: “There’s only ever been one goal for Claire — affordable, accessible health care for Missouri.”

Ironically, Democrats and the president had insisted repeatedly that no tax increase was connected to the health care reform act. They called it a “penalty” for those who chose not to buy insurance coverage. But it was the notion that the penalty was a tax increase that ultimately saved the law.

“President Obama and all members of Congress who voted for the federal health care law have now imposed the largest tax increase on the American people in our history,” said Missouri Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, a Republican.

Despite the volume from the Republican side, it wasn’t exactly clear how Congress will proceed in the short term. Little substantive legislation is expected to pass between now and the November election, and any attempt to derail the health care bill in the GOP-dominated House almost surely would be rejected by the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Congress may not be the only place where big decisions surrounding health care get made in the months ahead. If Obama is re-elected, one decision facing state legislatures will be whether to expand Medicaid, the health care plan for the poor, as called for in the new health care law, or keep the programs as they are.

As passed, the new law threatened to remove existing Medicaid funding from states that didn’t participate in the expansion. But Thursday’s ruling said the government must remove that threat.

Now state lawmakers must decide how to handle their Medicaid programs.

In Kansas, state Rep. Pat Colloton, a Leawood Republican, predicted the state would expand coverage because the federal government covers the cost of that expansion during the first three years.

But in Missouri, state Rep. Ryan Silvey, a Kansas City Republican who headed the House Appropriations Committee, said he expected the General Assembly to reject any expansion.

That’s because the federal government’s support for the expansion begins to drop after year three and the cost to the state could eventually reach \$1 billion a year.

“I just don’t think it’s sustainable,” Silvey said.



MU journalism dean to enter hall of fame

The dean of the University of Missouri's journalism school is among six people who will be inducted into the Missouri Newspaper Hall of Fame in September.

An induction will take place Sept. 21 at the Missouri Press Association's annual convention in Columbia.

Dean Mills has led the Missouri School of Journalism since 1989. His top achievements have included the restoration of community newspaper and management classes to the curriculum and the launch of the Reynolds Journalism Institute, according to a news release from the MPA.

Other inductees will include Dave Berry, vice president of Neighbor News of Missouri and publisher of the Bolivar Herald-Free Press and seven other weekly newspapers; the late Bill French, an editor and publisher from Eminence who wrote and printed several of his own books; Tom Miller Sr., a former co-publisher of The Washington Missourian; and Steve and Linda Oldfield, publishers of The Adrian Journal and The Drexel Star.

Hall inductees are chosen based on a career of ethical journalism and service to the state's newspaper industry and the community, the news release said.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Dr. Eugene Mitchell dies; broke 'glass ceiling' for blacks here

BY MICHAEL D. SORKIN — msorkin@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8347 | Posted: Friday, June 29, 2012 12:10 am | [\(0\) comments.](#)



Dr. Eugene Mitchell was recommended by a committee of physicians to become medical director of the Homer G. Phillips Hospital. Photo taken on Aug. 3, 1967

Dr. Eugene Mitchell, who died Friday at age 78, was a prominent surgeon and newspaper man who made headlines himself.

He was the former owner of the St. Louis Argus, once one of the leading African-American newspapers in the U.S. and the oldest black-owned business in Missouri.

During the 1950s, he was the first African-American admitted to the University of Missouri School of Medicine in Columbia. He went on to become medical director at the old Homer G. Phillips Hospital in north St. Louis, where some of the nation's most prominent black physicians were trained.

When the all-white Veiled Prophet organization desegregated in the late 1970s, Dr. Mitchell was one of the first three blacks to gain membership.

Dr. Eugene N. Mitchell died June 22, 2012, at the Grand Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in St. Louis. He suffered a stroke on March 18 and had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2003, his wife, Betty Mitchell, said Thursday.

Dr. Mitchell's position at the hospital and ownership of the newspaper made him a person of influence in St. Louis.

During a time when other media largely ignored blacks, the Argus, along with a few other African-American-owned newspapers, was where blacks read about their marriages, babies and their successes.

Dr. Mitchell's grandfather founded the Argus in 1912. Dr. Mitchell was estranged from his father. After his father died, Dr. Mitchell returned to the newspaper and assumed control in 1971.

A few years later, Mayor Jim Conway angered the African-American community with a plan to close Phillips. The Argus helped lead the fight to keep the hospital open and defeat Conway.

Conway lost to Vince Schoemehl, who had promised to keep the hospital open but later closed it.

Dr. Mitchell found himself courted by members of the Civic Progress crowd. He became one of the first African-Americans to serve on the board of a major bank here (Mercantile Trust Co.); was elected to the board of the Arts and Education Council; and, in 1978, was invited to join the Veiled Prophet organization.

"He was not just a trendsetter, he was a glass ceiling-breaker," recalled Gene Liss, a publisher and former head of advertising at the Argus.

Dr. Mitchell also had a reputation as a skilled physician at a hospital, Phillips, where a lot of victims of violence were taken. "He was the surgeon of choice of the entire black underworld," Liss said. "They asked for him by name."

In 1982, Dr. Mitchell was charged with illegal possession of cocaine and marijuana. A jury found him innocent.

After that, his career and the newspaper went downhill. He retired and sold the Argus to Eddie Hasan in 2003. Hasan later went to prison for tax evasion and the Argus went on a reduced publication schedule.

"He did fall pretty far from a pretty high position in the community," said Dr. Donald Suggs, a longtime friend and publisher of the St. Louis American newspaper.

In 1985, Dr. Mitchell converted to Islam after a friend gave him a copy of the Quran, his wife said.

The family held a private graveside service on Tuesday at Lake Charles Park Cemetery.

In addition to his wife of 50 years, survivors include a son, Eugene "Butch" Mitchell Jr. of St. Louis; a daughter, Toni Hayes of St. Louis; six grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.



4 hospitals in Missouri, Kansas join breastfeeding effort

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) - Three hospitals in Missouri and one in Kansas are joining a national effort to improve breastfeeding rates.

They are Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis, Truman Medical Center in Kansas City, the University of Missouri's Women's and Children's Hospital in Columbia and Wesley Medical Center in Wichita, Kan.

The institutions are among 90 hospitals chosen to take part in a program called Best Fed Beginnings. The hospitals will get help implementing recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. They include establishing support groups and helping mothers nurse their babies within a half-hour of birth.

Breastfeeding has health benefits for moms and babies. But studies show that half of U.S.-born babies are given formula in their first week. By nine months, only 31% of babies are breastfeeding at all.