Documents Show U. of Missouri Press Suffered Years of Mixed Signals

In the wake of the U. of Missouri system's decision to close its university press, a wave of criticism assailed the move, as described in this cartoon from "The Columbia Daily Tribune."

By Peter Monaghan

Late in May, administrators shut down the University of Missouri system's 54-year-old press, citing its continuing inability to close a "growing" deficit. Now, in the face of vehement protests from inside and outside the university, the administrators have rushed to announce their plan for a replacement.

The new press, which will emphasize digital and possibly multimedia publishing, will be directed by a novelist and journal editor with no experience running a publishing house. It will operate as a "teaching press," staffed, in large part, by graduate students completely new to the daily business of acquisitions, editing, production, marketing, and distribution.

Still, officials at the University of Missouri are touting the plan as a bold way forward for academic publishing. Given years of cuts in state support, the university can no longer subsidize a traditional press, they say.

It "ran up against time, and time said. We can't continue to do this," says Natalie Krawitz, the system's vice president for finance and administration.
According to financial records obtained by The Chronicle, though, the press had operated at a loss for years and was actually well on the way to righting itself just as the university pulled the plug. Those documents and others, along with interviews with more than a dozen people from the press floor to the senior levels of university-system administration, reveal that conflicting philosophies of press management often operated simultaneously. They also show that signals from the administration were sometimes unclear, and that the press's ambitions long jeopardized its financial stability.

A Unilateral Move

The University of Missouri Press, which opened in 1958, built a large list of academic and regional titles, many of them award winners by the likes of Langston Hughes, Howard Nemerov, and Cleanth Brooks, along with esteemed series on Mark Twain, Harry S. Truman, and the political philosopher Eric Voegelin. With a backlist of 1,000 titles, the press sells more than 100,000 books each year. Its specialties include presidential politics, regional history, and 19th-century Western expansion.

The administration's decision, announced on May 24, shocked the press's 10 employees and university faculty members, none of whom had been consulted or apprised of the move in advance.

Timothy M. Wolfe, a software executive who took over as system president in February, said the university would discontinue its annual subsidy to the press at the end of June. During the last 25 years the subsidy had ranged from $370,000 to $635,000, and in recent years it had hovered at around $400,000 of the university system's $2-billion budget. (Critics of the decision to pull the subsidy point out that it coincided with the administration's announcement of plans to borrow $200-million to upgrade athletics facilities.)

Nearly all of the 134 members of the Association of American University Presses are given subsidies and could not operate without them. But Missouri officials said they had lost patience with the press's dependence on system underwriting.

If the faculty response was muted when administrators announced the shuttering of the old press, it has exploded since. About 5,000 people have now signed a petition urging reinstatement of the press, as it was, and a Facebook protest group has drawn 2,500 supporters.

John M. Budd, a professor of information science and learning technologies at the university's Columbia campus, was among a few faculty members invited onto a committee that over the last two years had considered ideas about the future of scholarly publishing. Often, during the panel's meetings, administrators expressed support for the press, and they never discussed closing it, he says.

"It is foolish to destroy an organization and then try to rebuild it from the ground up," says Mr. Budd, whose specialty is organizational management. "This is precisely what has happened, with no infrastructure in place."
Why not simply require the old press to innovate? System officials say that question ignores how long the press was a problem. Interviews and records from the last 20 years suggest persistent disagreement about whether the press was performing well, or was a money pit.

**The 'University of Beverly Jarrett Press'**

The person with the most influence on the press until recent years was Beverly Jarrett, who moved from Louisiana State University Press in 1989 to become director and stayed until her retirement, nearly 20 years later.

Upon her arrival, Ms. Jarrett pursued an ambitious plan to raise the Missouri press's size and prestige. She committed the press to buying a $1.4-million building that would make room for its growth, but payments for it, on top of maintenance and fixed costs such as utilities, hobbled the press for many years.

In an interview, Ms. Jarrett recalls that administrators asked if the press could afford the new building: "I naively said, 'Sure.'"

But asking the press to do that, she insists, "was just part of the university not taking full responsibility for providing its state university with an active and operational press."

Ms. Jarrett doubled the size of seasonal lists, to as many as 67, plus up to 15 reprints, always able to persuade at least some administrators of the wisdom of the approach, says Clair Willcox, who served as acquisitions editor and then editor in chief for 24 years. "She was in touch with that administration," he says. "She could charm the socks off a snake."

She was a workaholic, he adds: "I tease people that it was the University of Beverly Jarrett Press."

In the three years before her retirement, the press's staff grew to 26. Ms. Jarrett won notice for cultivating outstanding authors in several fields, including John Hope Franklin and Sissela Bok. The press won acclaim for both the content and the design of its books.

But deficits grew—to more than $360,000 in 2007 on sales of $1.4-million, even after a university subsidy of $480,000. That fit into a pattern of overstaffing, overpublishing, and overprinting, according to consultants who reviewed press operations at the end of 2008.

Sources including former administrators say system leaders encouraged Ms. Jarrett to expand the press, even as others in the administration—like Steven W. Graham, now senior associate vice president for academic affairs, and Ms. Krawitz, the financial vice president—demurred. Says Ms. Krawitz: "The rationale brought to us, and that was in our thoughts in the early and middle part of the last decade, was that we weren't publishing enough books, and would become a sustainable operation if we published more. That didn't seem—the way we were doing it—to be sustainable. But we depended on the people we hired to do it, and they weren't able to make it work."
She insists: "The university system never pushed the press to grow; that came from the press."

Figures tell a different story. In various years, senior administrators allocated additional subsidies to the press, when the sizable original subsidies still left imposing deficits.

Also telling is what happened in 2003, when the press received a windfall from an author Ms. Jarrett had cultivated: $1,060,000 from Eugene Arthur Davidson, who had served as editor of Yale University Press for 26 years, had published several books with the Missouri press, and had married into a fortune. The gift was spent on tamping down deficits, rather than invested in an endowment.

Dwight Browne, who became interim director upon Ms. Jarrett's retirement, believes the gift was actually "very detrimental to the press" because it allowed Ms. Jarrett to continue a growth strategy even as other fund-raising efforts failed.

Ms. Jarrett disagrees, saying it was economic forces that hit the press hard: "Libraries bought fewer books; sales diminished."

But again, the numbers tell an additional story. From 2005 to 2009 the press was paying, on average, 23 staff members. The salaries of the press's two top earners, Ms. Jarrett and the chief financial officer, Linda Frech, alone accounted for two-thirds of the university system's subsidy. Their pay was toward the high end of standard academic-press ranges, according to Association of American University Presses surveys, and even while some longtime staff members earned well below them, the overall payroll was burdensome.

**Mixed Messages**

A key issue in the fate of the press has been whether it was expected to end deficits or to end its reliance on subsidies from the university system—a tall order for any academic press. Ms. Krawitz, who arrived at the university system in 1996, says that during her time there administrators had repeatedly emphasized that the press should be self-sustaining, "in the way other auxiliary operations are self-sustaining."

Mr. Browne, the interim director, who began at the press as a student employee in 1981, says that over the years officials vacillated on the subsidy, an assertion confirmed by two system officials.

When Ms. Jarrett left, leaving a $284,000 deficit even after a subsidy of $530,000, "the ship was sinking and on fire," he says.

It was Mr. Browne's decision to call in five university-press consultants. Their report, submitted in 2009, praised the "excellent, knowledgeable" remaining staff for achieving the goals set for them and for providing "an outstanding return on the university's investment."

But the report also alluded to several earlier years of too many books, with too many copies printed, too little list planning and strategic planning, and misguided pricing of books.
Mr. Browne responded in 2009 by laying off seven staff members and taking several steps recommended by the consultants: He outsourced fulfillment processing to a large distribution center in Chicago. He reduced the inventory by one-half; some 200,000 books were removed from the press's warehouse before the remainder were shipped to Chicago. He also raised the number of the press's titles available as e-books, to 500.

The changes took some time to save money. Under the "write-down" method of accounting that presses commonly use, Missouri incurred a substantial on-paper cost from getting rid of so much of its unsalable stock. Severance and vacation payments to the laid-off employees added to costs, too.

Nonetheless, the press reduced its deficit almost to nil. But Mr. Browne was perplexed that during his four years as interim director the university did not advertise for a permanent leader, and he was frustrated that administrators did not adopt one of the consultants' top recommendations: to institute an industry-standard independent advisory board of alumni, scholars, and editing professionals who would guide and oversee the press.

He says he understood the administrators' reluctance only when he saw their May 24 announcement.

Widespread Denunciation

The administration's plan to run a press with graduate-student interns leaves Mr. Budd, the organizational-management specialist, "dumbfounded." He contends that it is not just an affront to the skills of the professional editorial and production staff, but also irresponsible. "While Ph.D. students are likely to be very bright, their first job is as students," he says. "And our first responsibility is to help them complete their program, not to get cheap labor out of them."

The Facebook protest group, the Coalition to Save the University of Missouri Press, raises other objections. "Why," the group asks, "must 10 trained professionals with decades of experience be put out on the street," to be replaced by student interns who may well scare away authors? "Who will want to publish with such a press?"

"This decision was made by looking at spreadsheets, with no concern for traditions, scholarship, or people," say the protesters. And they suggest that the spreadsheets are wrong because digital publishing is proving to save little money and multimedia publishing is likely to be very expensive.

Officials at the university's Columbia campus, which will house the new press, say those objections miss the point. The new press will forge a new path for scholarly publishing, and will do that by drawing on campus strengths, they say.

Speer Morgan, an English professor there and editor of The Missouri Review, will be the director. He plans to hire an editor in chief and two other editorial staff members, in faculty positions that will include teaching and research responsibilities.
The new press will be analogous to many hands-on university programs, says Brian L. Foster, the Columbia provost, citing as examples the student-run law review and the work that advanced students perform in medical and other clinical programs and in science laboratories. "We're extending a model," he says, "that is very common in research universities."

He says converting the press into a teaching operation also makes its expense more palatable, a cost of instruction. Nonetheless, he says, it will enjoy the same safeguards as any academic press when it comes to, say, vetting manuscripts.

Mr. Foster freely acknowledges, however, that many details of the new press remain to be worked out. Asked, for example, whether staffing levels will be adequate for such urgent tasks as finding books for next year's lists, he says: "We're not sure. We'll know the details of that in a year or two. My point is that the business model for scholarly communications is changing so rapidly. So it's hard to know where we're going to be."

And the cost? Although the press will be able to use about $800,000 in income from sales of existing Missouri books, Mr. Morgan says, "nobody is so unrealistic to expect us to turn it immediately into a black-line operation."

A 'Perfect Storm'

In a letter seeking applicants for the editor-in-chief post, Mr. Morgan makes use of the drama of the process. He writes: "We are going through a 'perfect storm' of bad publicity at the moment due to the fact that the management of the transition was done so awkwardly." But he says he thinks that the storm "is beginning to calm down."

Meteorologists might differ. Several authors are dissociating themselves from the new press. John Shelton Reed, a prominent sociologist and essayist who has written or edited 19 books, five with Missouri, wrote to system administrators of his "dismay and disbelief" at their actions: "Your New Model Press ... is not something that I care to be associated with. Please tell me what I must do to ensure that I'm not."

Several other authors have also requested the rights to their books, asserting that the Missouri system has failed to live up to contractual guarantees.

Among other prominent detractors of the new plan is a Missouri native, William Least Heat-Moon, the author of *Blue Highways* (Little, Brown, 1982). In a July 15 newspaper column, he suggested that the decision to close the original press was "an expression of the worst in bottom-line thinking." He added: "Missing from all the manipulated figures out of University Hall is the universally recognized fact that a university press exists to further learning, not to make money."

The chairs of six departments at the University of Missouri at St. Louis wrote to President Wolfe: "As a research university, if we can't make the case for a university press, how can we make the case for anything else that we do?"
In his letter to potential candidates for editor in chief, Mr. Morgan paints a picture of opportunity. The new editor will be able "to redefine the press," he writes.

For now, Mr. Morgan and whatever colleagues he can muster to his cause face a daunting task. They will know that going electronic saves little if any money. They will also know, or learn, that some Missouri authors, past and present, are considering lawsuits. And that almost all the authors of books that the old press was considering have spent the last eight weeks placing their books with other presses eager to snap them up.

Mr. Foster, the provost, insists that "there are risks here, for sure, but I'm also strongly convinced that there are risks in not doing something different, too." Meanwhile, the wits on the system's campuses have been sharpening their pencils, and so far have come up with several new monikers for the new press, including "Morgan's Folly" and "Mizzou Lite."
Walter Russell Mead on the budget pressures facing higher education:

[The University of Missouri] has just announced that it is closing its university press after losing its annual subsidy of $400,000. Now professors and students are up in arms over the closure, decrying the move as an attack on scholarly discourse and taking to Facebook petitions to protest the decision.

Look past the uproar, however, and it is clear that this is part of a wider trend. A number of other universities, including prestigious schools like Rice, have shuttered their presses, and six more have joined it in the past three years alone. As state budgets contract, and as private universities face higher costs, schools across the country are all finding out the same thing—the money just isn't there.

Fewer university presses with higher standards would probably serve humanity better than the current system. Some of the problem stems from the nature of the tenure system, in which every academic in the country is under pressure to publish books whether he or she has anything worth saying or not. In that sense the university press problem is a symptom rather than a cause of academia's woes. Parts of the university press system work like vanity presses, where the driving force in the system is the author's need to be published rather than the reader's need to know.

What's going on here, however, is less about quality than it is about money and the outmoded foundations of American institutions and practices built in the post World War Two era. The baroque inefficiency of the academic enterprise—and especially the research model university, which . . . has built a system that demands enormous outside resources to continue to function.

In a handful of cases, notably the best endowed private universities, there is enough money on hand to make this system work. But less affluent private universities and virtually all public universities face a harsher climate. And as state governments in particular face claims on their tight revenues from more powerful constituencies than university faculty and staff, the public universities are being systematically starved of cash.

There are two ways for the system to respond. One is by cheese paring: cutting costs on "extraneous" or "non-core" activities while trying to preserve the heart of the old model. This looks like simple common sense to most administrators, and it is often the thinking that leads to
the closure of university presses as well as other activities that, in the cold light of a budget crunch, suddenly look like frills.

The second way is more difficult, but it is ultimately what the academy must do: it must reinvent itself and radically restructure. This would involve not merely closing down an expensive university press but rethinking the relationship of scholarship to teaching, and re-examining the relevance of the "publish or perish" system for the large group of disciplines and institutions where it doesn't really make sense.
UM Press staffers say rationale behind new model is bogus

By JANESE SILVEY

Saturday, July 21, 2012

University of Missouri Press employees say they're frustrated that university administrators have indicated that a new publishing house will be more innovative than its predecessor.

MU officials on Monday released details of a new press model that will take advantage of new digital technologies and serve as a teaching tool for graduate student interns. But the UM Press already uses a variety of digital book formats and has an internship program that has taught dozens of graduate students every year about scholarly publishing, said John Brenner, acquisitions manager.

"To say they're going to do new things, when we've been doing those things well for years, is beyond demoralizing, it's infuriating," Brenner said. "How could they not know we do these things?"

UM President Tim Wolfe in May said the press would be phased out starting this month. The 10 press employees had remained mum about the situation, but several of them opened up this week after details of a new press emerged.

Speer Morgan, director of the new press, fueled the fire when he sent a letter to potential candidates for the new editor-in-chief position. Morgan, an English professor, wrote that he is looking for someone who will embrace electronic marketing and experiment with new forms of delivery. He also promises a salary of $110,000 — about $50,000 more than Clair Willcox, the current editor-in-chief makes — and said the "current gross income of the press" off the backlist of book titles is about $800,000.

Morgan and MU Provost Brian Foster have said current press employees can apply for the three jobs expected to open at the new press, but they also said they're looking for people with different skill sets. The letter of inquiry, though, went to professionals who have experience at traditional university presses.

"I am utterly outraged by Morgan's recruitment letter for a number of reasons, but two cannot pass without comment," Willcox said in an email. "First, it is clear both from the letter and from the identities of at least some of those to whom it was sent that he is seeking applications for positions that would require precisely the same qualifications now held by the employees who are being laid off. Because he has stated publicly that the present employees do not have the 'skill sets' for the new positions, he is essentially attempting a pre-emptive lockout of our staff from openings at the university."
"Second, his reference to the 'current gross income' of the press is utter nonsense and is further evidence of his ignorance about book publishing and our operating statement," Willecox continued. "The figure to which he refers is commonly known to those in our profession as 'net sales,' a completely different concept. This is a 'gross' error that will amount to a red flag for any book publishing professionals who receive his absurd letter."

University administrators yesterday released answers to some frequently asked questions about the new press, saying it will employ half the number of employees as the current press.

UM Press workers, though, say they don't understand how the three professionals expected to run the experimental model will be able to do the actual work.

For instance, Beth Chandler, marketing manager, wants to know who will replace the sales representatives who travel the country pitching book titles to buyers such as Barnes & Noble and Amazon. And buyers want to be assured that they can return books, making book returns a significant function of the press staff, she said.

Details are being discussed during the transition, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

UM administrators don't know yet what they'll do with the UM Press facility off LeMone Industrial Boulevard. The press office pays the mortgage, utilities and maintenance, in part, using the $400,000 yearly subsidy from the UM System that it received until July 1.

Also unknown is whether Morgan and MU will release rights to previously published books to authors who request them. So far, three authors have formally requested rights be returned to them.

Current UM Press workers are in limbo. They say they can't seek other employment until their layoffs are effective, because they're expecting severance pay.

It's been tough to come to work for the past two months, said Jennifer Gravley, publicity manager. "To say it's been difficult would be an understatement," she said. "But it's very heartening to see the fight to save the press and to see people who believe in our mission and think it's important."

About 5,000 people have signed a petition asking Wolfe to reverse his decision and keep the traditional publishing house running. Critics of the decision are meeting at 11 a.m. Tuesday at the MU Student Center.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Critics of new University of Missouri Press model speak up

By Farecha Amir
July 21, 2012 | 5:16 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Critics have had a lot to say about the new University of Missouri Press outlined Monday.

For Bruce Joshua Miller — who has been a sales representative for academic presses for 30 years and has clocked "at least 20" with the University of Missouri Press — the bottom-line question is simply: Will the business model work?

He, for one, doubts it.

The MU News Bureau announced earlier this week that a new, innovative press would open and focus more on digital delivery of books. The new model will have a faculty editing staff who will serve as both editors and teachers for students interested in learning about book publishing.

Miller said that because few specifics of the new press have been provided by MU administrators, it's hard to say exactly how their vision will work as a business model. Based on what has been said, though, he doesn't see how the press as envisioned will be less costly than or as valuable as its predecessor.

"Presses are under a lot of pressure nationwide," said Frank Donoghue, an English professor at Ohio State University. Donoghue said if they aren't able to financially support themselves, universities see them as a liability.

Pointing to an increasingly large operating deficit, UM System President Tim Wolfe announced in May that the University of Missouri Press would be phased out during the 2013 fiscal year.

The decision was met with public backlash over concerns that the university's reputation and an author's ability to publish for a small audience would suffer, among other things.
"They've been very quick to destroy but don't know how to build," Miller said.

Miller hopes the administration will change its decision, but he doesn't plan to continue working for the press after the new model is put in place. In his 30 years of work with university presses, he said he has never seen a university administration demonstrate such ignorance about its press.

“It’s like a bad joke being played on people,” Miller said. "It's a slap in the face for the people of Missouri."

**Making ends meet**

Digital publishing is not cheap. Although there will be fewer printing costs, the whole process of book publication will remain the majority of the cost, Miller said. That process includes paying for office space, digital archiving and storage, salaries and author fees — costs that won't go away with the new model, he said.

Donoghue said more presses are trying to have digital books available, thinking they will save money. However, since the process of publishing isn't changing, the cost doesn't really change either.

"You don't really save money. You save paper, but not cost."

Although he said digital publishing might not save money, Donoghue did say using the publication as a teaching facility and integrating it with the campus is a good idea. He added that often presses are detached from the campus, and therefore overlooked.

Donoghue said university presses make most of their money through one or two very profitable textbooks. Because of the abundance of information available online and because it's easier to teach without a book, fewer textbooks are being purchased by professors and, by extension, students.

The rest of what presses publish are academic monographs, Donoghue said, which are usually written for a specific audience. The production of these outweighs the sales and therefore presses lose money.

Furthermore, many authors from the backlist of the current press want rights to their books back. As those rights are returned, Miller pointed out, the new press will lose their related sales.
A shaky precedent

MU is not the first to experiment with a digital press model — Rice University tried it in 2006. Over the course of the experiment, the press did not achieve the goals officials had hoped it would, said Eugene Levy, a professor at Rice. It closed its doors due to poor sales in 2010.

Levy was provost at the time and said that the circumstances were different. The traditional university press had closed down in the mid-90s; it wasn't until 2006 that the university launched an experiment for a new all-digital press. The idea then was to have a published book available for free online, downloaded as a PDF or purchased as hardback through print on demand.

"It's important to keep in mind that a great deal of the costs are incurred before you print everything," Levy said. "Printing is just one part of the publishing process."

Levy said the university understood very clearly the cost of book publishing from the beginning and had a great deal of discussion before it decided to launch the press.

Rice also differed from the new UM Press model because it did not serve as a teaching lab for students. That means it did not incur the costs of a new management staff, which the new university press will be hiring.

A new editor-in-chief will also have to be paid more than the current editor-in-chief if the administration hopes to find anyone experienced in university book publishing during its nationwide search, Miller said.

Supporters of the current University of Missouri Press will meet Tuesday at 11 a.m. in room 2501 of the MU Student Center to discuss the closing of the press and the new model.

Supervising editor is Katherine Reed.
Our Opinion: Press university to retain print publishing

By News Tribune

Friday, July 20, 2012

University of Missouri officials may not equal the “firemen” in Ray Bradbury’s “Fahrenheit 451,” but they are no friends of printed books.

In the futuristic novel, society considered books subversive and employed firemen to round up the banned volumes and burn them.

At our state school, officials have deemed the book publishing operation of University of Missouri Press too expensive. The initial plan to eliminate academic publishing entirely has been eased; instead, the university press will transform from print to digital book publishing.

Critics of the initial plan have not been appeased by the planned transition from print to digital.

Opponents have collected about 5,000 signatures and plan to gather on the Columbia campus next week to discuss their next steps.

In addition, some authors are signaling discontent, not only with their voices but with their manuscripts.

Former U.S. Rep. Ike Skelton, a Lexington Democrat who previously represented Central Missouri’s 4th District, intends to take his memoirs elsewhere, perhaps out of state, for publication.

And Don Spivey, author of a biography of Satchel Paige, has asked the university to return his publishing rights.

“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 e-mail to Tim Wolfe, university president.

University officials said their decision was prompted by costs. The university press received a $400,000 subsidy from the university system.
We understand technology provides a less expensive way to deliver information. A survey this week revealed sales of e-books more than doubled, from 6 percent to 15 percent of the market, from 2010 to 2011.

Digital publishing is here to stay.

But we believe e-books should be an alternative to, not a replacement for, printed volumes. Among publishers, academia should appreciate and respect that.
LETTER TO THE EDITOR: University needs balance

By William Chisenhall
July 20, 2012 | 3:35 p.m. CDT

From 2008 to 2011, I had the honor of coaching MU's fencing program. During that time, we grew from a Tier 3 club to Tier 1 — just shy of varsity status. MU's fencing squad has repeatedly ended up at national championships, sometimes close to the top. This was partially due to unending work put in by student-athletes; they ran the club, conducted the logistics of tournaments and trained endlessly to become one of the greatest squads of fencers in the Midwest.

It was also due to the generous support given to us by the university. We were given funding for equipment, which can be expensive. We were given travel funding to spread the fame of Missouri Athletics. If we worked hard, the university worked just as hard in funding us. From a coaching standpoint, we never felt unsupported. I thank the university for its past and continued attention to the unparalleled athletic programs at MU.

However, this reflects disparity in funding for academia, ostensibly a university's primary mission. The 'reorganization' of the University of Missouri Press publicly states that the university administration isn't interested in educating balanced members of society. It is interested in making money. This philosophy is reflected in other imbalances: doctoral candidates in humanities at MU work minimum wage jobs to make ends meet. The Art History & Archaeology departments hold bake sales in order to fund seminars. This is shameful.

A good university seeks balance: To ensure the physical lives of students match the mental ones, to produce healthy, thinking members of society who can look back on any aspect of their student experience with fondness and unity and to ensure that every department of MU is fully funded and supported. The philosophy of this administration runs the real risk of brain-drain at MU, leaving it an academic laughing-stock. I urge the administration to fund all aspects important to a university. Make all things Mizzou as great as the athletics program.

William Chisenhall was the head coach of MU Fencing from 2008 to 2011. He lived in Columbia until late 2011. He coaches men's rugby at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.
Gov. Jay Nixon and University of Missouri president Tim Wolfe will join utility executives and business leaders at an event designed to boost support for building small modular nuclear reactors in the state.

The event Monday on the Columbia campus is billed as an economic development summit, while officials await word on a U.S. Department of Energy grant application.

Westinghouse Electric Co. and Ameren Missouri are competing for a share of the $452 million the energy department has set aside for the new technology.

Ameren wants to build and operate up to five smaller reactors in Missouri. The St. Louis-based company operates the state's only nuclear power plant in Callaway County. The federal department plans to announce its grant recipients by September.
Missouri state rep issues statement criticizing Gary Pinkel’s comments about Joe Paterno

By Nick Bromberg | Dr. Saturday – Fri, Jul 20, 2012 9:56 AM EDT

Missouri State Representative Sara Lampe issued a scathing statement Thursday about comments Missouri coach Gary Pinkel made about Joe Paterno at SEC Media Days.

"Paterno may have been a great coach, but as a man he failed at what mattered - protecting children from a sexual predator," Lampe, a Democrat from Springfield running for lieutenant governor, said in the statement. "Coach Pinkel's defense of the indefensible indicates that he holds the same attitude that allowed the reprehensible situation at Penn State to occur; the attitude that building a successful football program is more important than everything else, including protecting innocent children from rapists."

On Tuesday, Pinkel said the following:

"Joe Paterno's a friend that I got to know professionally, and you can't take away the greatness of this man. 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."

"He was a great man, a good man. I'm sure he would, maybe if he could do it over again he would have followed up a few things. But don't take away all this guy did, and to sit there and blame him for all this, I think is wrong."

As Graham said so appropriately at the time, Pinkel stepped on a media relations landmine given the information in the Freeh Report. And as Pinkel's comments made the rounds his remarks were panned, though the landmine hadn't detonated fully. Well, until Lampe's release, that is.
Tuesday, Pinkel said that he hadn't read much about the Penn State situation, and in an interview with a St. Louis radio station Thursday afternoon, Lampe said that she had read an executive summary and news reports about the Freeh Report, telling KFNS-AM that "My conclusion from that is the reason I made the statement I made," and that her statement had nothing to do with the upcoming Democratic primary election on August 7. Lampe is one of eight Democrats on the ballot in the August primary. The winner will likely face current Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder in November.

Lampe, a former teacher and principal, told the Associated Press that "I believe Coach Pinkel was using his public voice to do what's right, and I'm doing the same. I have spent 30 years standing up for children."

The Missouri athletic department has declined comment on Lampe's remarks, and that's the right call -- there's no need to continue to dwell on a topic that would yield no benefit to either party. Pinkel's comments were one instance too many, and it's doubtful Lampe would see a boost -- no matter her position -- from a protracted war of words with the only FBS level football program in the red-leaning state.
Missouri football coach Gary Pinkel's defense of Joe Paterno ("Paterno legacy remains valid, Pinkel says," Post-Dispatch, July 18) is outrageous. Pinkel stated: "You can't take away the greatness of this man."

Paterno was more interested in defending an institution than defending little children who were being sexually abused. Paterno's cover-up of Jerry Sandusky allowed more children to be sexually abused. Pinkel's values are horrible, and the thought of Pinkel leading young men at the University of Missouri is repugnant. What this says about Pinkel, the University of Missouri administration that keeps him and the fans who cheer his team is a tragic commentary on the messed-up values of our society today.

Keeping children from being sexually abused is more important than winning football games. Pinkel is a public figure and a representative of the University of Missouri. To keep the honor of the University of Missouri, Pinkel should be fired.

Dick Reeves — Kirkwood
Site: MU Health Care ranks as region's best

Saturday, July 21, 2012

U.S. News & World Report has ranked University of Missouri Health Care the best hospital in Central Missouri and the second best in the state.

Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis took the top rank out of the more than 100 Missouri hospitals reviewed. MU Hospital's ear, nose and throat program also was ranked 47th in the country.

The Columbia facility was the only hospital in Mid-Missouri and one of three in the state to receive a "Most Connected" designation for successfully implementing electronic medical records.

Rankings were determined, in part, by data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services related to patient survival and safety, nurse-to-patient ratios and infection rates.

The magazine also tracked patient surveys. Sixty percent of respondents rated MU Health Care high or very high, while 12 percent gave the hospital a low rating, according to U.S. News & World Report's website.

Statewide, 68 percent of patients surveyed rated hospital experiences high or very high, while 9 percent gave low ratings.
Sex scenes in movies impact sexual behavior in teens, study says

Published July 20, 2012

A new study has found that sex scenes in movies have an impact on the sexual behavior of teens who watch them, HealthDay News reported.

After analyzing sexual scenes and content from hundreds of top-grossing movies released between 1998 and 2004, researchers from the University of Missouri asked over 1,200 kids between the ages of 12 and 14 how many of the movies they had watched.

According to HealthDay News, the scientists followed up with the participants about their sexual behavior. The teenagers and young adults were surveyed about when they became sexually active, if they had engaged in risky sexual behavior – such as not using condoms or having multiple sexual partners.

Those who had been exposed to the most sexual content in movies had become sexually active at younger ages and were more likely to engage in risky behavior, the study reported.

Scheduled to be published in the journal Psychological Science, the study highlighted a specific personality trait called sensation-seeking – a tendency to seek new and intense forms of stimulation that peaks from ages 10 to 15. According to the research, the more exposure to sexual scenes in movies during youth led to a higher peak of sensation-seeking during adolescence.
Has society become accustomed to violent acts?

By ERIC ADLER and IAN CUMMINGS

Like the rest of America, Jessika Miller, 21, of Blue Springs awoke Friday to what she called “shocking” news of a massacre in a movie theater in Aurora, Colo., with a dozen people dead and dozens more wounded.

She was horrified. Yet she also concedes that she, along with her two sisters and their friend, Mike Enriquez, 27, of Kansas City, had another reaction to the mass shooting, a response that experts worry is becoming ever more commonplace.

“Now, it’s expected,” Miller said. “It’s happened so often.”

“It’s not the way it should be,” said her sister, Sarah Miller, 18, “but it’s the way it is.”

Said Enriquez, “It’s a part of life.”

For them, that is true.

It’s been 13 years since two gunmen in April 1999 killed 12 students and a teacher at Columbine High School in another Denver suburb.

In little more than half a generation, the Miller sisters and those younger have grown up among headlines, 24-hour news stations and, now, the Internet, YouTube and texts flashing accounts of one senseless rampage after another:


Meanwhile, the defining disaster of their lifetimes was the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that followed.
Thus it is hardly surprising, say sociologists, psychologists, criminologists and others, that what they suspect is a growing portion of the U.S. populace, although initially stunned, might quickly grow desensitized to such reports.

“My general sense is that we are becoming somewhat inured to the outrageousness of these acts,” said Robert Brenneman, who has studied gang violence in South America as a sociologist at Vermont’s Saint Michael’s College. “We just kind of resort to a kind of collective hand-wringing for a week or two. Then we wait for the next Virginia Tech. And we just hope it won’t be my college, or my school, or my movie theater.”

In The New Yorker’s online version, columnist Adam Gopnik reflected the same sentiment just hours after the Aurora shooting. “Only in America,” he wrote, “are gun massacres of this kind routine, expectable, and certain to continue.”

Brenneman said that he find himself both curious and disturbed by what he sees as the blasé societal reaction in the face of such repeated events.

“I have the sense,” Brenneman said, “that perhaps ‘outrage’ isn’t the best word, but widespread lament is lacking in the U.S. compared to, say, a Norway, or a Japan.

“It’s not like these kind of things only happen in the U.S., but they do happen with enough frequency that it is hard to imagine why with the second, or third, or fourth, or 10th shooting spree like this, it doesn’t lead to a social movement to take radical steps to make sure this doesn’t happen again.”

**At the University of Missouri, Bruce Bartholow, a psychologist and associate professor in the Social Cognitive Neuroscience Lab, has studied the effects of repeated exposure to violence. Primarily, he has studied brain wave activity following play on violent video games.**

Those studies, he said, have shown a desensitizing effect. At this time, he said, there is no clear evidence or research showing a similar effect on society as a whole in the face of repeated violence.

“There is an ongoing debate within the scientific literature whether society has become more violent or less violent over time ... going back to caveman days,” he said. “Depending on the evidence you use, you can tell one story or the other. There have been random acts of senseless killing as long as there have been people.

“But if you look at more modern history, society has become more accepting of the kind of violence that occurs. ... It has to become more shocking to get anyone’s attention.”

Mai Fernandez, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime, said that although the rate of violent crime has been falling steadily in recent years, she thinks stories of mass shootings open old wounds for former crime victims and hurt the national psyche.
"There’s a fear that you can’t protect yourself from this," she said. "People are, more and more, feeling that it could be them. They are thinking, ‘The lone wolf is out there, and I could be a victim.’"

Fernandez said she hopes the Colorado shootings will lead to a productive dialogue on preventing gun violence.

"We need to sit down as a nation and say, ‘This cannot happen again,’ ” she said.

But criminologist Gordon Crews of West Virginia’s Marshall University said that, despite the horror of such attacks, they often fade quickly from the nation’s attention.

"It’s kind of like, ‘What’s the daily tragedy going to be?’ ” he said. “Then you wait for the next tragedy. …You get up the next morning and forget about it.”

Right now, Felicia Hanks of Kansas City is not forgetting about it.

She has a 15-year-old son. She knows that the next time he goes to a movie, or just about anywhere, she is going to worry.

"You can’t be safe going out to pick up a gallon of milk,” she said. “Going out and having a good time? You just can’t do it anymore.

“You have to worry, every place you go.”
Eyes used as inspiration to solve printer problem

By JANISE SILVEY

Saturday, July 21, 2012

University of Missouri engineers have invented an ink jet printer nozzle that prevents clogs and saves ink.

The discovery was inspired by the human eye, said Jae Wan Kwon, associate professor in the College of Engineering.

"The eye and an ink jet nozzle have a common problem: they must not be allowed to dry while, simultaneously, they must open," he said in a statement. "We used biomimicry, the imitation of nature, to solve human problems."

Kwon's inkjet nozzle uses a drop of silicone oil to cover the opening of the nozzle when it's not in use. That's similar to the film of oil that keeps a layer of tears from evaporating off the eye.

Eyelids spread that film of oil on the human eye, but because of the small size of ink jet nozzles, the droplet of oil is moved in and out of place in the nozzle by an electric field instead.

Dry ink forms a crust and clogs ink jet printers regardless of how often the machine is used. Right now, that clog is cleared when a burst of new ink breaks through that crust.

Over time, this cleaning operation wastes large amounts of ink. Kwon's invention eliminates the need for the extra squirt of ink.

He sees potential for other applications, including in biological tissue printers that squirt living cells out to form biological structures. The cells are so expensive that researchers often find it cheaper to replace the nozzles rather than waste the cells, Kwon said.

"Other printing devices use similar mechanisms to ink jet printers," he said. "Adapting the clog-free nozzle to these machines could save businesses and researchers thousands of dollars in wasted materials."

MU engineering doctoral student Riberet Almieda helped develop the oil droplet nozzle cover, a discovery featured in a paper published in the Journal of Microelectromechanical Systems.
Listen up

By AARIK DANIELSEN

Sunday, July 22, 2012

It is not the I's that will be dotted but the rhythms. Not T's that are being crossed but melodic lines and voices.

Over the next week, some of the brightest talents in new music will gather in Columbia to polish and process their innovative works, then release them into the atmosphere. For the third straight year, the Mizzou New Music Summer Festival will demand the attention of the compositional world, existing as a critical mass of conversation, creation and performance.

The works of both established and emerging composers will be made available to Columbia audiences, articulated by some of the most exciting voices in modern music, including vanguard chamber ensemble Alarm Will Sound and award-winning soprano Anne-Carolyn Bird.

The festival is one of the shining jewels of the Mizzou New Music Initiative, an effort by the University of Missouri and committed patrons, most notably the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation, to make the city and school an incubator for musical creativity. The success the festival has already experienced is indicative of a growing trend, said Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Steven Stucky. Compositional energy is no longer centralized or constrained to larger metropolises but is filtering out into locales such as Columbia.

"It's happening at a grass-roots level more and more, and I think that's a great thing," Stucky said.

MUSICAL HIGHFLIERS

The crux of each year's festival is the interaction between composers and performers who are operating at a high level, their exchanges fostering an environment of mutuality and music-making. Each year, MU brings in two highly accomplished guest composers to lend their wisdom and worldview to a stable of younger artists who are learning to find — and clearly articulate — their own voices.

This year, the task falls to Stucky and his Irish counterpart, Donnacha Dennehy. Themes of both gracious collaboration and individuality sound through their résumés and works. A professor at Cornell University for more than 30 years, Stucky also has served as composer-in-residence with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and written works for numerous other ensembles.

Though 21 years his junior, Dennehy is crafting a canon of his own. He has received commissions from the likes of the Kronos Quartet, Bang on A Can All-Stars and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. His most
recent album, "Grá Agus Bás (Love and Death)," was named one of 2011's 50 best albums — in any genre — by NPR. According to Stefan Freund, a professor of music theory and composition at MU and member of Alarm Will Sound, Dennehy bucks the modernist and avant-garde impulses indulged by many composers on his continent to embrace an artistic heritage that spans many generations.

"Traditional Irish music is a huge part of his language but also you'll hear a lot of minimalist ideas in his music, so there's a lot of rhythmic repetition, pattern work," Freund said.

From 145 applicants, eight composers were selected as residents. While the group of emerging writers comes, in a sense, to be molded by Stucky and Dennehy, Freund said this incoming crop already has been shattering molds wherever their music has played. "We might have to re-evaluate that word: emerging," he said. "A lot of these folks have already emerged, as far as I'm concerned."

Among this group of resident composers are musicians who have won prestigious awards, studied and taught at venerated conservatories, gigged with the likes of Philip Glass and had works presented at some of new music's most forward-thinking festivals. Their eclecticism is astounding, and Stucky, for one, is excited and hopeful to hear music along "a huge range from very complex to very straightforward music, from tonal music to atonal music, from music that seems to come from an anguished soul to music that seems quite satisfied with itself."

Among the resident composers is a familiar face to Columbia music lovers: Stephanie Berg, who just received a master's degree from MU. Having written for several university and area ensembles and won the coveted Sinquefield Composition Prize in 2009, she is a stellar example of a composer growing up right before the eyes of local audiences.

"She's matured greatly from not being a composer at all when she came here and being a clarinetist to being, really, what I want to see out of my students — a well-rounded musician, someone who plays well, someone who writes music well, thinks about music well, who's listening to all different kinds of music," Freund said.

COMPOSERS AS PERFORMERS

In Alarm Will Sound, resident composers will be working with another de facto group of teachers — approximately a third of the group's members are well-established composers in their own rights, their accomplishments granting a unique perspective as they seek to interpret and reflect a composer's intentions. The group's remarkably diverse résumé — which includes collaborations with Steve Reich, the Dirty Projectors and Aphex Twin — only lends legitimacy to the ideas it'll bring to bear as it attempts to do for these composers what other groups have done for it, giving a voice to its innermost thoughts and expressions.

"We have a lot more passion for the music, I think, because we know what it's like to create music," Freund said. "We know that we" as composers "can only do so much. The performer really has to take it to the next level. You can write all the notes you want, but if they're not played well, they're not played with conviction, they're not communicated to the audience, it's going to be lost."

This insight can't be overemphasized. Stucky talked about the need for composers and performers to relate to one another as "colleagues on the same level, not as a kind of master-and-servant relationship. ...
What we're doing is making really important human activities, human being to human being, not sort of employer to employee. How much one can learn from performers if you enter that relationship with some humility.

SIGNATURE EVENTS

Throughout the week, the public can peek behind the creative veil as composers and performers explain and refine their works at free, open composer presentations, master classes and rehearsals. Three signature concerts at the Missouri Theatre close the week, bringing the festival to its crescendo.

Thursday, Alarm Will Sound performs works by Stucky and Dennehy as well as works by several other revered songsmiths. A portion of Dennehy's "The Hunger" will be debuted, a piece the festival has dubbed "a searing portrait of his native Ireland's Great Famine and the unexpected role of a 19th-century American missionary woman."

Stucky's piece is not as new but possesses an inherent novelty, written for what the composer himself calls an "unlikely solo instrument." "Etudes" is a concerto written for that universal utensil of grade-school music, the recorder. Once asked to write a recorder concerto, Stucky balked at the notion until he heard Danish musician Michala Petri, perhaps the world's foremost recorder soloist, coax sounds he'd never heard from the slight instrument.

"When she played it, it was like a real instrument with dynamic range and all kinds of technical possibilities and very expressive," Stucky recalled. "It's still tricky. It's one of those instruments you have to be extremely careful with the orchestration because you can cover it by sneezing."

Friday, MU ensembles get their share of the spotlight. The Mizzou New Music Ensemble will perform works by Dennehy, Stucky and MU Professor Thomas McKenney. Led by Director of Jazz Studies Arthur White, the MU Concert Jazz Band also will play a set. White has emphasized composition in his program, and Freund believes that intentionality and artistry will only bolster the overall mission of the festival.

"New music is not just about an orchestra or a chamber ensemble or a clarinet," he said. "There are exciting things happening with jazz right now. I think you'll hear a lot of ideas from the art music that's on the program incorporated into the tunes that Arthur plays on Friday night."

Saturday, Alarm Will Sound will premiere the works of the festival's resident composers. The program is the festival's artistic apex but, for all the anticipation and ceremony, remains an intimate opportunity for the composers to transmit their ideas to an audience. "People have" said "Wow, this is really amazing to hear eight brand-new different works by very different voices that can get up on stage and talk about their music," Freund said.

Freund has been impressed with the way Berg, for example, has developed a "world music-influenced style" and, indeed, the piece she composed for Alarm Will Sound will more fully explore that mode. She described "Ravish and Mayhem" as a work that evokes the "wild, festive, very excitable atmosphere" of a Middle Eastern bazaar. Varied in texture and color, it features "small, intimate chamber sections ... contrasted with big, bombastic orchestral tuttis," Berg said.
HEARING THEM OUT

Casual observers have long expressed concerns that new music is too strident or heady, too experimental for their tastes, an artistic language that doesn't translate well to the common man. Festival principals understand that insecurity and patiently, compassionately insist new music doesn't have to be treated like rocket science.

"I think the big obstacles are expectations. Listeners who don't think of themselves as experts might stay away or might come to such a concert feeling unqualified, feeling they're not going to get it, having a kind of stage fright or insecurity about whether they're smart enough for this music," Stucky said.

Some 20 years ago, Stucky wrote an essay on how self-proclaimed "outsiders" might begin to approach new music. His advice was fivefold: "don't expect the wrong things;" "be prepared for discontinuity;" "don't try too hard to 'understand;" "expect new instruments, new ways of playing and singing, and influences from other cultures;" "and finally, give yourself permission to dislike what you hear." He echoed those same ideas and stressed that all he would ask listeners to do is come released from any shackles of their own making.

"The first thing always to remember is music isn't about understanding or being smart or knowing about the theory behind the practice," he said. "It is just about opening up your emotions to whatever might happen. Music has an incredibly powerful effect on the interior, emotional life because it has such a powerful physical effect on our bodies. Those turn out to be kind of the same thing."

Freund believes the experience of Saturday's concert, in particular, can be a sure-footed first step for those reluctant to start a new music journey. Because of the eclectic nature of the program, he guaranteed audiences will find something they like — and, certainly, something they don't, which doesn't have to be a bad thing. "I think that really allows the other music to stand apart," he said.

"These pieces are all relatively short," Freund added. "So, you don't have to make a major investment. It's not like learning a Mahler symphony where there's so much information.... These are almost snapshots of what's going on today in new music. That's what I think is so exciting about it. Then, the audience member can maybe hear something they like and learn more about that composer, that style of music, get a little deeper into that vein."

As Berg sees it, the give-and-take between artist and audience has rounded some of new music's rougher edges and made the form more listener-friendly than it has ever been.

"The nice thing about new music nowadays is that it really can be anything — it is much more accessible than it used to be," she said. "... We're bridging the gap. People are becoming less afraid and starting to explore this thing called new music."
Study finds hospitals hype robot surgeries

By Frederik Joelving  updated 7/20/2012 12:49:43 PM ET

Consumers shouldn't expect straight talk about robot surgery from hospital websites, but rather vague claims and marketing mantras, according to a new U.S. study.

Researchers sifted through online information from 432 hospitals across the country and found nearly half marketed robotic surgery for gynecologic conditions such as endometriosis or cervical cancer.

A quarter of those hospitals used boilerplate copy from the robot manufacturer Intuitive Surgical, and one in six told consumers that "you owe it to yourself."

However, almost none mentioned potential downsides to the technology such as increased operating time or higher cost compared with conventional types of surgery.

"This is marketing," said Dr. Jason Wright, a gynecologic surgeon at Columbia University in New York, who led the new work. "Many of the claims that were made by hospitals were not supported by high-quality data."

Robot surgery originally took off as a new way to operate on men with prostate cancer, but doctors have since started using it for several other procedures, too. Today, the technology is being used in hundreds of thousands of surgeries every year.

According to California-based Intuitive Surgical, more than 2,200 of its da Vinci robots have been installed worldwide. The machines, which are operated by a surgeon, run between $1 million and $2.5 million each.

Compared with open surgery, in which the doctor makes one long incision, robot surgery leads to a faster recovery and less blood loss, said Wright. But it's not clear that it has any advantages over traditional minimally invasive surgery, called laparoscopy, he added.
"There is definitely a role for robotic surgery and I think it is an exciting technology," said Wright, who uses the technology himself. "But right now the data are really very limited."

**What risks?**
Wright's team found that most hospitals described robot surgery as having several benefits, but just 15 percent referenced data from clinical trials to support those claims.

And only a few hospitals discussed the risks, operating time and price, which is usually at least $1,000 higher than for traditional laparoscopy.

The findings, published in the American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology, jibe with a report from last year that looked at how U.S. hospitals describe robot surgery in general on their websites.

That study, in the Journal for Healthcare Quality, concluded that online materials "overestimate benefits, largely ignore risks and are strongly influenced by the manufacturer."

In a quick Web search, Reuters Health found several hospitals advertising "better clinical outcomes" with robot surgery. Yet none of them made clear what those outcomes were or what treatment the comparison group got.

The Nebraska Medical Center, in Omaha is a case in point. From its homepage, it takes just two clicks to get to a video touting robotic surgery for gynecologic cancer.

"This is all brand new, it's phenomenal, it's changed how we practice medicine," Dr. Kerry Rodabaugh exclaims as the video begins.

Four minutes later, without having mentioned any risks, she ends the piece by saying, "It's really wonderful to be able to give this option to patients, because it's just plain better."

**Rodabaugh did not return phone calls requesting comments; nor did the marketing directors of two other hospitals, St. Anthony's Medical Center in St. Louis and the University of Missouri Health Care in Columbia, both of which advertise robot surgery on their websites.**

Wright acknowledged that many hospitals are businesses and have the right to market their services. But at the same time, patients trust hospitals to provide more-balanced information than manufacturers, he said.

"Most patients have a higher expectation of physicians and hospitals," Wright told Reuters Health. "Hospitals should have a mandate to supply unbiased information to patients."

In the meantime, he added, people should quiz their doctor about the risks and benefits of the procedure they are considering and ask about the scientific evidence for those claims.