The new president of the University of Missouri — who came from the world of business — decided to close the university's press rather than make up a shortfall in its $400,000 a year budget. That has sparked a protest movement in the academic world, which is worried about the incursion of corporate values into academia. There is special concern about what the closing may mean for academic research into the work of Langston Hughes. The collected work of Hughes is published by the University of Missouri press.

Transcript of report follows:

AUDIE CORNISH, HOST:

It's ALL THINGS CONSIDERED from NPR News. I'm Audie Cornish.

MELISSA BLOCK, HOST:

And I'm Melissa Block. After 54 years, the University of Missouri Press is about to close. The university's board is not backing down from a decision to shutter the publishing house for financial reasons. Supporters of the press, spurred by an online campaign, attended a board meeting this week, hoping to turn back what they see as corporate incursion on campus. NPR's Lynn Neary has the story.

LYNN NEARY, BYLINE: It was a miserable Memorial Day weekend for Bruce Joshua Miller. The publishers' representative who has worked with the University of Missouri Press for 20 years had just learned that the small publishing house had lost its $400,000 subsidy from the university and would have to shut down. He was trying to figure out what he could do to support the press.

BRUCE JOSHUA MILLER: So I started a Facebook page and had a few people liked it. And, you know, it had 12 people, and I was excited because I had 28 people, and it just started to kind of mushroom from there.
NEARY: More than 2,000 people have now shown their support for the University of Missouri Press on that Facebook page, and more than 4,000 have signed an online petition to support the press. Ned Stuckey-French, an associate professor of English at Florida State University who had a book published by the press, organized the petition. He says books published by scholarly presses like Missouri may not be well known, but that doesn't mean they're not important.

NED STUCKEY-FRENCH: They may go for a year or two or three without anybody even checking them out of the library, but that doesn't mean that they won't be rediscovered, that they don't serve scholars to re-envision a certain time in history or a certain writer in a new way a decade down the way. I mean, books, like teachers, affect eternity, and especially these books.

NEARY: The University of Missouri Press publishes a range of scholarly material, including works on regional figures like Harry Truman, Mark Twain and Langston Hughes, who was born in Joplin. The 10 editors of the collected works of Langston Hughes wrote an open letter questioning the decision to close the press. Stuckey-French says the fate of this scholarly collection is now uncertain.

STUCKEY-FRENCH: And so whether these works of Langston Hughes, these 16 volumes that really helped us re-envision Hughes as an important writer, whether they'll continue to be distributed or whether those books will be pulped or just sit in a warehouse, we just don't know.

NEARY: The university says it wants to create a new model for the press which would take full advantage of digital technology and would involve students in some way. But Bruce Joshua Miller says the university's plans for the press are unclear.

MILLER: They seem to be pushing this so-called new model and trying to fob that off as a university press, just a different model, which it would not be. They're killing a publishing company and doing something else that has nothing to do with scholarly publishing.

NEARY: Jennifer Hollingshead, chief communication officer for the University of Missouri System, says the university is committed to publishing scholarly works, but she says the press was operating in the red.

JENNIFER HOLLINGSHEAD: With declining resources, it's more important than ever that we align those precious resources that we have with priorities that are going to be viable in the long term.

ALBERT GRECO: The vast majority of university presses are vulnerable to this sort of an evaluation that Missouri just went through.

NEARY: Fordham University professor Albert Greco is editor of a series of books on scholarly publishing. He says universities are facing tough choices right now.

GRECO: Provosts and presidents have had to evaluate university presses in terms of is that press as important or more important than an academic department, perhaps sociology or
anthropology? I personally think it may well be, but if I were the sociology department, I may well have a different position.

NEARY: It's a tough economic time for everyone, says Ned Stuckey-French, but he worries that universities are looking to corporate culture for solutions that don't always respect academic values. The phasing out of the University of Missouri Press begins this weekend, but Stuckey-French and Miller say their protest movement is still growing, and they're not giving up yet. Lynn Neary, NPR News, Washington.
NPR reports on UM Press

BY JANE HENDERSON > Post-Dispatch Book Editor • jhenderson@post-dispatch.com
Posted: Saturday, June 30, 2012 7:44 am | (6) comments.

NPR's website has the transcript of a new Lynn Neery report on the University of Missouri Press' closure.

Here's a link to the transcript.

Publishing expert Albert Greco, a professor at Fordham University, says:

GRECO: Provosts and presidents have had to evaluate university presses in terms of is that press as important or more important than an academic department, perhaps sociology or anthropology? I personally think it may well be, but if I were the sociology department, I may well have a different position.

A commenter on the website puts the decision even more bluntly:

The new president and his double-speaking acolyte want to spend 500,000 dollars on new letterhead and a new logo. George Orwell must be spinning in his grave. (Have someone at the library help you if that reference slips by you). The university and its staff and students are so poorly served by this miscreant and his apprentice. The university system is an institution of learning, not another corporation to reduce to rubble.
Missouri's not in Kansas anymore as Tigers join SEC

COLUMBIA, Missouri -- Perhaps the only downer in Missouri's jump to the Southeastern Conference is the indefinite interruption of the feisty border conflict with Kansas.

Left behind in the Big 12, the Jayhawks were left feeling abandoned, jilted. Men's basketball coach Bill Self said several times last season that he couldn't see scheduling the Tigers anytime soon.

There seem to be no hard feelings anywhere else, including the big city just down the road that used to benefit from the Missouri-Kansas rivalry. Missouri athletic director Mike Alden took delight this past week announcing that a $30 million gift that jump-started the school's $200 million facilities facelift came from Kansas City.

"I thought it was pretty special to know that coming straight out of Kansas City was the second-largest gift to ever be made in the history of the University of Missouri," Alden said. "Certainly the move to the SEC was something that created quite a bit of enthusiasm and support."

Missouri's move to the SEC is official on Sunday, ending an association with the Big 12 and its previous incarnations dating to 1907. There's no looking back. An SEC logo already adorns midfield.

The campus is sleepy this time of year. Yet, there's unprecedented excitement about the inaugural year in a league that has recently dominated the top tier of college football in particular.

A Tiger Town initiative endorsed by the Columbia Tribune proposes closing downtown to vehicles and relaxing the city's open container policy to accommodate "increasing hordes of Southeastern Conference visitors" and create a "pedestrian downtown party zone." Tickets are scarce for the inaugural SEC game against Georgia in September, just the second meeting between the schools. Alabama comes to Columbia in October.

Season-ticket holder David Branom of Kirkwood, Mo., is anticipating making mini-vacations out of "some great road trips."
"I did not want Missouri to leave the Big 12," Branom said. "And I have always thought the SEC thought a little too highly of itself. But now we're a part of it, so I need to change my attitude."

During a summer men's basketball teleconference several days ago, the new guys had the welcome mat out.

"Clearly, last year they were one of the top five teams from start to finish," Florida's Billy Donovan said of the Tigers. "Some of them are gone, but others are coming, and I'm a big, big fan of Phil Pressey."

John Calipari, coach of national champion Kentucky, believes the new SEC, which is also adding Texas A&M, will send half of its teams to the NCAA tournament.

"And that's going to be from here on out," Calipari said.

So rather than Oklahoma and Texas, the top-end competition in football will be Alabama and LSU. Or Arkansas, where there is also an attractive rivalry possibility in men's basketball given that Razorbacks coach Mike Anderson led the Tigers for four seasons.

"Now it's just gotten a little more interesting," Anderson said. "They bring a great deal to the league. The whole athletic program, what Mike Alden has done, has been tremendous and I'm proud to have been a part of it."

Football coach Gary Pinkel has characterized the move as "mammoth." He is fired up about a renovation project that will add 6,000 seats and luxury suites, along with other improvements that should make it easier to sell high school prospects that Missouri is a destination school. The boost in capacity to about 76,000, in anticipation of increased demand relating to the move, would still be ninth in the SEC. But it makes a statement nonetheless.

"It's great for many reasons but it's also huge for recruiting," Pinkel said. "Players want to go to a place where they're going to be the best, where they have excellent facilities, as good as anyone in the country. That's what we're going to have."

What Missouri had before now was instability and a feeling of second-class citizenship in a conference dominated by Texas. Missouri and Texas A&M are leaving one year after Colorado and Nebraska jumped ship. The Big 12 is adding TCU and West Virginia to remain at 10 members.

The Tigers will compete in the SEC's Eastern Division along with Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Tennessee and Vanderbilt.

The huge benefit to the convincing case for switching is an influx of cash. The SEC distributed a record $18.3 million to its 12 schools last year.

Missouri is spending in anticipation, pouring money into improvements, with the initial round also including facility upgrades for softball, baseball, tennis and golf.
"We made a commitment early on to be the best in all that we could be, academically as well as athletically," Chancellor Brady Deaton said. "It's a proud moment when you can hold your head high and say we're doing it right at Missouri in every day."

Both major sports appear ready for the move.

Pinkel has taken the Tigers to a bowl game the past seven seasons, and eight times overall, most in school history. Last year's senior class finished with the highest four-year victory total in school history, and there's been a solid run of first-round NFL draft picks in recent years including Eagles wide receiver Jeremy Maclin, Jaguars quarterback Blaine Gabbert and 49ers defensive end Aldon Smith.

Haith's first team was the surprise of the Big 12, and the victory total the past four seasons is another school best. Haith played at Kentucky and Mississippi State when he was at the University of Miami, so he has a bit of familiarity with the new league.

One of the downsides for the northernmost SEC member is an increased travel budget. No more going Greyhound.

In Haith's first season here, there were five bus trips. In season two, there will be none.

"We've got a little bit longer distance to go where we're playing, and they're really good," Haith said.
When he first heard talk of the possibility of Mizzou joining the Southeastern Conference, Gary Pinkel acted like a wise man, not an emotional one. The coach who has turned Tiger football into a significant national program in the Big 12, wanted to proceed on this potential new journey with the caution of an earnest school crossing guard.

He wanted to look before he leaped. So there was no knee-jerk celebration, no automatic stamp of approval. He didn't allow his mind to drift off into how easy it would be to sell Mizzou football to teenaged high school recruits on the value of playing in the best football league outside of the NFL. Personally, he even refused to dream about the possibility of matching his Xs against the Os of some of the best (and highest paid) minds in the college coaching business.
Instead Pinkel wanted answers. All he wanted to know from all the rather giddy folks who were rushing to push Missouri towards the SEC was the answer to one rather poignant question: Were these excitable administrators, boosters, alums and fans getting ready to write a check with their bubbling enthusiasm that their, ummm, financial support couldn't cash?

"When we discussed this going into the SEC, I often expressed if you're not going to be committed to excellence and invest, that you should never go into this league," said Pinkel, who already knew from several of his coaching buddies exactly what sort of heavy lifting is required to be competitive in college football's top conference.

Well, now Pinkel has his answer and it is emphatic and impressive.

When Mizzou announced earlier this week that anonymous donors from Kansas City had written a $30 million check to help jump-start a $200 million master plan for athletic facility upgrades, it was a major statement that Missouri athletics is not messing around. If there was any doubt in my mind about Mizzou making the move to the SEC, it was never about the men and women who play and coach. It was always about whether university officials, deep-pocket alums and so-called rabid fans had any idea what sort of neighborhood they were moving into.

It's a conference that does not mess around when it comes to big-time spending on athletics. I'll let you sort through your own ideas about the propriety of lavish spending on college sports and whether that's a good or a bad thing. But the rules of engagement in the SEC are unlike any other conference in college athletics, and if you're not up to those standards — or you happen to have more intellectual views about the value a state-of-the-art science lab over the late innovations in field turf — it doesn't make you a bad person. It just means you have no business hanging out in the SEC, where they make no excuses and offer no apologies for their ambitious attitudes and fanaticism about sports.

In the SEC, bigger is better. Lavish is even better than bigger. Ginormous recruiting budgets, state-of-the-art stadiums, ardent (did someone say "over-the-top crazy") fan support are all considered to be part of standard rules of engagement. And while MU director of athletics Mike Alden was sure that many of the improvements to the sports facilities would have happened no matter what conference the Tigers played in, he's certain that moving to the SEC had a dramatic effect on the entire process.

"I would say that the speed and the scope of what you saw today has a direct correlation to us going to the SEC," said Alden. "It doesn't mean that everything we're planning on wouldn't have happened, but the speed and scope changed dramatically after the decision to go to the SEC."

When you look at the plans to upgrade the football stadium, the designs show how Memorial Stadium will be transformed from a bland cement structure into a far more attractive and impressive stadium that will have the sort of retro red-brick facade similar to new Busch Stadium. It will have two large video screens above the south end zone seats, expanded loge and luxury suite boxes on the east and west sides, an upgraded press box, sideline seating that brings fans closer to the field and the opportunity for seating capacity that could expand the building to more than 77,000 seats (and perhaps as many as 80,000 seats further down the road).
In the next few years as you drive up Stadium Boulevard, Memorial Stadium will become the most impressive anchor to the steadily improving Mizzou Sports Park. It will look more like a big-time enclosed stadium rather than the undistinguished cement bowl it is now. But now comes the final part of the equation for the folks who wanted Missouri to switch from the Big 12 to the SEC. It's whether or not the fan support will mirror the financial support of the heavy-hitting boosters.

Will Mizzou home games become weekly events now that these new college football brand names like Alabama, Georgia, LSU, Florida and Tennessee will start coming to town?

The days of 50,000 and 60,000 Tiger fans showing up for home games better be over, because if MU fans aren't interested in buying up all the seats for conference home games, the rabid traveling caravans from every school in the conference will gladly fill up entire sections of Faurot Field and create a road-game atmosphere for all those home games.

"I do want (the stadium) to look better aesthetically," Pinkel said. "That is important. But my big thing is to sell it out whether it's 75,000 or 77,000. That's what we want to be able to do .... now it has to be better."
Big 12 played large role in Mizzou's rise

BY STU DURANDO sdurando@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8232 | Posted: Sunday, July 1, 2012 12:30 am | (2) comments.

Even as Missouri entered its final week as a member of the Big 12 Conference, the difficulty of breaking old habits was evident when Chancellor Brady Deaton addressed the Board of Curators.

A packed room laughed it off when Deaton slipped and said that Mizzou was about to become an official member of the conference it is leaving.

But as of today, any mention of the Big 12 in Columbia is sure to be taboo. After eight months of practice, all references to the Southeastern Conference should roll off the tongues of university officials, who will welcome their arrival as a full-fledged 1/14th partner today with, well, a day off.

But as the move neared, athletics director Mike Alden found it impossible not to give a final nod of gratitude to a 16-year relationship that crumbled in the last year.
"Where we are today is absolutely a direct result of the competition and type of institutions we were associated with," he said. "We’re better because of that and thankful for that type of opportunity.

"When we went into the Big 12, think about where we were ranking-wise across the board academically, financially, competitively and facility-wise. When we went into the Big 12, we were ill-prepared to compete."

Only time will tell if Mizzou is situated well enough to compete in the SEC, which claimed nine national championships in 2011-12, including its sixth consecutive football title.

Mizzou started its Big 12 tenure low on funding with an annual budget of about $10 million, stagnant in facilities and surely lacking success.

The athletic department now boasts a budget in the neighborhood of $59 million (2010-11) and last week announced plans for $200 million in improvements with half of the funding ready to roll.

It’s a bold move at a time when increased resources are going to play a role in dictating how competitive Mizzou can be.

"There’s never enough of everything, but I believe we have planned very carefully in all components of the university," Deaton said. "That’s not to say there’s not going to be glitches here and there. There are going to be all kinds of new adjustments. Actually, we see those on a day-to-day basis."

As the Big 12 is left behind, Missouri can point to competitive breakthroughs along the way. Regular bowl appearances by the football team, increased success in men’s basketball and a rise to national prominence in softball have been highlights.

But the Tigers have a dearth of national titles, with the last team championship coming in 1965. Now, they join a league where Alabama won championships in football, softball, women’s golf and women’s gymnastics in the last year.

Mizzou certainly will have to adjust financially. The athletic department ranked sixth in the Big 12 out of the remaining 10 teams in budget for 2010-11, and the $59 million spent that year would have ranked 11th in the SEC.

Budgets in the SEC averaged slightly more than $81 million while Big 12 schools spent around $68 million.

But Alden believes the upgrades have placed the athletic department in a good place.

"As we enter the SEC, we are so much more prepared from facilities, academics, recruiting and competitively," Alden said. "But even with that, we have another challenge ahead of us in that it will be huge how we continue to invest and improve. We can’t allow ourselves that hiatus from
investing like we did so many years. We took a 13-year, maybe 25-year hiatus investing in facilities, budgets, coaches. We can’t afford to gravitate back toward mediocrity."

Mizzou has been through an array of steps toward becoming fully immersed in the SEC.

The school was accepted as a member in November after months of discussions and rumors. Numerous Mizzou administrators attended the SEC’s annual spring meetings in May. And earlier this month the conference and commissioner Mike Slive held a welcoming party for Mizzou and Texas A&M in Atlanta.

Today, the university will slip quietly out of the Big 12 and into a new world.
Stuck in the middle? MU report says yes

Study considers Missouri's status.

By JANISE SILVEY

Friday, June 29, 2012

We're average, and we know it.

A University of Missouri report shows that the state ranks in the middle of the country on most health, education and economic indicators. The fourth "Snapshot Missouri: A National Comparison" also says most residents realize it and are OK with that.

"Most Missourians really don't care whether we're average or not," said David Valentine, a research associate professor in MU's Truman School of Public Affairs.

Missouri's mediocrity shows up in health measures including obesity, teen birth rates and the percentage of people without health insurance. In education, fourth- and eighth-grade reading scores, as well as the number of adults with college degrees, also are average compared with other states. Missouri's household incomes and poverty and unemployment rates also don't stand out.

The report, which cites data from 2007 to 2011, shows policymakers have their work cut out for them, Valentine said.

"You'd have to make a really strong case for any of your major policy changes and be able to articulate how it's going to affect public health or any of these other issues," he said. "If you can't do that, people are going to say, 'What I have is OK.'"

Of the 37 measures, Missouri does rank in the top or bottom tiers in five areas. Whether that's good or bad depends on your perspective.

Smokers, for instance, might like that Missouri has the lowest cigarette tax — 17 cents a pack — in the country. At the same time, the state has one of the highest populations of adult smokers, ranking 11th.

"That's probably not a coincidence," Valentine said. "The low tax certainly makes it a lot more difficult for people who smoke who wish to not smoke or to not start smoking in the first place."

The state report is conducted annually and wasn't published because of any upcoming tax proposal. But it comes out this year as Missourians decide whether the state should increase its tobacco tax. An
initiative headed for the November ballot would ask voters to approve a 73-cent increase, which would bring the total state tax on a pack of cigarettes to 90 cents. That's on top of a $1.01-per-pack federal tax. Other tobacco items also would see a 25 percent increase.

Revenue from the increase would be split among public schools, colleges and smoking cessation and education campaigns. Of the funding specified for colleges, most would be restricted to use for training health care workers.

UM System Curator Warren Erdman was part of the group responsible for getting the tax proposal on the ballot. This week, he told the UM Board of Curators passing the tax is "the most important thing we can do in Missouri this year."

He said about 59 percent of those polled support the tax now, but he doesn't expect an easy win. Missourians have voted down two previous tobacco tax increase proposals.

Opponents point out that it's a 429 percent hike. It also would set the tax at a rate higher than four states bordering Missouri.

There's also the question of whether lawmakers would decrease current appropriations to education if schools and colleges were getting new revenue. Erdman said money generated from the increase would go into a trust fund kept separate from the appropriation process, but he acknowledged lawmakers ultimately have the authority to appropriate state dollars.

Valentine's report also shows Missouri is a low-tax state in other areas. The state has one of the lowest gas taxes and ranks 44th in state tax burden as a percentage of personal income. Missouri was second from the bottom in job growth rate, too, according to the study.

Missouri also isn't average when it comes to two traffic-related indicators. The state ranked 46th for the percent of people who use seat belts and 12th for fatalities in alcohol-related crashes.
State suffers by not keeping pace

By BOB ROPER

Sunday, July 1, 2012

The bad news on Missouri's economy keeps rolling in. In 2011, it grew at a very poor 0.04 percent, compared to the national rate of 1.5 percent. This put us 43rd out of 50 states.

It gets worse. University of Missouri Professors Joe Haslag and Mike Podgursky have researched Missouri's economic performance from 1997 through 2010, and the results are unsettling. During that time our real gross domestic product grew, on average, at an annual rate of 1.03 percent while the nation's GDP as a whole grew at an annual rate of 2.22 percent. Compared to its relative position in 1997, Missouri's output during that period shrunk by more than 14 percent. That's losing ground — big time.

The professors also measured Missouri's performance relative to the nation from 1997-2010 by dividing total GDP by the population. Unfortunately, in this per capita analysis Missouri once again did poorly, trailing by 11 percentage points compared to the national average.

Similar desultory results occurred in nonfarm payroll employment. Here the shortfall compared to the entire nation since 1997 is 7 percentage points, not as bad as the other metrics but bad nevertheless.

Missouri is adjacent to eight states. Surely we do better than most of them on the above metrics, right? Wrong indeed. We are dead last in GDP growth; dead last in relative GDP growth; and next to last in nonfarm payroll employment, where we managed to beat bankrupt, deadbeat Illinois.

All these numbers are terrible, particularly when the professors point out if Missouri had simply kept pace with the national economy, the GDP in 2010 would have been $253.2 billion, not the $217.3 billion we actually got. Something tells me those missing billions would have made funding MU a lot easier.

Confirmation of these unhappy findings comes from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Every year, the chamber publishes a monograph titled "Enterprising States — Policies That Work." The authors discuss the economy as a whole, tell us what works and rank the 50 states in six major categories. Subparts expand the category comparisons to a total of 33.

The 2012 edition is out, and Missouri fares poorly. We are in the top 10 states in only two of those 33 categories — entrepreneurial activity and higher education degree output. We rank in the 11-25 area in...
only 10 items. That’s right: We are rated in the top one-half of states in only 12 of the 33 metrics examined. By my reckoning, only two states did worse. Highly ranked (and very successful) Texas, by contrast, is in the top 10 or top half in 28 of the 33 categories.

Some will say things are not as bad as the data suggest. After all, our unemployment rate is 7.3 percent, compared to the national average of 8.2 percent. Our exports, especially for agriculture, are booming. We added 27,500 jobs in the first quarter of 2012, better than those adjacent states. Also, the Mercatus Center at George Mason University ranks Missouri No. 5 in its Index of Personal and Economic Freedom, which employers should appreciate. Still, how can anyone reasonably argue with the facts and studies discussed above?

Missouri should be doing better. We are centrally located, surely a good thing. We are blessed with great agricultural land, and exporting food should be a huge enterprise in the years ahead. Our people are naturally hardworking Midwesterners. Our cost of living is very competitive. Our two major rivers are a big plus, as is our extensive rail network. And yes, we have an excellent higher education system, especially the University of Missouri.

So what’s the problem? Some will say it is because we are not a big producer of oil, gas or coal. That is true in part, but a lot of non-energy-producing states do better than us, and a lot of them do other things besides energy well.

Instead, we are wrong on a lot of our policies.

In two weeks, I’ll explain Roper’s remedies for fixing Missouri’s economy. You won’t want to miss it.
Toll road construction should be considered, says MU engineer

By JANESE SILVEY

Saturday, June 30, 2012

A University of Missouri engineer who analyzed the history of toll roads said residents shouldn't rule them out at a time when the federal Highway Trust Fund that historically paid for maintaining interstates is going broke.

"The issue to focus on is how to fund our vital transportation system, as opposed to choosing sides in a pro-toll versus anti-toll debate," Carlos Sun said in a statement.

Sun is an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering in MU's College of Engineering who documented the challenges of having toll roads in Missouri.

A 1939 report that influenced national legislation to favor free roads has since been rejected by other states, he found. In Missouri, though, a 1969 Missouri Supreme Court decision blocked the construction of roadways in Missouri, creating a legal question affecting the future of toll road projects.

"The situation has changed since 1939 and 1969," Sun said. "Early planners hadn't considered the tremendous volume of traffic that now flows over American highways and the subsequently higher costs of maintaining those roadways. The reality of the situation now is that the HTF may go broke as the cost of repairing bridges and roads outpaces fuel tax revenues."

Sun's analysis concluded that toll roads can result in a more equitable distribution of costs because only users pay for them. "Truck drivers and travelers may choose to take one route over another if it means a safer ride with less wear on their vehicles, even if they have to pay a toll," he said. "For example, in Missouri, Interstate 70 competes with I-90 and I-40 in other states. Well-maintained toll roads could capture revenue for Missouri's economy from out-of-state truckers and travelers, even if they don't buy gas or other products in the state."

Sun's legal review was published in the Kansas Journal of Law and Public Policy.
Skipping Breakfast Can Lead to Unhealthy Habits All Day Long

ScienceDaily (June 29, 2012) — Compared to breakfast-eaters, breakfast-skippers tend to weigh more and have other unhealthy habits, such as consuming too many sugary drinks or high-calorie snacks, according to a panel discussion during a symposium at the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) 2012 Annual Meeting & Food Expo.

Research shows about 18 percent of Americans older than age 2 regularly skip breakfast, said Nancy Auestad, PhD, vice president of regulatory affairs at the Dairy Research Institute. They are missing out on key nutrients, she said, pointing to statistics that show breakfast-eaters get about 17 percent of their daily calories from breakfast as well as a significant portion of their daily recommend intake of several key nutrients, such as Vitamin D (58 percent), Vitamin B12 (42 percent) and Vitamin A (41 percent).

In addition, studies of young people found that breakfast-skippers consume 40 percent more sweets, 55 percent more soft drinks, 45 percent fewer vegetables and 30 percent less fruit than people who eat breakfast.

"Most of these negative factors were abbreviated when breakfast was consumed, compared with breakfast-skippers," said Heather Leidy, PhD, assistant professor in the department of nutrition and exercise physiology at the University of Missouri. "Targeting that behavior could lead to a reduction in obesity."

Leidy conducted research focusing on the role of protein in breakfast, and she found that the effects of breakfast-skipping were felt throughout the day. She assembled a group of 10 breakfast-skipping teenagers and split them into groups that consumed no breakfast, a normal-protein breakfast and a high-protein breakfast. By measuring their hunger levels and several other indicators, she found that eating a healthy breakfast of any kind lead to more satiety and less overeating throughout the day, but these benefits were especially prominent among the teens who ate the high-protein breakfast. They consumed about 200 calories less in evening snacking, she said.

Her study also used magnetic resonance imaging to determine that a protein-rich breakfast reduces the brain signals controlling food desires, even many hours after breakfast.

Despite the benefits of consistently eating breakfast, all the participants in Leidy's study went back to being breakfast-skippers within six months, citing the lack of available healthy, high-protein foods. This means the food industry has to work to create more of these options to fit into the lifestyle of busy kids and adults.
Buck's Ice Cream goes mobile with carts

By JAN ESE SILVEY

Sunday, July 1, 2012

What's better than a scoop of Tiger Stripe ice cream? Not having to walk across campus to get it.

**Buck's Ice Cream Place has purchased two motorized ice cream carts that will let employees sell treats across the University of Missouri campus. Last week, senior Jamill Teter tested potential routes to see where business might be best.**

He expects the main cart — which is outfitted with a freezer — to be stationed on the south side of Jesse Hall between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. daily when school starts. The second cart, which uses an ice chest to keep the goods cold, likely will be reserved for deliveries.

Rick Linhardt, coordinator of research activities at Buck's, said the trucks will become a familiar site at tailgating hot spots on Missouri football game days.

Caitlin Meyer practically cheered after purchasing a scoop of ice cream, a nice way to cool down in 100-plus degree weather.

An assistant in the College of Arts & Science associate dean's office, she typically opts for Buck's signature vanilla-and-chocolate-striped ice cream but last week couldn't resist the sound of a special flavor called Frozen Indulgence. "You had me at 'white chocolate and raspberry,'" Meyer quipped.

Having the cart located behind Jesse Hall is especially nice when lunch hours are limited. "When you only have a half-hour break, it's a lot easier," she said.

Buck's Ice Cream Place is a student-operated food science lab within the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. The college purchased the mobile carts from a Kirksville family retiring from the ice cream business.

The two Cushman ice cream trucks cost $11,000, Linhardt said, and the money came from an industry gifts account administered by Robert Marshall, a professor emeritus of food science.

Teter and his twin brother, Jeremy, also a Buck's employee, volunteered to spruce up the carts with shop logos and MU colors. They're in the process of replacing the cassette tape decks that now play children's music to MP3 players loaded with Mizzou fight songs.
The U.S. Supreme Court upheld most of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act on Thursday, including its provisions tailored to patients with pre-existing conditions and young adults covered by their parents' policies.

MU graduate Lauren Breckenfelder fits both categories.

"I'm otherwise healthy, but I do have this pre-existing condition," she said.

From an early age, Breckenfelder had been prone to hearing loss and chronic ear infections, undergoing her first corrective procedures at age 4. By the time she was a senior in high school, an aggressive cyst, called a cholesteatoma, had formed in her right middle ear.

The condition is rare; for Breckenfelder, it's congenital. If left untreated, it can eat away at bones and tissue in the ear, and even lead to brain infections.

Three surgeries and $40,000 later, doctors removed the cyst and Breckenfelder recovered.

"Now, I'm really healthy, but that wouldn't have happened without insurance," she said. She underwent her last surgery as a junior in college a year and a half ago.

In addition to regular ear screenings and allergenic shots to fight congestion, the procedures have all been covered by her parents' health insurance. Otherwise, she said her medical bills would have been debilitating.

"We were very excited to hear when Obama's health care law passed," Breckenfelder said.

Portions of the health care bill took effect immediately when President Barack Obama signed it in 2010. Coverage expanded for young adults, and patients could no longer be denied coverage for pre-existing conditions. With Thursday's ruling, those provisions will stand.

All this came at a critical time for Breckenfelder; she'll turn 22 in less than a month, which would have made her ineligible for coverage on her parents' plan. As a student, she would have been forced to pay for pre-existing coverage, or join the estimated 30 percent of young adults living without health insurance.
Breckenfelder said she didn't feel comfortable with either option.

In the fall, Breckenfelder will be entering law school at the University of Wisconsin, and she's been haunted by the notion that her chronic condition wouldn't be covered by a new health care plan not tied to her parents.

"Part of my fear was that I would start law school without insurance," Breckenfelder said. "Even one mildly expensive health bill could force me to drop out of school."

News of the Supreme Court's decision offered Breckenfelder some peace of mind. Coverage on her parents' policy will still continue until she's 26, and she won't face denial of coverage for her ear infections, should they return.

"As a student, I would have had no means to cover these kinds of expenses," Breckenfelder said. She still undergoes yearly screenings, but has been well for the past couple of years and isn't taking prescription medication.

By the time she turns 26, she'll be two years out of law school and likely covered on her employer's health care plan.

*Supervising editor is John Schneller.*
High heat and no rain deepen drought

By SANGEETA SHAstry

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You’re not wrong: It’s gotten hotter and drier faster this year.

And if this weather keeps up, Kansas City could be headed for severe drought.

Already the area has seen about 5.5 fewer inches of precipitation so far this year than at this time last year — leading to burn bans in several cities and soaring water bills for homeowners trying to keep their lawns alive.

And if we don’t get rain today, the little more than 5 inches we’ve received since the beginning of April will make the past three-month stretch the driest April-June here since 1911.

None of this is good, weather experts say.

“Most meteorologists would tell you that once you start to see drought conditions set in, it’s very difficult to get that pattern to change into a wet pattern,” said National Weather Service meteorologist Andy Bailey.

Already the area is officially in a moderate drought, with the extreme drought in the southwest creeping our way this spring.

The current heat wave isn’t helping.

The highest temperature recorded at Kansas City International Airport during June last year was 95 degrees — this June, 105.

Kansas Citians can expect highs reaching into the upper 90s and lower 100s for the next several days.

The area is under an excessive heat warning until tonight, and the Weather Service’s month-long outlook doesn’t give much else to look forward to: The area is likely to have below-normal rainfall and above-normal temperatures.

The extreme weather is hitting home for many people, and not just because it drives them to seek an air-conditioned refuge.
Dennis Patton, a horticulturist with Johnson County Extension, said Kansas Citians can normally make it through the Fourth of July without needing to water their lawns more frequently than usual.

"Unfortunately, depending on where you’re at in the metro area, people have had to water earlier and more frequently," Patton said.

He said some avid gardeners he’s talked to have seen a $200 to $300 increase in their water bills during the month.

An increase in water usage is predictable during the summer months, said Mandy Cawby, communications manager for Johnson County Water District No. 1, but the district saw usage up by nearly 40 percent over a normal June.

That number was above what the district was expecting, but Cawby said there aren’t foreseeable concerns about restricting water use.

Still, the district is seeing numbers this season that are approaching its record day of water usage of 148 million gallons on Aug. 24, 2003.

"We may hit a new consumption record," Cawby said.

Mike Dixon, a master gardener with Johnson County Extension, said he’s watching and watering his flowers, trees and lawn very carefully this summer. Dixon has been gardening for 17 years, and he now has a one-acre yard and lots of flowers, rose gardens and trees.

"We would have this kind of weather and this kind of threat to our plants in July," Dixon said. "It started in June this year."

Bobbi Cummings, another master gardener, said she’s doing the same thing: keeping a close watch on her lawn and her gardens, which feature 150 types of plants. The real impact is what her water bill pulls from her wallet.

"Everything’s somewhat stressed," she said of her plants. "It just takes a lot more care and a lot more water."

Some lake levels have fallen — lakes around Springfield are down to 75 or 80 percent of normal levels. Bean Lake in Platte County also is down, partly due to dry conditions.

Farmland, too, especially in southwest and south central Kansas, could be in serious trouble if this pattern keeps up.

For farmers, the unrelenting dry weather is salt in the wound of lost and damaged crops from last summer. Warren Parker of the Kansas Farm Bureau said that the early lack of rain has made it "extremely difficult" for fall crops, especially corn.

"Unfortunately for some farmers, it’s going to look a lot like a repeat of last year, when the drought was so difficult for so many," Parker said.
Parker’s family owns a farm that it rents out in Edward County in south-central Kansas. They saw a significant cut in their crop yield last year, but Parker said there were farmers just west of his property who got hit much worse — some had no crop at all.

This summer, the family farm is still “very, very dry,” Parker said.

“We’re certainly looking for and praying for rain like everybody else,” he said, joking that he’d gladly accept some of the rain dumped on Florida by tropical storm Debby.

If area farmers don’t see significant rainfall soon, fall crops like corn and soybeans will be damaged. Some say we’re at a breaking point — Rick Miller, an agriculture and community development agent with Johnson County Extension, said the rain needs to show up within the next week or so to help salvage this fall’s crops.

“If we don’t get some water from Mother Nature, then those plants are going to respond by having twisted leaves and reduced production and eventually shut down and start dying,” Miller said.

Kelly Smith, marketing and commodities director for the Missouri Farm Bureau, agreed— there’s still a chance for a decent crop if there’s enough rain, he said.

University of Missouri soil scientist Randy Miles likens the water in the soil to an emptying savings account. The lack of rain combined with brisk winds is sucking more water out of the soil earlier in the growing season — if there’s any moisture left, that is.

“Whether temperatures go down or not, the one thing we have to have is rain,” Miles said. “If temperatures go down, that would be better yet.”