Plan to Close University of Missouri Press Stirs Anger

By JOHN ELIGON
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COLUMBIA, Mo. — A tide of anger has been swelling here since May after the new University of Missouri president, Timothy M. Wolfe, disclosed plans to close the university’s publishing house, stoking arguments over the institution’s priorities and fueling an escalating national debate over the necessity of university presses and their future in the digital world.

Over more than five decades, Missouri’s press has printed prized academic titles including “The Collected Works of Langston Hughes,” “The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson” and “Mark Twain and His Circle.” Word that it was shutting down after losing its $400,000 annual subsidy drew outrage from professors, students, authors and alumni, and from the sons of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and of the black historian John Hope Franklin. A news release that the university circulated this week announcing plans for a new publishing operation seemed only to intensify the venom.

“As I try to read this, I toggle back and forth between nausea and migraine,” Andy Frisoe, who described himself as a friend of a Missouri Press author, posted on a Facebook page, Save the University of Missouri Press.

Such disagreements are playing out on campuses around the country, as tightening budgets have complicated efforts by university presses to keep up with the changing publishing marketplace.

Half a dozen universities have closed or suspended their presses over the past three years. Utah State’s press had to join a consortium of university presses in Colorado to survive. Another press, at Louisiana State, was spared after cutting the staff and making other organizational changes.

“I really wish that universities would step up and say these presses are essential, we should fund them 100 percent,” said Richard Clement, the dean of libraries at Utah State. “I think that most presidents would tend to agree, but given the budgetary climate and situation, they have to make choices, and unfortunately the choices have not favored university presses.”

Scholars argue that university presses are vital for academic discourse. They publish erudite texts that commercial presses do not, giving scholars a forum to share and further research. Professors often rely on them to publish the works they need for tenure and promotion. But they are usually
money-losing operations. The presses at the University of Chicago, Oxford and Cambridge are the only ones widely believed to be profitable.

In their early decades the bottom line did not matter. Cornell started the first university press in the United States in 1869, and the presses were set up to publish the research results of faculty. As time passed, however, presses were increasingly asked to generate revenue for their institutions. Now their future at many campuses revolves around two questions: Are presses part of a university's core mission, akin to an academic department? Or are they business investments, expendable if they fail to draw profit?

"Many institutions are grappling with these questions — and all of them should, because support for scholarly communication remains vital, not just for scholars themselves, but for the university's ability to communicate with the world around it," said Kathleen Fitzpatrick, director of scholarly communication at the Modern Language Association.

Other universities have taken steps to revolutionize their publishing systems. Project Muse, which has published academic journals online as part of the Johns Hopkins University Press since 1995, began publishing full-length digital books in January.

After closing its press in the mid-1990s, Rice University reopened a digital-only operation in 2006, but it shut that down after four years. Rice's example revealed a difficult truth about digital scholarly publishing: it is still expensive. Most of the cost in producing scholarly writings comes before anything is printed on paper, through expenses like hiring people for peer review.

Speer Morgan, the editor of the literary magazine The Missouri Review, will head the new press. Under the University of Missouri's new plan, the more than 2,000 books already published by the existing press operation, which will make way for the new one after production of its fall books, will be digitized and promoted by university libraries, a news release said. The new press will publish about 25 titles a year in hard copy, slightly less than the current output of 30, and digital format, though most will be in print initially, according to Brian L. Foster, provost of the university's Columbia campus.

The university also will honor the contracts of authors signed to coming works and plans to publish the titles on its spring list, Mr. Wolfe said. Administrators do not know exactly how much the new model will cost, Mr. Foster said.

"One of the things that I believe is, if in fact we come up with a model that is more effective at disseminating scholarly work," Mr. Wolfe said last week in an interview, "the other presses are going to have to look at this model and say, 'Can we do what the University of Missouri is doing?'"

Before becoming president in February, Mr. Wolfe spent his entire professional career in business. When he announced in May that he would eliminate the press's subsidy, detractors said he did not appreciate its value. Mr. Wolfe defended the decision-making process, saying he relied on the university's chancellors and vice presidents who have lifelong backgrounds in academia.
But Mr. Wolfe acknowledged that he had never spoken to or consulted employees of the current press, and none of them were involved in the creation of the new model. Many critics said the new plan was vague and full of corporate jargon. They were concerned about the prospect that under the new plan students would be handling much of the work. "Will established scholars be willing to work with such a haphazardly staffed press?" Bruce Joshua Miller, a sales representative for university publishers, and Ned Stuckey-French, a professor at Florida State who has published with the Missouri press, wrote in a more than 1,500-word news release responding to the university's announcement. Mr. Miller and Mr. Stuckey-French have led much of the resistance, creating the Facebook page and an online petition that has gathered more than 4,700 signatures.

The administration seemed unaware that the press already was doing the supposedly new things described in the plan, Clair Willcox, the current editor of the press, said. The press, for instance, already publishes e-books, he said.

"The staff was enraged," Mr. Willcox said his colleagues' response to details of the new plan. "They were looking at descriptions of what they already did. It suggests that somehow they weren't doing a good enough job over here."
Authors leave UM Press amid controversial shakeup

By JANISE SILVEY

Don Spivey wants the rights to his book back: The University of Miami professor no longer wants to be associated with the University of Missouri or its new university press model.

After receiving details of a proposed new UM Press, Spivey — author of "If You Were Only White" published by UM Press in mid-May — told UM President Tim Wolfe he wants to move his book to another publishing house.

"After 12 years of research to achieve the definitive biography of the legendary Satchel Paige, I think you can understand why I want the book, in all of its forms, in competent and stable hands for both the short and the long term," Spivey wrote in an email to Wolfe.

That's the real fallout over the decision to shutter the traditional publishing house and replace it with an experimental model on the MU campus, said Clair Willcox, editor-in-chief at the UM Press.

"We've already seen a number of people who have spoken up and said, 'I wouldn't send my manuscript to that organization. I deserve professional treatment,' " he said.

Other authors who expected to see their books in an upcoming UM Press catalog also are turning to publishers elsewhere, including Ike Skelton. Skelton — who served Missouri's Fourth District in the U.S. House for more than 30 years — had been working with the UM Press to publish his memoirs until Wolfe announced in May the press was closing.

"Someone else is going to publish it, someone outside of Missouri, sadly," Skelton said. "There's no question about it, I would prefer that Missouri publish it. It's a Missouri story. ... It's very unfortunate and, I think, shortsighted, frankly, not just for me but for other Missouri authors."

MU administrators yesterday released details of a new press that would be housed in McReynolds Hall next to the Missouri Review literary magazine. Speer Morgan, editor of the magazine, has been tapped to direct the press, which also will include an editor-in-chief, a managing editor and a professional marketing director. Graduate student interns are expected to do much of the work.

Morgan said the positions will require different skill sets than current UM Press employees have. The 10 UM Press workers still are waiting to hear when they're going to be fired.
Administrators have cited various reasons for closing the current press. Wolfe has said it was a move to save the system the $400,000 subsidy that helps fund the operation, but it's unclear what the new press will cost. MU Provost Brian Foster said there's a draft budget but did not give a dollar amount.

Foster said the move is in response to a changing market and that the new press will take advantage of new technologies.

But the existing UM Press already offers its published works electronically through eight available formats, Willcox said. "One of the immediate reactions here by staff members is we already do all of that and more," he said, referring to details of the new press.

Opponents of the move have collected roughly 4,800 signatures on a petition and are still fighting, said Bruce Joshua Miller, a Chicago-based book representative. They're expected to attend an American Association of University Professors meeting at 11 a.m. next Tuesday in Room 2501 at the MU Student Center to discuss the situation. "If they thought this announcement would put an end to the controversy," Miller said, "I'm afraid it's only thrown gasoline on the fire."
No one really knows what the future will look like for the University of Missouri Press.

Thousands of people have signed a petition asking the university system's president to re-instate the press; its closure was announced just before Memorial Day weekend.

On Monday, the university system said the Columbia campus (where the press was born in 1958) would take over the press, with only a third of its present staff. Speer Morgan, English professor and editor of the esteemed Missouri Review, would become director.

I asked Morgan on Monday if the press might publish fiction and poetry (it does not currently, but has in the past). He didn't dismiss the idea, but said it would be up to the new editor and staff.

Morgan, 66, is head of the creative writing program at Mizzou. MFA programs have grown by leaps and bounds over the past couple of decades.

Everyone seems to want to be a writer. Technology makes it easier but also has made such a career less valuable. More books are written and published, but fewer serious writers seem to get wide readership. (This is not to say that there aren't plenty of great writers and books out there. There are. But picking them out of the huge crowd is messy.)

Graduate students may feel more comfortable editing and publishing fiction and poetry, which can now be done fairly cheaply. This is not to say that the Mizzou press would publish its own students -- Morgan is intent on finding the best writing around the country.

For those of us who have worked for daily newspapers (28 years now for me), the turmoil that all professional writers and editors face is terrifying.

It is hard to be optimistic that today's journalism students, humanities majors, creative writing graduate students, etc. will find it easy to make a living. And yet, they are paying thousands of dollars to universities to educate them in these fields. On the other hand, as the world becomes more complex and global, reading in the humanities is more important than ever.

The universities happily take students' money while, in effect, showing little faith in some of these programs.
The University of Missouri system obviously does not want to invest money in the press' future. At the same time, we hope that the press does well.

Just a few other thoughts on the university's moves:

* Anonymous sources seemed to assume from the beginning that the press financing was ending because someone had alienated someone in power. Another suggestion was that the press was not well run. If there were organizational issues, however, why not just replace the top editors?

* The university system had been concerned about both the press' organization and its budget for years. But the sudden way it announced the closing and the vague promise of a "new model" turned out to be a public relations nightmare. Obviously the business-speak in press releases and from the top brass was ill-planned and ill-advised.

* The press itself did not do much publically to fight for itself. Typical for university-paid employees who are afraid they will get in trouble?

* The press' reputation has been damaged, and its future model looks more like newer, less-respected university presses that usually come out with paperbacks that don't gain much
Fifty-four days after UM System President Tim Wolfe announced he was closing the 54-year-old University of Missouri Press, the University of Missouri administration introduced by press statement its "new model" for the press.

In a kind of "who's-on-first?" passing of the buck, the UM System and President Wolfe are apparently turning the press over to the Columbia campus. There is not mention in the release of the other three campuses — St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla (though in subsequent comments to the Columbia Daily Tribune new interim director Speer Morgan says a "board of faculty, likely from all four UM campuses, will serve as the peer review for manuscripts").

Much is missing from the press release and Morgan’s comments to the Tribune:

- Transparency: Who participated in the discussions to develop this new model? Why has there been no transparency? Why were faculty from all departments not consulted? Why was the current staff of the press not consulted? Why did the university community and especially the staff of the press learn about these developments by reading them online? Why have President Wolfe, the Board of Curators and the rest of the administration not addressed the public outcry, including the more than 4,700 signatures of the online petition to save the press, in an open forum?

- Building on the past: Why must the current press be eliminated in order to set up this new model? Why must 10 trained professionals with decades of experience be put out on the street? How does this new plan amount to anything more than a gutting and rebranding of the existing press (or, as the press release puts it, "enhancing the University of Missouri Press trademark")? What is being done to make use of the current staff’s experience and expertise?
Staffing: The MU English Department's director of creative writing Speer Morgan will be the interim director. He told the Tribune that in time he would hire an editor-in-chief, a managing editor and a marketing director. The press currently has an editor-in-chief, a managing editor and a marketing director. Why do they need to be replaced? Why are they being removed without due process? Morgan also says, "editing will be done, in part, by graduate students, most of whom are in their 30s," and the press release says the new press will rely on "wider campus involvement among closely linked departments, graduate internships or assistantships, and faculty to publish noteworthy titles." So, it seems that the paid professional staff will be cut from 10 to four and that already understaffed academic departments and their faculty be asked to staff the press in addition to doing their teaching and pursuing their research? Will departments (especially English) and the School of Journalism be asked to provide assistantships and set up courses to do the work of the press? Will the press be staffed primarily by unpaid student interns and underpaid graduate assistants instead of paid professional editors?

Professionalism and peer review: The press release claims that the new press will be "publishing quality work where new titles are carefully evaluated for quality and significance," but the use of passive voice here erases the subject of the sentence. Who will do this careful evaluating? Interns? MU faculty? In the past, at the University of Missouri and at virtually all university presses nationwide, professional acquisitions editors review manuscripts, decide whether they are worthy of peer review, find the best outside reviewers for selected manuscripts, evaluate the responses of the outside reviewers, decide what revisions are necessary and present the reviewed manuscripts to the press' editorial board for final approval. Will these steps now be placed in the hands of student interns and if so, who will want to publish with such a press? Will the peer review process be of sufficient rigor to allow untenured faculty to use a University of Missouri Press book as a selling point in their tenure process? Will established scholars be willing to work with such a haphazardly staffed press? The release characterizes the "new model" as a "teaching enterprise," but what scholar will want to have his or her manuscript evaluated, copy edited and indexed by a student as part of a course exercise?

Financial stability and permanence: The press release claims that the new press will be a part of the 2-year-old Mizzou Advantage, Media of the Future initiative. The university announced earlier that in "2010 and 2011, Mizzou Advantage awarded more than $2.3 million for 64 interdisciplinary projects." Some of those projects have panned out — others have not. How much money will go toward this project? Is the 54-
year-old University of Missouri Press now merely one among 65 interdisciplinary projects? Is it receiving merely a seed grant or is there an ongoing commitment? How will this new funding model work and how will it differ from the current one? Who will distribute the titles and where will the revenue go? Who will pay for lawsuits or buyouts if authors challenge this new model in court? How many donations and bequests have already been lost on account of the bad publicity resulting from the May 24 announcement?

- Design and digitization: The press release gives only the slightest lip service to book design. The administration seems to think that a publisher is nothing more than a printing press or Xerox. No mention is made of who will design the press' books, choose photos and illustrations, construct and copy edit graphs and tables, pick fonts for titles or subheads, secure and negotiate permissions for cover art or illustrations, and so on. Will authors want their books to be designed by students as a class project? Much noise is made in the press release about digitization, but again who will oversee the distribution of e-books? Who will use new media to market books, whether those books are print or electronic? Who will design the e-books and new multimedia projects? Again, professionals at the press have been doing all of these tasks. Now that those professionals are being laid off, will this work be left to students? Who will provide consistency, professionalism and institutional memory as student interns come and go?

- Competence, planning, authors and the backlist: Why did the administration announce the closing of the Press on May 24 and come forward only now with this vague plan for the future? Why did they leap before they looked? The press release closes with this line: "The University of Missouri Press will maintain its commitments to current and past authors and will solicit new scholarly works in the coming year." Why have authors with books under contract for the fall 2012 list and a spring 2013 list not been contacted? Why have authors of the 2,000 titles on the backlist not been contacted? Will authors of those titles want to entrust their books to such a haphazard scheme? Will they be willing to let their books be distributed, marketed and edited in new editions by student interns?

- Common decency: Why are 10 hard-working, well-trained professionals being laid off and why are they receiving the news in dribs and drabs via press releases? These people own homes in the Columbia area. Their kids go to school in Columbia. Their careers are being derailed, their families thrown into turmoil. These 10 people have served the university with devotion and skill, some for decades. They were told on the
morning of May 24 without warning that the press would close on June 30, but because the administration didn't have a plan in place for how to proceed, the staff of the press has been asked to continue working in limbo. And they have done that — unselfishly, professionally, under great stress, and with no thanks, only a promise that sooner or later they will be dumped out on the street. President Wolfe and his administrators never took the time to meet any of them. He never visited the press or consulted with them about their work and the 54-year old institution they've built. This decision was made without talking to faculty, staff, authors, editors and professionals in the field. This decision was made by looking at spreadsheets, with no concern for traditions, scholarship or people.

We stand by the six points elaborated in our online petition, which has been signed by over 4,700 people nationwide. Here, again, are those six points:

We, the undersigned, call on President Wolfe to:

- Rescind his decision to shut down the press and stop the layoffs of the current staff.
- Guarantee that the citizens of Missouri and the University of Missouri continue to be served by the University of Missouri Press and that the press continue to publish a broad range of important literary, scholarly, peer-reviewed and Missouri-based books.
- Guarantee that the press continue to publish print books as it expands its already substantial list of digital editions and explores other opportunities presented by new media.
- Follow the industry standard and establish an independent advisory board of alums, scholars and editing professionals that would raise funds and oversee the direction of the press.
- Hire an experienced director for the press so that it does not have to continue, as it has for the last three years, under "temporary" leadership.
- Guarantee that the press continue to train student interns but not use them to replace trained professionals.

Ned Stuckey-French, Jane Lago, Lois Huneycutt, Nancy Taube, Donna Potts, Bruce Joshua Miller and Annette Wenda for the Coalition to Save the University of Missouri Press. Questions? Contact Opinion editor Elizabeth Conner.
Gold and tea compound may be more effective at treating prostate cancer than chemotherapy

(CBS News) A new study shows gold nanoparticles, in combination with a compound found in tea, may treat prostate cancer better than chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy can treat different kinds of cancer, but typically carries toxic side effects. While it has been known to shrink tumors, chemo also destroys healthy areas as it passes through the body. But, University of Missouri researchers discovered that when small gold particles and a compound found in tea leaves were combined, they targeted prostate cancer tumors more directly.

"In our study, we found that a special compound in tea was attracted to tumor cells in the prostate," Kattesh Katti, curators' professor of radiology and physics in the School of Medicine and the College of Arts and Science and senior research scientist at the MU Research Reactor, said in the press release. "When we combined the tea compound with radioactive gold nanoparticles, the tea compound helped 'deliver' the nanoparticles to the site of the tumors and the nanoparticles destroyed the tumor cells very efficiently."

The study was published in the July 16 issue of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

With chemotherapy, hundreds of radioactive "seeds" are injected into the prostate, but their size and their failure to deliver effective doses doesn't make them ideal and renders their ability to treat aggressive forms of prostate cancer rather futile.

But, with the gold and tea combination - called Epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) - scientists were able to create nanoparticles that were just the right size. Instead of needing hundreds of injections, the compound was injected only once or twice and the nanoparticles were able to stay closer to the tumor sites. The tumors shrunk by 80 percent within 28 days of treatment.

Because radioactive gold nanoparticles have a very short half-life (the time it takes for half of the substance to decay) of 2.7 days, the radioactivity from the gold only lasts for three weeks. This meant the researchers were able to treat the tumor much more effectively and with a dose that was thousands of times less than what is given with chemotherapy.

"Current therapy for this disease is not effective in those patients who have aggressive prostate cancer tumors," Cathy Cutler, research professor at the MU Research Reactor and co-author of the study, said in the press release. "Most of the time, prostate cancers are slow-growing; the
disease remains localized and it is easily managed. Aggressive forms of the disease spread to other parts of the body, and it is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in U.S. men. However, we believe the gold nanoparticles could shrink the tumors, both those that are slow-growing and aggressive, or eliminate them completely.

The experiment took place on mice with human prostate cancer cells, but the researchers hope to test the compound on larger animals like dogs. Human prostate cancer is very similar to the form found in canines. Katti told Fox News she hoped human trials could begin within the next five years.

"We look forward to eliminating pain and suffering through this approach," Katti said to Fox News. "And this is a very simple approach. The chemical we use has already been through the human food chain for thousands of year. Most populations in the world consume tea. It will make patients and non patients alike very comfortable."
Newcomers Texas A&M, Missouri get first taste of SEC flavor

By Tim Gayle, Montgomery Advertiser

HOOVER, Ala. – For the first time since 1992, the Southeastern Conference has new members.

Texas A&M linebacker Sean Porter doesn't think the switch to the SEC from the Big 12 will be "overwhelming."

And Texas A&M and Missouri took center stage on opening day of the SEC football media days Tuesday, fielding questions about their adjustment from the Big 12 to the nation's toughest football conference.

"What's my assessment?" Texas A&M coach Kevin Sumlin said, repeating a reporter's question. "It's a pretty damn hard league."

Missouri coach Gary Pinkel was a bit more defensive. That is understandable considering Sumlin is in his first year with the Aggies after four years in Conference USA at Houston, while Pinkel spent the last 11 years as Tigers head coach as a member of the Big 12.

"We played in a pretty good football league ourselves," he said. "It's all going to play out. How is Missouri and Texas A&M going to do in the SEC? There's going to be analysis every single week."

SEC Commissioner Mike Slive opened the three-day extravaganza with recognition for the other 12 members that worked with the league to change their 2012 schedules to include the newest members.

"In our storied, nearly 80-year history, Texas A&M and Missouri are only the third and fourth new members of the conference," Slive said. "They support exceptional broad-based athletic programs with passionate fans and wonderful traditions. They fit."

Slive said during the hectic planning days in the spring, it was important to find "signature home games" for the new members and added, "in working with our athletic directors and presidents, it was important for me to recognize there was not a single school that didn't give up something, something important, to make this schedule work."

Sumlin must have winced when he looked at his copy of the schedule. The Aggies are the only team this season to play Alabama, Auburn, LSU and Florida, the last six national champions.
"We understand the challenges ahead of us," he said. "We understand it's going to be a difficult but exciting year."

The Aggies play Florida on Sept. 8 in their 2012 home opener.

"Our most important game is our first game and that's Louisiana Tech," Sumlin said. "We've got our plate full the first game. But there is no doubt our fans are excited about the home opener against Florida. That's going to be a big game for us. To have your home opener at Texas A&M be an SEC game is a big game."

The Tigers, meanwhile, open at home with Southeastern Louisiana before playing Georgia in Columbia, Mo.

"You normally never talk about a game other than your first game, but we understand, historically for the University of Missouri, it's going to be a big game," Pinkel said.

The biggest question faced by the two coaches and the trio of players each brought was whether they were ready for the faster, stronger, more competitive Southeastern Conference.

"I think we'll be ready," Texas A&M offensive tackle Luke Joeckel said. "We've played SEC teams before and there is a difference in their speed at every position. It'll be fun playing these teams this year."

Said Aggies linebacker Sean Porter: "People say that the caliber of the players is different. I just don't know how much better it can get. I don't think it's going to be overwhelming for us. I think we'll be ready for it."

South Carolina coach Steve Spurrier agreed.

"I think A&M and Missouri are going to be extremely competitive, they're going to win a bunch of games, and it wouldn't surprise me if they were in the hunt to win the division," he said.
Alden gives pep talk to MU boosters

Missouri athletic director reminds fans what going to the SEC will mean to the school.

By MATT KELLEY

While Missouri’s move to the Southeastern Conference can be considered a prestigious step, some Tigers fans have taken the excitement with a grain of salt.

Both jubilation and trepidation were in the air Tuesday at the Mizzou SEC Summit on the 10th floor at the offices of Husch Blackwell.

Of course, there were enthusiastic speeches — complete with more applause breaks than a State of the Union address — and highlight videos set to inspiring music at the event, sponsored by the Tiger Club of Kansas City and the Tiger Scholarship Fund.

But there was also chatter of stiff competition in the form of SEC football defenses. And there were concerns of MU’s historic rivalry with Kansas fizzling now that the schools reside in different conferences.

Such is the dilemma of the current MU fan.

Missouri athletic director Mike Alden reminded fans and boosters Tuesday just what the upgrade in conference affiliation will mean to the university’s national exposure.

“To put this in perspective, the footprint of the Big 12, which is phenomenal, has exposure to approximately 45 million people,” Alden said. “The minute we stepped into the SEC, we just exposed one of the great universities in our country, the University of Missouri, to over 89 million people.”

Alden said that being in the national spotlight would benefit the entire school, not just its athletics.

“Our athletic program just happens to be the strongest advertising vehicle we have for our university,” he said. “We want to maximize the advertising strength of our athletic program to promote one of the great land-grant institutions in this country.”

But there’s still one huge challenge: money.
The Star reported July 11 that only three of the 14 schools in next year’s SEC spent less on athletics than Missouri’s $65 million. Tuesday’s estimates by Gary Link of the Tiger Scholarship Fund were even grimmer, placing MU 13th in the conference in athletic spending.

“We have got to expand our donor base beyond where we are right now,” Alden said. “Gary talked about where we’re ranking right now in the SEC, and what I’m telling you, as we move forward on that, it’s critically important we expand that base.”

Some Tigers fans are concerned that discrepancy in funding might leave MU fighting an uphill battle in a conference that has won the last six national titles in football and crowned nine national champions in sports in the 2011-12 school year.

Two such fans in attendance Tuesday were Tom Apel, a 1976 alumnus who lives in Lenexa, and Robert Evans, who received a master’s degree from Missouri in 1985 and lives in Blue Springs.

Apel expressed concern about the geographic fit of the move, saying Missouri is much more of a Midwestern state than a Southern one. He was also worried about the Tigers continuing to recruit in Texas, a fertile field of talent, since Missouri will play drastically fewer games there after leaving the Big 12.

Despite the steepest competition in the country, Apel said he could envision an 8-4 season for the Tigers this year, and nothing would be better to bolster fundraising than a strong start in the formidable league.

But Alden knows better than to rush to great expectations.

“We’ve got to be able to adjust to just a different level of competition in the SEC and hopefully have some success,” Alden said. “We just need to see consistent growth as far as our competitive success this year.”
Tigers studying up on new neighbors

HOOVER, Ala. — One could view Missouri football Coach Gary Pinkel's first appearance at the Southeastern Conference Media Days as a symbolic event in his and the Tigers' baptism into the league.

But Pinkel yesterday stressed that the transition didn't happen in an instant but rather was the result of months of preparation.

"I've been involved in a lot of things that I normally would have never done, starting in January with getting the master plan for what I call the SEC transition and every phase and how it affects our football program, everything — A, B, C, D — what we have to do to get that done," he said to a small group of reporters before taking his turn on the dais at the Wynfrey Hotel. "Normally, you don't have those meetings and you don't have those lists of things that you have to do."

Pinkel cited the $102 million that the school announced last month it would spend to upgrade its facilities in football and other sports. He talked about the changes his staff has undertaken in its approach to recruiting, decreasing its presence in Texas and re-assigning resources to recruit the talent-rich recruiting ground around Atlanta and into Florida. The school has also built a marketing campaign around the move to the SEC.

After 11 years in the Big 12, his staff had a high level of familiarity with the rest of the league but has had to spend more time than usual this offseason getting acquainted with its new opponents.

"We have a whole schedule of teams in our league now that we just had to learn a lot more about," he said.

Pinkel added: "What we do is we have one coach on offense, one coach on defense will be in charge of a particular team and be an expert on that team — their personnel, their schemes and everything that they do. We're going to review it all in the next couple weeks. Then when that team comes up, we'll bring all that data, that information and get that offensive coach and defensive coach that's an expert at it, and they will help us along in terms of recognizing the things we have to do and the possible game plan."

EYES FORWARD: Pinkel needed no time to gather his thoughts when asked if he would be sentimental about no longer playing the Tigers' old opponents in the Big 12.

"No. Not at all. Not at all," he said. "League changes, you move on. I don't ever look back. I don't do that. ... It is what it is. Accept it and go on. We're in a new league. All our focus is there."
But Pinkel was not completely devoid of nostalgia when talking about the conference the Tigers had called home since 1996 and that he joined in 2001.

"It was such a great league when Missouri was in there with Colorado and Nebraska and A&M and the other eight teams," he said. "It was such a great league potential-wise, and it's kind of sad that the leadership did not allow it to keep that together. There's reasons why four teams left.

"I look back at that. That's disappointing and sad because it was a great league, but I wish them well. I want them to do well."

SAVE THE DATE: As soon as the scheduled came out, Missouri fans circled Sept. 8 — the day the Tigers play host to Georgia in their first SEC Conference game.

Pinkel, usually not one to look ahead, said he's giving his players special dispensation to talk about the matchup with the Bulldogs, at least for a little while longer.

"I'm going to let our players up through media day talk about our first game against Georgia just because it's historic," he said. "After that, then we'll make sure our 100 percent focus is where it should be" — on the opener against Southeastern Louisiana.

Pinkel was not surprised to see the game selected for the 6:45 p.m. time slot on ESPN2.

DIVERSIFIED: Mike Slive, marking 10 years in his post as SEC Commissioner, reflected on some of the strengths of the league during his annual address to kickoff SEC Media Days. One area where the league has made its biggest strides is in diversity, with three African-American head coaches now stalking the sidelines at member schools. Two of them — Vanderbilt’s James Franklin and Texas A&M’s Kevin Sumlin — took their turn in the spotlight yesterday.

"Ten years ago the story was that no minority served as a head football coach in the history of the Southeastern Conference," he said. "Today, we have three minority head football coaches, eight minority head basketball coaches and five minority women’s basketball coaches, all bucking a national trend as outlined in a recent AP article.

"I am very grateful that the hiring of minority coaches in the Southeastern Conference is no longer a story; it is simply part of who we are."

SEC NETWORK IN THE WORKS: Change Project X to Project SEC.

That's at least what SEC Commissioner Mike Slive says.

Rumors of the SEC's work toward its own network — something dubbed Project X — looks to become reality, though Slive was vague about it yesterday during his 19-minute address to reporters.

"There has been a whole lot of speculation about Project X. Is it still a secret? I don't think so," he said. "But we now call it Project SEC. Our objective long-term is to work with our television partner to provide fans with greater access to favored teams, more opportunities to watch rivals, and more insight into who we are: a conference of 14 great universities."

The Big Ten Network began its own network in 2007, a $2 billion, 20-year deal, according to reports.

Many SEC games are aired on ESPN’s SEC Network, a syndicated package owned and operated by ESPN.
Slive was vague on details of the conference's own network.

"I'd love to say more," he said. "I know you want me to say more. I won't say more."

CHAMPIONS BOWL: For more than seven years, the SEC has pushed for a playoff.

It first began, Slive said, when an undefeated Auburn team in 2004 was left out of the national championship game.

With those playoff wishes granted this summer, the league is moving toward the next priority, the Champions Bowl.

The Champions Bowl is a game pitting the best team from the SEC and Big 12 that do not make the four-team playoff, set to begin in 2014.

SEC officials are ironing out the details of the bowl.

"We will work with them to finalize plans for the inaugural game which will be played January 1, 2015. It will be played at a bowl yet to be determined," he said.

A DIFFERENT ENTRANCE: Franklin, Vanderbilt's head football coach, walked through the Wynfrey lobby last year for his first ever SEC Media Days.

"Not one person said one thing to me," Franklin said.

Sure, Vanderbilt's coach isn't the most popular guy here, especially a first-year coach like he was, but no one noticed him?

There's a catch. Franklin later mentioned who he walked in with — Saban.

"People were throwing babies to him to autograph and everything else," Franklin said, smiling.

No Saban run-ins this year. Alabama — and its hundreds of autograph-seeking fans that fill the Wynfrey lobby — aren't set to arrive until Thursday.

That's not the only reason Franklin's getting noticed more this year. He led the least successful team in the SEC to a bowl in his first year last season — and to near-wins against Tennessee, Florida and Georgia, too.

"It's just changed," he said. "But we also know you're not going to earn everybody's respect in one year."

No doubt that Franklin likes the newfound attention he and his team's getting. He's glad Missouri Coach Gary Pinkel didn't spoil it by bringing quarterback James Franklin to media days. "I would take the backseat to the other James Franklin," he said.

The Vanderbilt coach was asked about playing against James Franklin, the player. The two teams meet in Columbia on Oct. 6.

"Cousin Franklin?" he said smiling. "We're going to leave him alone."

EIGHT WOULD BE ENOUGH: A few days after college football approved to replace the much-maligned BCS with a four-team playoff, South Carolina Coach Steve Spurrier already wants a change.

"If I was calling the shots," he said, "I'd have eight teams go play."
In Spurrier's eight-team playoff, the six BCS conference champions would automatically qualify. The field would be filled with two at-large teams.

"If I was doing it, that's the way I would do it," he said. "It's not going to happen, but anyway."

INTO THE FIRE: Sumlin paid a visit to ESPN's bus and spoke with some of their on-air talent before passing in front of the print media. He was asked if realized the Aggies' inaugural SEC schedule included games against the last six national champions — Alabama and Florida have won two titles each in that span while the other two were claimed by LSU and Auburn.

"That's about the fourth time somebody asked me that," Sumlin said. "We knew that when we took the job. We understand the challenges that are ahead of us. We understand that it's going to be a difficult but exciting year."

FITTING IN: Texas A&M linebacker Sean Porter was deferential to the talent level in the SEC believes both Big 12 newcomers could have a chance to sneak up on league opponents this season.

"Missouri's a good team. They have a good quarterback. They hit hard on defense, so I think other teams should expect a good game out of Missouri and a good game out of us," he said. "I don't think that they should come into our game expecting to win or anything. They should definitely come ready to play just like every other Saturday in the SEC."
Pinkel offers defense of Paterno at SEC Media Days

HOOVER, Ala. — The first day of SEC Media Days didn’t pass without discussion of a story that occurred outside the league but that has dominated the news for much of the past eight months.

That is the Jerry Sandusky sexual abuse scandal at Penn State.

Late Coach Joe Paterno was again placed at the center of criticism for his actions last week with the release of a report on the investigation conducted by former FBI Director Louis Freeh. In it, Freeh, citing emails and handwritten notes, concluded that Paterno intervened and stopped a plan by Athletic Director Tim Curley, senior vice president Gary Shultz and President Graham Spanier to report a 2001 allegation against Sandusky to child-welfare authorities.

Asked for his thoughts on the situation and lessons that could be gleaned from it, Pinkel offered a defense of Paterno.

"Joe Paterno's a friend that I got to know professionally, and you can't take away the greatness of this man," he told a small group of reporters at the Wynfrey Hotel before taking his turn on the dais. "He was a great man. However you analyze this, you can't erase all that this guy's done. You can't do that. Nobody can do that."

Pinkel continued: "I think when you come out of such a tragic situation, certainly involving children and the magnitude of this in our country from a media standpoint, I anticipated really what happened. I anticipated that they would do this. You're not going to sit back there and say, 'Well, just things happen.' You're not going to do that. They're going to be firing, and people, they're going to make statements and they're going to point fingers, and that's what I anticipated a little bit."

Later, in response to a follow-up question, Pinkel seemed to disagree with the second-guessing of Paterno's actions that has taken place since the scandal broke last November.

"It's so easy in hindsight to go back there and say what it is," he said. "That's the easiest thing to do. The easiest thing to do is to point fingers and" say "'You should have done this, you should have done that, you should have done that.'"

He did say he thought Paterno would have done things differently.

"I'm sure he would, maybe if he" could "do it over again he would have followed up a few things," he said. "But don't take away all this guy did, and to sit there and blame him for all this, I think is wrong."
Pinkel later acknowledged there were lessons that should be learned from everyone involved and said, "I don't read a lot about it."

South Carolina Coach Steve Spurrier was also asked to share his thoughts about Penn State but was more measured with his praise for Paterno.

"Obviously, it's a terrible, terrible mess. I don't have the answers for this, that and the other. The only thing I would say about Coach Paterno, when he coached college football, he did everything right," Spurrier said. "His teams played fair, fundamentally sound. He was always revered for doing the right things.

"I don't want to get into the other side of a terrible, terrible situation. But as a college football coach, I remember him that way also."

Commissioner Mike Slive didn't mention Paterno by name but did allude to the situation during his address at the start of Media Days.

In it, Slive said: "Last week's headlines remind us that we must be ever vigilant on all issues of integrity and that our primary mission is to educate and protect young people. We must maintain an honest and open dialogue across all levels of university administration. There must be an effective system of checks and balances within the administrative structure to protect all who come in contact with it, especially those who cannot protect themselves.

"No one person, no matter how popular, no matter how successful can be allowed to derail the soul of an institution."