



## MU stays in top 100 on 'Best Colleges' list

By Janese Silvey

After climbing 12 notches over the past two years, the University of Missouri's U.S. News & World Report ranking slipped seven spots this fall.

MU is No. 97 on the magazine's 2013 "Best Colleges" list, down from 90th last year. In 2010, MU ranked 94th, landing back in the top 100 after falling to 102 the year before.

It's a numbers game MU administrators say they don't take too seriously, partly because the criteria change, making it tough to compare year-to-year rankings.

"It's like in sports — what do you do with athletic rankings?" said Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies. "You focus on whether you are improving on the things you know the institute needs to improve on."

MU recently celebrated an all-time-high six-year graduation rate and another record enrollment that includes a student body more diverse than ever, Spain said. Making sure those students have access to relevant degree programs, research opportunities, study-abroad experiences — "those kind of things, that's where our focus has been," he said.

U.S. News' annual rankings are calculated using 16 indicators — including academic reputation, graduate rates and faculty salaries — to create a composite score. The rankings are based on how those scores compare to other institutions. Trying to measure universities against one another can be tough, though, because higher education is structured differently from state to state, Spain said.

"It's hard for a single rating to capture and accurately describe all of that variation," he said. "On our campus, it's important for us to stay focused on those things we know are most important to our students and the state we're responsible to serve."

Among Missouri colleges, Washington University, a private institute in St. Louis, claimed the highest spot at No. 14. Harvard and Princeton tied for No. 1.

At least one college on campus is celebrating this year's rankings. MU's Trulaske College of Business climbed to the No. 47 spot in a separate list rating business programs. That's up eight slots from last year's ranking of No. 55 and puts the college in the top 50 business schools in the country.

The college-specific rankings are different from the main "Best Colleges" list because they are based solely on reputation, said Joan Gabel, dean of MU's business school. That eliminates some of the problems with using algorithms, such as the constantly changing criteria.

Deans are asked to rank business programs on a scale that ranges from weak to exceptional, she said. Although that system can be fickle, Gabel said it shows other schools have a high opinion of MU's business school.

"I don't think we've done anything brand-new this year, but we're constantly improving, and the word is getting out," she said. "We're very pleased to see our hard work reflected in the rankings."

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## **Missouri, Kansas slip in magazine's rankings of nation's universities**

By **MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS**

The University of Missouri dropped seven spaces in this year's ranking of the nation's top 100 four-year research institutions.

U.S. News & World Reports, in its annual Best Colleges report, ranked MU 97th among the top private and public schools. It tied with Florida State University, University of Colorado-Boulder and University of Massachusetts-Amherst.

Last year MU ranked 90th. It's been among the top 100 for nine of the last 10 years.

Criteria used to determine a school's position on the list include freshman retention, graduation rates, students' SAT and ACT scores, and faculty quality. Alumni giving and how much the institution spends on each student also are factors.

Harvard, Princeton and Yale were one, two and three. The University of Kansas ranked 106th, down from 101st last year. The last time KU was included in the top 100 was 2010, when it ranked 96th.

Two private schools in the eastern part of the state also made the list — Washington University in St. Louis is ranked 14th and St. Louis University is 92nd.

The magazine includes rankings also for regional schools and lists the best schools in specific study areas. For more on the rankings, go to [USNews.com/rankings](http://USNews.com/rankings).

## ***Paying for College: It's Never Too Early or Late to Start***

by Nick Prewett



**Using a multi-tiered financing strategy, you can tame the cost factor.**

Even though studies continue to show that college graduates earn substantially more money over their lifetimes than their non-degree-holding peers, there's no getting around the fact that college costs have risen dramatically. High school juniors and seniors around the country will soon begin making their college selections. For students, this often means choosing a school that offers a specific degree program, a world-class sports team or one that just "feels right." For parents, however, the choice often comes down to cost. Thankfully, several tools and options are available to students and parents as they make this very important, life-changing decision.

These tools include:

- **Net Price Calculators.** Required by the U.S. Department of Education to appear on university Web sites, this tool allows a student to enter basic biographical information and determine the net price of attending an institution. Keep in mind, this is only an estimate of actual costs.
- **FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).** Nearly every student qualifies for some type of federal financial aid, whether it is a scholarship, grant, work-study assignment or student loan. In order to determine a student's eligibility, every student should complete the FAFSA ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)). The application determines how much the family is expected to contribute toward college costs. The information is used to assign need-based scholarships. A common mistake for many students is failure to complete the FAFSA, thus missing out on various opportunities for financial aid.
- **529 or College Savings Plans.** These plans are special investment accounts designed to help families save for higher education expenses at eligible 2- and 4-year colleges, postgraduate programs, or secondary trade and vocational schools. Funds from a 529 plan cover qualified education expenses such as tuition and books, and certain room and board fees. Most 529 plans are sponsored by a state and offer tax advantages and other incentives that make it easier to save. Some 529 plans, such as Missouri's MOST, even offer scholarships.
- **Scholarship Aid.** Scholarships are education funds that do not have to be repaid. Eligibility is based on criteria established by the donor, which may include merit, need or special characteristics,

such as ethnicity, major, or geographical location. In 2010–11, University of Missouri undergraduate students received more than \$60 million in scholarship aid, both internal and external. Students should never assume they do not qualify for scholarships, as donors place specific criteria on many of their donated scholarship funds. For example, Mizzou has one scholarship that is designated for a student “reared on a farm” in Livingston County with a “sincere interest in agriculture.” In the 2010–2011 school year, MU students were awarded more than \$9.5 million in outside scholarships, which are often awarded by local organizations and require formal applications.

- **Institutional Aid.** Most institutions combine automatic scholarships with admissions applications. These are primarily based on standardized test scores, high school GPA and/or class rank. Students often know within hours of applying if they are eligible to receive these scholarships.

Other scholarships are based on the goals or interests of the institution. For example, MU strives to continue building relationships with alumni. Thus, we have established MU’s Heritage and Global Heritage scholarships that cover out-of-state tuition to students whose parents graduated from Mizzou. It’s important to ask about any supplemental scholarship applications when applying to an institution.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when applying for scholarships:

- Submit as many applications as possible.
- Don’t avoid applications that require an essay; if you thought about skipping it, others probably did too, and you will have a better chance of receiving the scholarship.
- If you’re a parent, don’t take over the application process. Reviewers can tell the difference between a student’s application and a parent’s work.
- Be sure each essay is written specifically for that application; cookie-cutter approaches don’t work.
- NEVER pay to submit scholarship applications; that’s a red flag for scams.
- Check with your high school counselor regularly; scholarship notices come in throughout the year.

Paying for college is within reach if you start planning now and keep an eye out for scholarships and other aid opportunities.

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**Nick Prewett** is director of student financial aid at the University of Missouri.



## ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

# MU students seek coal-free campus

Thursday, September 13, 2012

By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER ~ The Associated Press

**COLUMBIA, Mo. -- Student activists at the University of Missouri are taking their fight for a coal-free campus to the school's Board of Curators.**

The Coal Free Mizzou student group wants university leaders to commit to using renewable energy to completely power the campus by 2015. They plan a coal-free demonstration today when the university system's governing board begins its two-day meeting on the Columbia campus.

Students say Missouri has an obligation to stop burning coal because it has a detrimental effect on human health and the environment. The school used more than 48,000 tons of coal to generate electricity in 2007, accounting for 80 percent of campus energy use.

The students' effort is part of a national Sierra Club campaign that focuses on coal use at U.S. universities.

"I have really high hopes for this university," said Sierra Club organizer Lindsey Berger of St. Louis, a recent Missouri State University graduate. "If our university can't lead on this front, how can we expect our state to follow? Everybody looks at universities for leadership and innovation."

Berger said those innovators include the system's Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, where a planned geothermal energy project financed by \$32.4 million in curator-approved revenue bonds is expected to replace the campus' 67-year-old power plant and immediately save \$1.4 million in annual energy and operational costs.

The Sierra Club cites 17 other campuses nationwide that have agreed since 2009 to move "beyond coal," including the University of Minnesota, Ohio University, Clemson, Cornell, Penn State and North Carolina.

University of Missouri officials on Wednesday touted the school's existing clean-energy efforts, though they stopped short of endorsing a broader move away from coal.

Karlan Seville, a campus facilities spokeswoman, cited a planned \$75 million biomass boiler that will reduce campus coal consumption by 25 percent and burn wood scraps, corn cobs and other products for fuel. The school also buys wind energy from outside utilities, installed solar panels at its campus coal power plant and won an energy efficiency award from the federal Environmental Protection Agency in 2010.

"MU is committed to reducing our carbon footprint," Seville said.

Those incremental steps are not enough, said Berger and Kelsey Wingo, a Missouri student helping to lead the campaign. They said the school hauls in between eight and 25 truckloads of coal daily from an Illinois coal company and still generates the majority of its power by burning coal.

They plan a "storyboard presentation" displayed on posters that will greet the eight curators as they enter the meeting, followed by a 50-person procession into the board meeting Thursday afternoon. Berger said the group's efforts to formally address the university governing board were rebuffed -- a scenario University of Missouri Press supporters complained about when trying to get curators' attention at a previous meeting this year after the school said it planned to shut down the academic press. University President Tim Wolfe later reversed that decision.

"We've met with Chancellor (Brady) Deaton and numerous people we've been directed to meet with," Berger said. "The issue keeps getting pushed aside. ... There is no end game in sight. We will no longer allow this to be pushed aside."

Board chairman David Bradley said he is willing to listen to the students but wants to hear their information before discussing the specifics of their demand.

"We'll see the information they present, and then figure out what to do with it," he said.

## It's all about your profile picture: Comments left under your main photo on Facebook 'influence how the world sees you'

The image we choose - and what other people have to say about it - is one of the biggest ways judgements are formed, say researchers

Comments left under your profile picture on Facebook are one of the biggest indicators of your social status, according to a new study.

**Researchers at the University of Missouri say that the image we choose for our public persona, and what other people have to say about it underneath, strongly affects the level of the profile owner's perceived attractiveness - physically, socially, and professionally.**

Doctoral student Seoyeon Hong said that browsers, such as potential partners or employers, hold more weight by the comments left on your profile picture than any other part of your page - so your reputation is in the hands of those who leave a message.

For anyone unfamiliar with the social network, Facebook profile photos are the first photos visible on a user's profile.

Other Facebook users are able to post comments about each profile photo, which are visible to anyone who views the photo.

The researchers found that Facebook users whose profile photos include social cues, additional information about the user, and many positive comments on their profile photos are viewed much more socially and physically attractive than users who have fewer social cues and negative comments on their profile photos.

Seoyeon Hong, a doctoral student, conducted the research along with Kevin Wise, an associate professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and other doctoral students.

He said: 'People tend to rely more on other-generated information than self-generated information when forming impressions

'In other words, opinions of other people matter more than the target person's own self-presentation. Thus, for social networking users concerned about forming a desired impression,

being aware of other-generated information about oneself is paramount in the goal of achieving a positive self-presentation.'

For the study, Hong showed different Facebook profile pictures of the same person to more than a hundred college students.

Each picture varied in social cues and the quality of comments.

Profile photos with social cues are photos of the profile user that include additional information about who they are and what they do.

For example, a photo with a social cue of an athlete would be a picture of that person playing sports.

Likewise, a social cue for a musician may be a photo of that person playing an instrument.

Hong and Wise found that people with Facebook profile photos that include social cues were perceived to be more physically and socially attractive than people with profile photos that were plain headshots.

'These findings show how important it is to present yourself strategically on Facebook,' Hong said. 'If you want to be perceived positively by people who view your profile page, including friends and potential employers, it is important to include profile pictures with positive social cues.'

'No matter what the profile owner does to tailor their Facebook page, comments left on their page from other users should be monitored as well. Positive comments are very helpful, but negative remarks can be very damaging, even if they are silly or sarcastic.'

'To maximize the effects of positive self-presentation on Facebook, I would recommend using profile pictures with extensive social cues to show who and what you are in a positive way while also keeping track of what others say about you.'

Around the world, more than 850 million people use Facebook regularly to communicate.

More and more employers also are using Facebook as a way to examine potential employees before making hires.

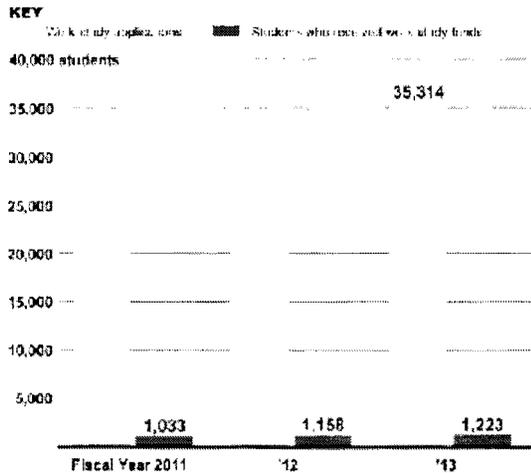
# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## Some MU work-study students lose, receive less financial aid

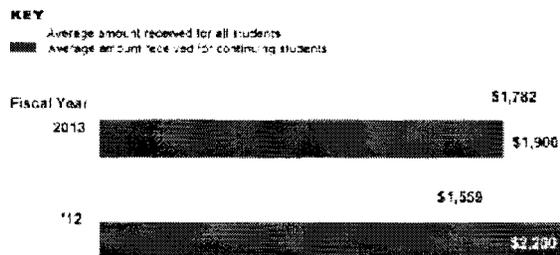
By [Stephanie Ebbs](#)

September 12, 2012 | 4:32 p.m. CDT

### 2012-13 work-study applicants and recipients



### Average work-study funds awarded



Source: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND MU OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

The amount of MU student work-study applications has increased from more than 27,000 to more than 35,000 during the past three fiscal years. The average amount of work-study awards for returning students decreased from fiscal year 2012. | [Anna Burkart](#)

**COLUMBIA — Some returning MU students did not have their work-study grants renewed this year because of a change in who is eligible for aid.**

After an increase in financial aid applications, the Office of Student Financial Aid decided to focus on "higher need" students when awarding federal work-study grants, said Nicholas Prewett, director of financial aid.

After the deadline for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid the financial aid office evaluates the number of applications to see how many students qualify and how much aid they can offer each student and each grade level, Prewett said.

The office decided to lower the Expected Family Contribution — the number used to determine a student's eligibility for financial assistance that is calculated using a formula that accounts for the parents' and student's income.

Along with this change, which left some students above the benchmark that qualifies them for work-study, the average amount of work-study awards for returning students decreased by \$300, Prewett said.

The number of FAFSA applications at MU for the 2012-2013 school year increased to 35,314, from 32,354 at the same point last year, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education's website. The number of applications has increased for the past three years by about 8 percent each year.

This is not the first time financial aid has changed due to an increase in applications. In 2009, a 16 percent increase in the number of FAFSA applications submitted led to a decrease in the amount of each student's award.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## FROM READERS: How losing a work-study job has affected one student

By CAITLIN KERFIN/MISSOURIAN READER

September 12, 2012 | 7:40 p.m. CDT

*Caitlin Kerfin is a journalism student at MU who is minoring in religious studies. She is from the southwest suburbs of Chicago.*

*This story is running in conjunction with a Missourian article about cuts in the work-study program.*

Some students had their work study cut this year, leaving students without a job and professors with fewer workers.

Students can apply for work study through financial aid, and if they qualify, can receive around \$1,000 per semester at an hourly job on campus that they choose. Working on campus also allows students without a car to make money, as well. Jobs vary from desk attendant at the library to research assistants for professors. It's really beneficial for both sides because students get work experience and money for school while teachers basically get free workers.

I started my work study job my freshman year. I'm a junior now, and it has opened up a great number of opportunities for me. I worked at the Center on Religion and the Professions/Religion Newswriters in the journalism school updating their websites, writing press releases, managing social media and organizing information. Doing these things meant that I was able to get real experience in the field of journalism right away, and being a journalism major, I was able to meet some professors like Debra Mason and establish a relationship with them before I was even in their class.

This sounds great right? Well, some students who benefited from this work study program have had their grant cut in their financial aid package. I was one of them.

Not only was my work study job a great resume builder, but it also helped me develop a passion for writing about religion. This summer I was able to help launch the new ColumbiaFAVS website, which publishes local religion news while creating a forum for faith groups and linking to national religion news.

Being a part of big things like this was only possible because I was earning money at the same time. If I had not had that work study job, I would have probably end up working at a restaurant or grocery store, if I could even find a job that is, and not doing what I'm passionate about. I'm immensely grateful for the opportunities I have been given thus far, but it is unfortunate it must end my junior year and it is a shame many freshmen will never be able to experience the program's benefits. The astounding professors we have at Mizzou give invaluable mentorship that some students can only utilize if they have the time to devote to it. If they had a job at a fast food restaurant to make money for school they probably wouldn't have time to work with professors and take classes.

I am still able to keep my job, however because of the work study cuts, I won't be able to get paid for it. While I want to continue the work I've been doing for three years, I won't be able to do as much as I have been because I need to look for another job to make money for school.

*This story is part of a section of the Missouriian called From Readers, which is dedicated to your voices and your stories. We hope you'll consider sharing. Here's how. Supervising Editor Joy Mayer.*

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## MU education syllabuses requests spark discussion on intellectual property

By Lizzie Johnson

September 12, 2012 | 6:41 p.m. CDT

**COLUMBIA – A nonprofit advisory council in Washington, D.C., has requested copies of education program syllabuses from the four University of Missouri campuses, sparking discussion on intellectual property.**

The National Council on Teacher Quality sent an open-records request to the University of Missouri System for a variety of materials related to the teacher education program, including syllabuses, in November 2011. The request was made as part of a review of about 1,100 private and public universities' teacher preparation programs.

In the assessment, schools are assigned a grade ranging from A through F based on criteria including admissions, coursework, licensing exams and student teaching placement, according to the council website. The report is scheduled to be published early next year in cooperation with the U.S. News & World Report.

In July, the UM System denied the syllabuses request, saying the documents were intellectual property and not subject to open records law. Discussions are still under way to determine if an agreement can be reached.

"I think what it really comes down to is some faculty view their syllabi as intellectual property," UM System chief of staff Robert Schwartz said. "That's where our discussions are centering. In terms of that, that is why we are looking at not disclosing them from a copyright protection perspective."

Intellectual property is creative work considered to be owned by the maker. The property is not subject to open records laws.

"We needed to make sure our faculty were protected," said Kathryn Chval, associate dean for academic affairs at the MU College of Education. "When faculty create products, including syllabi, we can't just release them out for everyone to use and potentially abuse."

About a half-dozen other faculty members in the College of Education contacted for this story would not publicly comment on the matter.

Arthur McKee, managing director of teacher preparation studies for the council, said he found the decision to not release the syllabuses confusing.

"We are talking about syllabi at public universities that are handed out freely," he said. "To suddenly say they are intellectual property is puzzling to us. Where we have no other choice, we will go forward and press our case legally in order to get the documents we need."

McKee said the council has received cooperation from about 80 percent of public institutions.

The council has also utilized other methods to obtain the syllabuses, such as contacting students to buy them.

"Obviously it's totally up to students as to what they feel about those requests," McKee said. "In our point of view, it's perfectly legitimate activity. Very soon, we will put ads in student newspapers asking students to work with us."

The aggressive techniques have sparked concern over how the syllabuses will be used.

"They could go directly to the faculty and ask them for the syllabi," Chval said. "I'm not sure why they didn't try that or start there. We are very protective of faculty's work. We want to make sure people's motives are appropriate."

Schwartz said a final decision will be made after consulting academic administrators and faculty.

"We don't have anything to hide," he said.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*

# Tennessee professor to speak on SEC history at Missouri Theater

By Dan Burley

September 12, 2012 | 5:39 p.m. CDT

**COLUMBIA – The Missouri football team’s first season in the Southeastern Conference has brought along a series of new things: A new conference, new rivals, even new jerseys.**

**Thursday night at the Missouri Theatre, University of Tennessee professor and SEC historian Mark Windham will give Tiger fans the opportunity to learn about the old, as he details the tradition-laden history of the SEC.**

Windham will present a condensed version of the conference’s historical arc, from its birth in 1932, to its current form. He’ll also discuss each school in the conference and share the background stories behind some of the most bizarre and colorful traditions.

“Why in the world does Alabama have a man in an elephant suit, and yell ‘Roll Tide’?” Windham said. “How can you go to a ballgame and not wonder why?”

Windham’s curiosity about SEC football led him to create a freshman course on the conference’s history seven years ago at the University of Tennessee. Since then, he’s been invited to speak at University of Tennessee alumni chapter meetings, private businesses and regional conferences.

When he spoke this summer at an SEC communicators association meeting in Knoxville, Tenn., Missouri representatives invited him to Columbia. His presentation begins at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the theater. Admission is free.

“I’m here to learn about Mizzou first and foremost,” Windham said about his stay in Columbia. “I’m getting tours, going to the ballgame. I’m trying to be a sponge when it comes to MU tradition.”

After watching the Missouri football team play its first SEC game against Georgia on television last Saturday, Windham said he was impressed with the Tiger fans.

“They fit in just fine,” he said. “They’re as avid as everybody else.”

On the subject of Tiger fans being “too nice,” Windham had one piece of advice:

“What you have to understand, being in the SEC, is you don’t have one big rival, you have 13 Kansas Jayhawks,” he said. “You should treat everyone like you treat Kansas folks.”

Windham calls his SEC obsession a hobby and scoffs at the notion that he’s a real historian. He primarily teaches courses in plant pathology and his research focuses on diseases in ornamental plants, such as roses, dogwoods and hydrangeas.

Although he teaches at the University of Tennessee, Windham grew up a fan of Mississippi State University, where he received his undergraduate and master’s degree and his father ran track.

Despite his affiliations, Windham said he’s an avid fan of every team in the conference — except Ole Miss.

“I just wanted to know what made every team tick,” he said. “They say keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”

*Supervising editor is John Schneller.*

# THE ST. LOUIS AMERICAN

## Former Suggs Scholar Brian Hamilton recruits blacks to his alma mater

By Rebecca S. Rivas | [0 comments](#)

**By Thanksgiving, Brian Hamilton, coordinator of culturally diverse recruitment programs at University of Missouri, will visit 52 high schools in St. Louis and Kansas City to recruit minority Mizzou students.**

Hamilton, 24, graduated from Mizzou in 2010. When he tells his story about being an African-American male at Mizzou, it tends to calm parents' anxiety about their children attending a "predominately white institution" (PWI).

"When I tell them that I was absolutely comfortable my four years here and I couldn't see myself going to any other school," he said, "they feel more at ease."

But Hamilton remembers having anxieties as a high school senior. Hamilton graduated from Webster Groves High School in 2006 and received the Donald M. Suggs Scholarship, which includes a full four-year ride to University of Missouri-Columbia. He and his parents had some fears about him attending a PWI.

What fears? "Not really finding anyone to relate with or that looked like you," he said. "Standing out in a class or in a crowd. My parents shared those anxieties. But I learned that happens sometimes, that's life. Eventually, I got more comfortable with it, and I saw it as an opportunity to educate my peers as well."

Hamilton's story and experience are reaching parents and students. In the fall 2011 semester, the university had 538 African-American, first-time college students, which was a recruitment record for black students. And under Hamilton's leadership, African-American freshman in fall 2012 rose by 23 percent to 662 students.

As a student himself, most of his personal fears were quieted when he attended the Clue N 2 Mizzou, an orientation event specifically geared towards African-American students from St. Louis and Kansas City. It was his first experience with the campus.

"The whole idea of the event is to make incoming African-Americans students feel more comfortable on campus," he said. "You can talk with your academic department and meet with a

student on campus. For me, it really did. I was a little more at ease, and that encouraged me to apply and do the same for other students.”

Immediately when he arrived at Mizzou, he applied to become a United Ambassador, a member of the university’s minority student recruitment team. He didn’t make the cut his first year, but he was persistent and applied again his sophomore year. He was accepted, and for three years he guided potential recruits as an ambassador.

When he graduated in December 2010, he wasn’t sure what his next step would be, he said. Working at the front desk in the Office of Admissions as a senior, he found out about the open position for coordinator of culturally diverse recruitment programs. The coordinator also oversees the United Ambassadors, and when he was chosen for the post, he said it was the natural next step.

“I have been recruiting since before I graduated, and it’s nice to do that in a bigger capacity now,” he said.

Hamilton graduated with a bachelor’s in English, although he came in as a secondary-education major.

“Wherever life takes me next,” he said, “I want to continue to work with minority students and in the realm of education.”

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## 'Catch Me If You Can' conman Frank Abagnale gives lecture at MU

September 12, 2012 | 11:51 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Chris Stacy held a copy of the book, “Catch Me If You Can,” as he waited in line to get a signature from its author and main character, Frank Abagnale Jr.

“In my life, I have a hard time not telling the truth,” said Stacy, a medical examiner and MU assistant professor of clinical pathology. “It’s interesting to learn about someone who was the opposite.”

The book is an account of the conman who cashed over \$2.5 million in fraudulent checks while impersonating a pilot, doctor and lawyer and was made famous by a movie of the same name starring Leonardo DiCaprio.

At the book signing, it was easy to see how Abagnale, with his grin and firm handshake, could convince anyone of nearly anything.

From the age of 16 to 21, Abagnale evaded enforcement agencies while assuming false identities and cashing fraudulent checks in every state and 26 foreign countries. All that changed when he was finally caught in France in 1970, served five years in prison, and — in another twist — ended up working for the FBI to help teach them fraud prevention.

He’s now one of the most respected authorities on subjects of forgery, embezzlement and secure documents, according to his website.

**At the MU Bookstore, Abagnale signed copies of two books he penned on his life and fraud prevention before he gave a speech Wednesday night in Jesse Auditorium as part of the Delta Gamma Foundation's Lectureship in Values and Ethics.**

Throughout the presentation, he entertained students with anecdotes about his five years as a con artist, but ended by teaching the audience the morals he learned 36 years later after he left prison in an agreement to work for the FBI, met his wife and had a family.

"I never believed a piece of paper can excuse my actions," said Abagnale, who turned down three presidential pardons and worked for the FBI 26 years longer than the terms of his agreement. "Only my actions can."

Born in Bronxville, a suburb of New York City, in 1948, Abagnale was caught up in small crimes at a young age. When his dad bought him a car, he gave Abagnale a Mobile credit card that he used to rack up thousands in charges. He'd buy four tires from an auto store, for example, and convince the owner to buy back two of the tires for \$100 just as a way to get cash.

"Oh, I did little, creative things," Abagnale said with a grin.

When he was 16, his parents divorced after 22 years of marriage. Torn by having to choose whom to live with, he cried and ran right out of the courtroom into New York City with little cash.

"I needed to survive, and the only asset I had was that I looked older than I was," Abagnale said.

He altered his driver's license to say he was 27 years old and he would step into banks throughout the city and, without an account, convince them to cash fake checks. One day after spotting an airline crew, he had the idea to pose as a pilot, a job which received admiration and respect.

Posing as an employee who lost a uniform, he called the Pan American World Airways to get one. Eventually, Abagnale forged a PanAm identification card and learned through conversation enough about flying planes to hold his own while he rode jump seat on flights around the world. Where he landed, he cashed checks.

Abagnale said he never planned a thing in his con years, but took advantage of opportunities as they came.