Tiger Pantry founder Nick Droege and operations coordinator Amanda Gray walk through the facility Monday during an opening ceremony. The food pantry will serve students and employees.

By Janese Silvey

A new food pantry that will serve University of Missouri students and employees was to open this afternoon off Rock Quarry Road.

Tiger Pantry offers cereal, pastas, canned vegetables, bottled water and other nonperishable goods, although Director Nick Droege hopes to someday add fresh produce to the menu. Those visiting the pantry are asked to fill out a form but do not have to prove income.

Although hunger is not a visible problem on campus, based on the number of students receiving financial aid, food insecurity is an issue at MU, Droege said.
"This right here," he said, pointing toward the pantry during a ribbon-cutting ceremony yesterday, "needed to happen."

Tiger Pantry, located in Room 8 at 1400 Rock Quarry, will be open from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays.

The pantry has been nine months in the making. It's an idea Droege, a junior, and other Missouri Student Association members had after seeing a similar student pantry when visiting the University of Arkansas.

Droege enlisted the help of Anne Deaton, wife of Chancellor Brady Deaton, and other administrators, as well as Peggy Kirkpatrick, executive director of The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri.

"I did everything I could to dissuade him and his contemporaries from doing this," Kirkpatrick said.

She feared the pantry would be a student project that wouldn't last beyond Droege's MU career. After seeing the team's determination, though, Kirkpatrick said she's confident the pantry will have a lasting impact on campus. Not only did the group leave a legacy, she said; the pantry "is a bridge between people who can help and people who need help."

The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri will provide some of the goods for the pantry, but Droege also envisions on-campus food drives. Individuals also are welcome to donate food and toiletry items directly to Tiger Pantry.

Droege wants the pantry to also serve as a referral agency to connect students and employees down on their luck to other resources.

Tiger Pantry, he said, should be a solution, not a temporary fix. "Our goal is not to fend off hunger," Droege said, "but to take a bite out of it."

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Tiger Pantry opens to serve the needy in MU community

By Christine Cauthen
October 2, 2012 | 11:18 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — A new food pantry on Rock Quarry Road that opened Tuesday has been flooded with donations and volunteers.

Nick Droege founded and will serve as the director of Tiger Pantry, which will serve only members of the MU community who are in need. This includes all students and staff.

The pantry is still totaling the donations that have been received so far, but there are quite a bit, he said.

The pantry has 10 full-time staff and 25 full-time volunteers, in addition to 500 hands-on volunteers that asked to be put on an email-list that will inform them about upcoming volunteer opportunities.

"I'm very confident in our staff and volunteers," Droege said.

Inspired by a similar program at the University of Arkansas, Droege reasoned that if hunger was an issue on another SEC campus, it was probably an issue at MU.

According to the Tiger Pantry's website, nearly 20 MU students reported that they were homeless last semester, and there are more than 15,000 students that receive need-based financial aid.

The pantry has already received about 6,000 pounds of food from the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, which was founded in the early 1980s. Tiger Pantry will continue to receive donations from that group, Droege said.

Droege said other food drives and fundraisers on campus for Tiger Pantry, like the one Pepe's Mexican food truck sponsored last week, have been important.

Chancellor Brady Deaton and his wife, Anne, the Panhellenic Association and coordinators and staff with the pantry have all given money, though Doege couldn't provide exact figures.
Currently, Droeger is asking for donations of toiletries and non-perishable foods such as canned tuna, pasta, pasta sauces and rice. 

Droeger said he'd like to accept perishable items such as fresh produce in the future. "We're aiming to provide that next semester," he said. "It just wasn't possible this semester."

Droeger explained that including perishable food immediately was too much of a risk to take right away, and that Tiger Pantry wants to cover the basics first and expand from there.

The pantry aims to be a permanent fixture in the community, Droeger said.

"We want to be part of a solution," he said. "Not just a temporary fix."

Tiger Pantry, located in room No. 8 at 1400 Rock Quarry Road, is open from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sundays.

To donate to Tiger Pantry, contact tigerpantry@missouri.edu or visit tigerpantry.missouri.edu.
Missouri tobacco tax foes say it will cost local governments

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. • Opponents of a tobacco tax initiative on the Missouri ballot say local governments could lose money if the measure passes.

The proposal would raise the state cigarette tax from 17 cents to 90 cents per pack and also increase taxes on other tobacco products.

An estimate from the state auditor's office says it would generate between $283 million and $423 million annually for the state. It says the effect on local governments is unknown.

But an association of convenience stores hired an economist at the University of Missouri-Columbia to analyze the issue. That study assumes a higher state tax will decrease sales of tobacco products, thus decreasing sales tax revenues for cities and counties.

The Missouri Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association launched a campaign Tuesday against the initiative.
Advocacy group sues UM over teacher course syllabi

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

A Washington-based education group sued the University of Missouri yesterday over its refusal to provide records related to teacher training at the university system's four campuses.

The National Council on Teacher Quality filed the civil complaint in Boone County Circuit Court. The research and advocacy group said the university system has refused to turn over course syllabi, which it claims are public records. The group wants the course material as part of its efforts to monitor what aspiring teachers learn at college. A joint study with U.S. News & World Report is expected to be released next year, rating schools with letter grades from A to F.

"Right now, on aggregate, teacher preparation programs are not helping teachers get better," said Arthur McKee, the council's managing director of teacher preparation studies. "We do have an agenda — of wanting teacher preparation to be excellent. We don't shy away from the fact that we have higher standards."

Officials in the College of Education at the Columbia campus as well as with the system administration did not respond to several requests for comment yesterday. But like other schools that object to the records request — the council has filed similar lawsuits in Minnesota and Wisconsin — Missouri considers a course syllabus to be intellectual property.

At an MU Faculty Council meeting this summer, professors in the College of Education said they weren't hiding anything but were concerned about the council's motives. Last month, Robert Schwartz, the UM System's custodian of records, said he was trying to reach a compromise with the organization to provide some, but not all, records.

Those who train teachers also criticize the council's research methods. In a Feb. 23, 2011, letter to the council, 14 university presidents from Missouri declined to participate in what they called "ill-conceived 'research'" conducted "in a coercive way from outside the profession."

The leaders of Westminster College, Lindenwood University, Missouri Southern State University and the University of Central Missouri were among those who shared their objections.

Such resistance has led the teacher quality council to seek course outlines in more roundabout ways, such as buying syllabi from former students contacted through classified ads in campus newspapers.
McKee said the council has settled another legal complaint in Cole County against Lincoln University filed in June after the Jefferson City school initially provided limited course materials at what the group considered an excessive cost.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Advisory council sues UM System over access to faculty syllabuses

By Lizzie Johnson
October 2, 2012 | 6:10 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — An advisory council in Washington D.C., sued the University of Missouri System Monday after the system refused to submit education program syllabuses under an open-records request.

Robert Schwartz, UM System chief of staff, said in an email that before the UM System responds to the suit, it will have to review it.

The National Council on Teacher Quality submitted an open-records request for the documents on Oct. 31, 2011. In July, the UM System denied the request for the syllabuses, saying the documents were intellectual property and not subject to open records law.

UM System President Tim Wolfe said in a letter to faculty members that it is up to individual faculty members to decide whether they want to share their syllabuses.

"As owners of this property, it is at your discretion whether you provide your syllabi to them," he said in the letter. "Our denial of the request is based on the premise that it would not be appropriate for the university to provide the syllabi without the consent of the affected faculty members."

In the letter, Wolfe said that the National Council on Teacher Quality proposed that the syllabuses be provided under a confidentiality agreement. The UM System denied the request and proposed sharing only syllabuses of faculty members who did not object.

The civil complaint was filed in Cole County Circuit Court on Monday after an agreement between the two could not be reached.

The advisory council requested the syllabuses to evaluate teacher education programs at the system's four campuses. In the evaluation, schools are assigned a grade ranging from A through F based on criteria including admissions, coursework, licensing exams and student teaching placement.
Arthur McKee, managing director of teacher preparation studies for the council, said he is confident the advisory council will eventually obtain the syllabuses.

The report is scheduled to be published early next year in cooperation with the U.S. News & World Report.

*Supervising editor is Jacob Kirn.*
State Senate candidates Schaefer, Still engage in spirited debate at MU

See also – UM Mention on pg. 2

By Hilary Niles
October 2, 2012 | 11:30 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Rep. Mary Still and Sen. Kurt Schaefer leveled heated accusations at each other Tuesday when they faced off in a forum hosted by Pi Sigma Alpha and the MU Political Science Club in MU’s Allen Auditorium.

Still hopes to unseat Schaefer as Missouri’s 19th District state senator in one of the state’s most-watched campaigns this season.

“They definitely went at it a little bit,” said Trey Sprick, president of the student organization Tigers Against Partisan Politics.

Philosophy of public service

The tone for the evening and a major current in the campaign surfaced when a student panelist asked whether or not each candidate would prioritize their party’s platform or the interests of their constituents.

Still emphasized her values.

“I will be there to represent you, the values we share, and to fight for working families. It’s working families that are getting squeezed,” Still said. She promised to prioritize constituents over special interests if elected to the Missouri Senate. “Not special interests, not any party, and especially not the Tea Party.”

Schaefer emphasized his legislative record as evidence that he can get things done.

“I would work with Republicans, Democrats, anyone who has an idea and wants to work to make this a better state,” he said. “I have sponsored and passed over 50 bills, most with
overwhelming bipartisan support.” He also underscored his powerful position as chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which he was chosen for after two years on the job.

**Higher education**

Many questions from the student panelists focused on higher education.

*Both candidates disagreed with Senate Bill 389, passed before either was elected. It transferred some powers from the UM System Board of Curators to the General Assembly. And both agreed that the board should include student membership, although Still claimed to have taken that stance before her opponent.*

Schaefer and Still support the November ballot measure to raise the tobacco tax for different reasons. If passed, new revenues from the tax would fund K-12 and higher education.

Still maintained Schaefer has only recently converted to supporting the tax increase, while she has spoken out for it for years. She compared it to the song lyrics, “I was country before country was cool.”

Schaefer said he supports it as a way to discourage smoking because the state spends so much money on health-related complications from smoking because of Medicaid and Medicare obligations.

Both candidates pledged to ensure that any new revenues for education raised through a tobacco tax hike would not be offset by reduced funding from the state’s general revenues.

Still said that funding for higher education has been cut every year since Schaefer became chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, while the state has promised more money in tax credits to corporations for economic development.

“That’s better invested in the university,” Still said.

**Interstate 70**

The candidates mentioned several possible solutions for funding I-70 repairs and upkeep, including the option of bonding.
"I believe pouring concrete is a very good way to stimulate the economy," Still said. She said she is not fond of toll roads, and confessed that she recently got a bill from the state of Illinois for some tolls she apparently missed on a recent road trip.

Schaefer suggested the option of an increased diesel tax, especially because the trucking industry recently said they would rather pay that than a toll, he said. He also said that 50 percent of the traffic on I-70 drives straight through the state, which makes him question the logic of putting state dollars to work for out-of-state drivers.

**Term limits**

Schaefer and Still agreed that it's unlikely term limits would be repealed.

Schaefer said he thinks complications from term limits have caused a loss of collegiality at the Capitol, while Still blames term limits, in part, for greater influence from lobbyists.

"We probably can't get rid of term limits, but that makes it all the more important to have campaign contribution limits," Still said.

Missouri campaign finance law includes no caps on campaign contributions.

**Copenhaver-Wright controversy**

Still denied that she had any involvement in an alleged payoff offer received by Nancy Copenhaver in exchange for dropping out of her primary race against John Wright for the 47th District House seat.

Schaefer responded by distancing himself from the allegations, but also cited Copenhaver's credentials as a former state representative and Moberly city councilwoman.

"Is she lying?" Schaefer asked Still, without looking at her. He pointed out that paying someone to get out of a political race has "criminal implications."

*Supervising editor is Jacob Kirn.*
The president hasn't closed the deal on the economy, and Romney has trouble connecting.

Story Highlights

- One of five people in a USA TODAY poll say the debates could sway them
- "Persuadable" voters call for more specifics, less rhetoric and fewer attacks
- When the contest is relatively close, debates can narrow a race or even swing it

8:00PM EST October 2, 2012 - WASHINGTON — If Mitt Romney is going to change the trajectory of a close race that is bending in President Obama's direction, his best opportunity will be during 90 minutes on a Denver stage Wednesday night.

Obama has opened a modest advantage over Romney since the political conventions ended last month, especially in the battleground states. But as the presidential rivals prepare to face off in the first of three debates, a USA TODAY/Gallup Poll shows Obama with vulnerabilities and Romney with assets — even on the question of whether Americans have become too dependent on the government.

The question: Can the Republican challenger seize on those openings? If he fails — and he admittedly has struggled since clinching the GOP nomination in the spring — his path to victory over the final four weeks of the campaign becomes much steeper.

"The vast majority of viewers tune in to these debates to cheer their candidate on; they've made their decision and want that decision confirmed," says Mitchell McKinney, an associate professor at the University of Missouri who studies presidential debates and political communication. But there also will be viewers who are only "weakly committed" to a candidate "and still need some persuading."

Almost eight in 10 Americans in the USA TODAY poll say there's nothing either candidate could say or do in the debates that would change their minds about their vote. Still, one of five say the debates could sway them — including 24% of Obama supporters and 18% of Romney supporters.

How?

Those "persuadable" voters call for more specifics, less rhetoric and fewer attacks. "Act more like four years ago," one respondent said in response to an open-ended question included in the survey. Others who are leaning to Romney but open to Obama's case cited particular issues, from doing more on the environment to saving the coal industry. And a tall order: "Come up with all the answers for all the problems."
The debates are a chance for Obama to win back the vote of Elizabeth Gower, 49, of Tacoma, Wash. "Four years ago, my husband and I voted for Obama, and I think it was awesome that he got elected," she said in a follow-up interview with USA TODAY. "But as far as I'm concerned, he's blown it." She worries that the Affordable Care Act the president signed into law may subject her family to fines because they don't have health insurance and can't afford to buy it. She'd like to hear him on that.

Voters who were leaning to Obama but open to hearing from Romney volunteered that Romney should show that he would focus on the concerns of people like them. "He needs to help the middle class instead of keep helping the rich," one said in the survey. Several said they'd like to hear not only that he would repeal the health care law but also what he would do in its stead. "Just say what he would do as president," one advised.

"It's OK that he was a businessman and very wealthy, but I think he should be honest and open about that," Paul Rayman, 24, the operations manager at a distribution center in Indianapolis, said in a follow-up interview. He was put off by Romney's comment at a campaign event that students who can't afford college should borrow money from their parents. "That was really laughable for a lot of people," Rayman says, and as he sees it, a sign Romney doesn't understand the tough economic times many face.

"He needs to say he would in office seek out the opinions of others on how to address those concerns and understand," he says.

Then there's that damaging "47%" video. For weeks, Romney has been forced to spend time and air ads aimed at repairing damage from comments he made on a secretly taped video at a fundraiser in May, posted online by the liberal Mother Jones magazine. In them, he described 47% of Americans as "victims" who are dependent on government and unwilling to take responsibility for their lives. Obama jumped on the comments as harsh, inaccurate and unpresidential.

Despite the negative fallout, Romney's general point resonates with many voters. By 2-1, 64%-33%, those surveyed agree that Americans are too dependent on the federal government. A solid majority, 57%, say the government is trying to do too many things that should be left to individuals and businesses. One-third, 34%, think the government should do more to solve the country's problems.

Romney's weaknesses on other fronts has made it difficult for him to tap that support for a less expensive and less intrusive government. His favorable-unfavorable rating is an anemic 47%-48%. The biggest personal shortcoming found in the survey is the belief that he doesn't understand the problems Americans face in their lives.

One critical task for him is to convince them that he does.

At the same time, he needs to be on the attack against Obama. "He has to make the case that the president's policies are directly responsible for the bad economy," says Brett O'Donnell, a Republican consultant who advised Romney during some of the GOP primaries. "He's got to stay on offense throughout the entirety of the debate."

**Why they're undecided**

Most Americans surveyed like Obama. His favorable-unfavorable rating is 55%-44%, his best standing this year. By 20 percentage points, they say he understands better than Romney the challenges of their lives. By smaller margins, they say he is more likely to share their values, to be a strong leader, and to keep his campaign promises — all assets in a presidential contest.
But when it comes to handling the issue they see as most important — the economy — they remain unconvinced Obama is up to the job. A majority of those surveyed, 52%, predict the U.S. economy won't be better in four years if he wins a second term; 40% say it will be worse.

Romney continues to have an edge when it comes to managing the economy — albeit a smaller one than he had before months of Democratic ads attacking his record at Bain Capital — and on handling the federal budget deficit. If he is elected, 50% of those surveyed predict the U.S. economy will be better in four years; 35% say it will be worse.

John Davis, 69, a retired chef from Reading, Pa., is an undecided voter because of his mixed views of both candidates. "I want to hear some kind of positive answer of how they're going to bring our country back together again," says Davis, who was called in the poll. "Romney sounds good on the economy, but he seems a little lean on diplomatic issues, foreign policy issues. Obama sounds good on foreign policy, but he's lousy with our economics. So I'm still up in the air."

Obama has a 26-point advantage when it comes to handling social issues such as same-sex marriage and abortion, and a significant one on foreign affairs and handling terrorism. On health care, energy, Medicare and taxes, his edge over his challenger is in single digits.

His approval rating has risen to 51%, the first time a majority of Americans have approved of the job he's doing as president since the brief boost he got after the killing of Osama bin Laden last year. In the poll, the president's narrow lead nationwide expands a bit in the 12 swing states but is still in single digits. (The swing states: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin.)

If Romney needs to use the debates to convince voters he understands their lives, Obama's task is to convince them he can be trusted to make those lives better.

"With an incumbent president in a debate, the principle question is: Should you be re-elected? Do you deserve four more years?" McKinney says. "Obama has to go beyond his message of 'it could be worse.' He needs to try to resurrect some of the 'hope' message that it will get better."

What history has shown

Debates can be powerful.

Ten of the past 13 presidential elections have included televised debates. In three of them (1960, 1980 and 2000), the eventual winner went into the first debate trailing in the Gallup Poll and came out of the last one ahead. In two more (1976 and 2004), the eventual winner lost significant ground during the debates. That opened an opportunity for the underdog in the campaign's final days, although in the end it didn't change the outcome.

Debates can't take a runaway race and make it a contest. In 1984 and 1996, popular incumbents Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton swept to easy victories over Walter Mondale and Bob Dole. In 2008, the nation's financial collapse, not the debates, defined the campaign's final weeks and contributed to Obama's victory over John McCain.

When the contest is relatively close, especially if one of the candidates isn't well-known, the debates can narrow a race or even swing it.
Consider the impact in two of the three most recent elections:

In 2000, Al Gore went into the first of three debates leading George W. Bush by 8 points. After faceoffs in which his demeanor, his exaggerated sighs and even his makeup drew criticism, Gore trailed Bush by 4 points after the last one. Gore ended up narrowly winning the popular vote but losing the Electoral College, a split decision that presumably would have been avoided with a wider lead.

The lead in the race also switched after the debates in 1960 and 1980, two contests with iconic debates. John Kennedy's appeal over a pale, sweaty Richard Nixon in 1960 stands as an object lesson for politicians in the television age. In 1980, Ronald Reagan's reassuring mien in his only debate with then-president Jimmy Carter — and his closing "are you better off?" query to voters — gave him a crucial boost.

In 2004, John Kerry went into the first of three debates trailing Bush by 11 points; he came out of the last one 3 points behind. Kerry failed to get it closer. On Election Day, Bush won a second term by 3 points.

This time, Americans by 57%-33% expect Obama to do a better job in the debates. Even 17% of Romney voters predict Obama will prevail; just 2% of Obama supporters expect Romney to do better.

Steve Elmendorf, a Democratic veteran who was Kerry's deputy campaign manager, sees parallels this time with the 2004 race and calls the debates critical. "There is a very small group of undecideds in this election, and maybe they won't watch all the debates," he says. "But my guess is their opinions will be moved by the debates."

"Romney is behind, and he needs to change the dynamic. His next opportunity, his last opportunity, is these debates."
Parry and thrust: a look at the history of U.S. presidential debates

While the United States presidency has existed since the days of knickers and powdered wigs, the exercise in public theater known as the presidential debate is a relatively recent phenomenon, dating back just a half century.

The institution has predecessors, including intraparty debates between Republican presidential candidates Harold Stassen and Thomas Dewey in 1948, and Democrats Estes Kefauver and Adlai Stevenson in 1956.

But the first general presidential debate didn't happen until 1960, when John Kennedy and Richard Nixon squared off on television. It was the year a promising young boxer named Cassius Clay won an Olympic gold medal and "The Flintstones" debuted.

For many Americans, that first debate is within living memory. But while the Barack Obama-Mitt Romney showdown at the University of Denver is rooted in the Kennedy-Nixon debate, the rise of social media and the 24-hour news cycle has changed things. Today, gaffes and gotcha moments, such as Gerald Ford's infamous 1976 assertion that Eastern Europe was not under Soviet domination, go viral.

The history of presidential debates might be brief, but it is packed with memorable moments: zingers and flubs, triumphs and flops, and tons of back room dish. Former president George H.W. Bush dubbed the experience "tension city."

"There's almost a NASCAR mentality," said Dale Herbeck, who chairs the Communications Studies department at Northeastern University in Boston. "A lot of people watch the debates to see who's going to put their foot in it and have this massive flameout."

Kennedy-Nixon

The Kennedy-Nixon debate on Sept. 26, 1960, was the first of four meetings. It was televised, and the common memory is of a pale, sweating Nixon getting trounced by the tanned, charismatic Kennedy.
It was a bit more complicated than that. Nixon was under the weather, arriving at the Chicago studio the day of the debate after a frenetic state-to-state campaign hop. (President Dwight D. Eisenhower had told his vice president to avoid debating Sen. Kennedy, since it put him on a level playing field with his opponent.) Kennedy, fresh off a California swing, was in town a day earlier, where his staff scouted the studio and recommended he wear a dark suit to contrast with the painted set.

In fact, many people who heard the broadcast on the radio thought Nixon more than held his own.

"There is one story about a group of Southern governors convening in Arkansas who only had access to a radio," Herbeck said. "They thought Nixon clearly won. But when they saw the TV tape next day, they thought Kennedy won."

Scott Jensen, who directs the debate and forensics team at Webster University in Missouri, said Nixon would have fared well in a pre-TV era debate. "He was intelligent, had vision and was articulate," he said. "But his visage was made for radio."

The instant collective wisdom in 1960 was that Nixon was undone by television. Polls showed that more than half the voters based their decision on the debates.

Carter-Reagan

Candidates became so leery that the next presidential debate would not occur until 16 years later. Lyndon Johnson, who was far ahead in the polls, declined to debate Barry Goldwater in 1964. Nixon refused to debate Hubert Humphrey in 1968 or George McGovern in 1972.

Carter was boosted in 1976 by Ford's "no Soviet domination" gaffe, but endured the downside of televised debates in 1980.

Beset by a bad economy and the Iran hostage crisis, Carter was finally persuaded by his aides to debate Ronald Reagan. (An earlier debate between Reagan and independent candidate John Anderson had gone off without Carter, who nixed a three-way format.) The defining moment: Carter making a detailed but rather droning point on health care, and then Reagan, with his Hollywood-honed affability, telling the audience that Carter had mischaracterized his Medicare aims with a shake of his head and "There you go again."

It was a verbal shiv to Carter's ribs, and about as deflating. Reagan won in a landslide. (Reagan would use the phrase in future debates, including one with Walter Mondale in the 1984 presidential race.)

Dukakis-Bush

In 1988, Democrat Michael Dukakis, who faced George H.W. Bush, was savaged after moderator Bernard Shaw asked him what his reaction would be if his wife, Kitty, was raped and murdered. Dukakis, who was anti-death penalty, was perceived as giving a dithering reply.
"It was actually more nuanced than that, but in such circumstances, audiences wanted to see more emotion, even if it was him blasting out with a 'How dare you ask that question!' said Mitchell McKinney, professor of communication at the University of Missouri.

"I think we've learned that the 'aha' moments have become more important," Jensen said. "People look for the one thing that'll be in the paper the next day."

Or tweeted in the next 15 seconds.

McKinney sees the use of social media during debates as a positive.

"When people use social media, they follow more closely, engage with fellow citizens and are more engaged in the campaign," he said.

Others aren't so sure, worrying that the truncated format exacerbates sound-bite nation. Public appearances become minefields, with kabloomie moments caught on film and made viral in seconds. Texas Gov. Rick Perry was derailed in an early GOP debate when he could not name the third of three agencies he had vowed to abolish.

Debate formats have changed enormously since one of the modern debate's antecedents, the seven 1858 meetings between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, who were vying for a U.S. Senate seat in Illinois. The format: One candidate got an hour to speak, his opponent followed with a 90-minute speech, then it was back to the first speaker for a 30-minute rejoinder.

And debate formats changed significantly since 1960, morphing from panels of journalists running the show to single moderators to town-hall formats where candidates field questions from the public.

**Bush-Clinton**

The first town-hall presidential debate came in 1992. Incumbent George H.W. Bush took the stage with Bill Clinton and Ross Perot.

"The contrast could not have been more stark," McKinney said. "Bill Clinton was saying, 'I feel your pain,' while Bush looked ill at ease and awkward in interaction. The camera caught Bush looking at his watch while the other candidates were speaking."

The debates were sponsored and run by the League of Women Voters from 1976 to 1984, who quit in protest of candidates and parties trying to dictate how the debates were formatted.

Running the debates was taken over by the Commission on Presidential Debates, headed by former chairs of the Republican and Democratic national committees.

Vice-presidential debates produce memorable moments on occasion. Witness Lloyd Bentsen's "You're no Jack Kennedy" takedown of Dan Quayle when the latter compared himself to JFK in 1988.
And anticipation of the 2008 veep debate featuring Sarah Palin found an audience of 70 million viewers, more than any presidential debate except Carter-Reagan in 1980, which drew 80 million.

Obama and Romney's appearance at DU is the first of three between now and Nov. 6.

For all the potshots, posturing and punditry, Herbeck said he found the debates an invigorating experience.

"What a marvelous celebration of American democracy," he said. "Millions will sit down and watch the same thing. We might see and hear different things, but we're all together. What a moment.

"And the next day at the water cooler, we won't be talking about the blown call in the Packers-Seahawks game. We'll be talking about something of substance."
President Barack Obama and Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney face off at the first presidential debate Wednesday — an important moment for both candidates, but especially critical for Romney.

Presidential debates tend to reinforce, rather than sway, voter opinions. But in some instances, they can affect the dynamics of a race, boost voter enthusiasm and provide a candidate an opening for a comeback.

That is exactly what Romney needs. After failing to gain traction from the GOP convention, he hurled himself into a turbulent month marked by campaign blunders and contradictory messages, leaving his campaign in constant "reboot" mode.

Now, as he moves into the final weeks of the campaign, his path to the White House is narrowing as he faces anemic poll numbers in key swing states, such as Florida and Ohio — a state no Republican has ever lost and won the presidency.

Despite Obama's mediocre job-approval numbers and his vulnerability on the economy — consistently cited by voters as the most important election issue — Romney's economic message hasn't resonated with a majority of voters, including those in the middle class.

Recent polls show the former head of Bain Capital has lost his edge on whom voters trust to handle the economy. Add on a gender gap, high unfavorability ratings and voters' perception that he isn't like them — and Romney has some ground to make up.

"(The debate is) Romney's last best chance to turn things around," said Republican strategist Mark McKinnon, a former adviser to President George W. Bush. "He'll have to exceed expectations by a lot. He needs to have a moment that gets people to view him differently. And he needs to articulate some ideas that people think are credible on the economy. He needs to appeal across the board."

With early voting already underway in some states such as Iowa and Ohio, and other critical swing states kicking off voting over the next two weeks, the first presidential debate is widely viewed as both candidates' best chance at reaching the public.
In Colorado, where early-voting ballots this year go out Oct. 15, nearly 80 percent of voters cast ballots by Election Day in 2008, said Michael McDonald, an election expert at George Mason University. McDonald predicts this year 35 percent of the presidential votes nationwide will be cast before Election Day.

The event's hype has led Obama's advisers to downplay expectations, noting that the president's busy schedule has not allowed for enough debate practice. Romney's campaign and surrogates, however, are covering all their bases, simultaneously playing up Romney's abilities while tamping down expectations.

With estimates that more than 50 million people will watch the debate in an attempt to get answers to their questions about the economy, health care and the role of government, it is unlikely that either candidate won't be ready for prime time. But what they do with that time is critical.

"Obama's task is like being on a football team with a lead. Put in the defensive backs and don't make any mistakes," said Dan Schnur, director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California and former adviser to Republican U.S. Sen. John McCain during his 2000 presidential primary run. "Romney has to throw the ball, but it's not time yet for a Hail Mary. He has to consistently move the ball down the field."

As the incumbent president, Obama needs to play defense without looking defensive, said Schnur. And Obama should remind people why they like him, note the promises he kept and attempt to gingerly place the blame at the feet of the U.S. Congress for those campaign vows he broke, said Boston-based Democratic strategist Mary Anne Marsh.

While he needs to play it a bit safe — he's only narrowly ahead of Romney in national polls — he also needs to go on the attack, painting Romney's positions as nearly identical to those of President George W. Bush, which "contributed to the mess today," she said. And expect to hear more than one reference to Romney's comments suggesting that 47 percent of Americans were dependent on government and viewed themselves as victims.

"Whenever he can, the president will say, 'I represent all of America,' forcing Gov. Romney back on his heels," she said.

Obama, however, also needs to remain engaged, give short answers and avoid lecturing as though he were teaching a constitutional law class.

"The president is not a terrific debater. The format of short answers does not lend itself well to his skills," said David Birdsell, dean of the School of Public Affairs at Baruch College in New York, who has written a book on presidential debates. "He has a tendency to appear supercilious, and use a tone that is condescending — especially when he starts a sentence with 'Um, look.' The president needs to avoid looking smug, out of touch and arrogant."

During a 2008 Democratic primary debate against opponent Hillary Rodham Clinton, Obama somewhat callously referred to her as "likable enough." And appearing tired and irritated during
a recent "60 Minutes" interview, the president referred to the instability in the Middle East as "bumps in the road."

Romney's hurdle is that he needs to outperform the president and give voters a reason to both reject Obama and embrace him, strategists and political observers say. That means Romney must accomplish a number of things in 90 minutes: Be relatable and likable; offer specific policy details he has not disclosed in the past; aggressively, but respectfully, hit the president on his record; and try to squeeze in a memorable line or funny zinger.

**While there are very few undecided voters left, there are always those who are weakly committed — crucial in a tight race such as this, said Mitchell McKinney, a political communications specialist at the University of Missouri.**

"We call them persuadables. They still aren't completely comfortable with their choice," he said. "It's a chance for Romney to get his message across and re-reintroduce himself."

That message should avoid "Republican ideological code words" on the economy such as "free market, self-reliance and downsize government" because they often turn off moderate voters, said Bruce Buchanan, a presidential politics expert at the University of Texas. And Romney should add some meat to his economic plan, which includes cutting taxes for the wealthy and the middle class; slashing regulations that negatively impact businesses; expanding trade; balancing the budget; and promoting domestic energy independence.

"He certainly doesn't need to spew off 57 specific proposals, but he needs to paint a compelling vision of a better future and give voters confidence that his plan is better than Barack Obama's," said Republican pollster Whit Ayres.

Romney has some advantages. He has been preparing for the debates since June, and challengers tend to gain immediate stature by appearing on stage next to the incumbent. And while he hasn't participated in a one-on-one debate, he holds the record for debate attendance among general-election candidates since he ran in both 2008 and 2012, McKinney said. During his match-ups against Newt Gingrich, Romney proved he could be aggressive, even accusing the former House Speaker of "influence peddling."

"He's a very good technical debater. He doesn't make substantial errors," said Brett O'Donnell, GOP communications strategist and debate adviser to Romney during the primary. "His weakness is that when he gets defensive, he tends to looks bad."

During a GOP primary debate, Romney went off-script and offered a $10,000 wager to Texas Gov. Rick Perry. That reinforced some opinions that Romney was out of touch.

While there is much at stake, and viewers can expect a good video bite to emerge in the aftermath and perhaps information to help them make an educated decision on who to vote for, most political observers agree that this debate will not miraculously change the race overnight.
"Super Bowl moments don't happen in debates," Schnur said. "If you are looking for a single, magical, transformative moment, you might be let down."
Be part of the debate tonight with us, as we use Twitter to gauge your feedback to the Obama-Romney faceoff

It’s finally time: Barack Obama and Mitt Romney debate tonight. Tens of millions will watch. But only a few get to participate in a most excellent feedback experiment.

Join us tonight on Twitter, sharing your thoughts, observations and questions with the hashtag #dmndebate. With the help of our partner researchers at the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri, we’ll share highlights and trends of what sparked the most reaction, pro and con. You’ll get immediate feedback on what your fellow citizens had to say about the issues and the candidates.

Here are a few tips on what we’re looking for your reaction to:

– Consider how each candidate answers questions. Does he provide specifics or offer new information? Or does he evade the question by attacking his opponent?
– What did you think of the questions asked by the moderator (or, in the second debate, by the citizen questioners)?
– What sort of image did the candidate try to create for himself?
– Did the debate change your previous opinion of one or both candidates?

If you don’t already have a Twitter account, sign up for free at Twitter.com. Email your friends that you’re going to tweet along with other DMN readers, and encourage them to do the same, then follow each other’s tweets during the debates.

You can also follow our staff political and editorial writers and editors in one click with this handy Twitter list.

The debate starts at 8 p.m. Dallas time. It’s on every major network and news channel.

Once we all get rolling, it’ll look something like this. Don’t you want to be part of it?
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Student groups come together to increase alcohol awareness at MU

By Christine Cauthen, Sarah Pendergrass

October 2, 2012 | 5:49 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Free pizza and T-shirts lured in students to the Alcohol Responsibility Month (ARM) Resource Fair Tuesday morning in Memorial Student Union. This year marks the 30th anniversary of Alcohol Responsibility Month, which is sponsored by MU’s Wellness Resource Center. The resource fair was the first of several events this month.

Some of the groups with informational booths at the fair were campus organizations such as Greeks Advocating the Mature Management of Alcohol (GAMMA), which was also responsible for organizing and staffing the event, the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, MU Police Department, Alcoholics Anonymous and the statewide CHEERS program.

"The purpose of the resource fair is to get students to make better choices especially in regards to alcohol," said Wellness Resource Center director Kim Dude. Dude said she believes students have the biggest influence when intervening in situations that are potentially dangerous to their peers. According to the MU Department of Residential Life director Frankie Minor, increased independence can lead to student adjustment issues and experimentation with alcohol. Even so, he explained that college isn’t always the first place that young adults encounter these temptations.

“A lot of students have their drinking habits established before college,” Minor said. Dude said that students are often under the illusion that nothing bad will happen to them, despite risky behavior.

"A big reason for students getting into trouble with alcohol is them feeling invincible," Dude said. Moderation is encouraged by programs on campus that teach students how to be responsible regarding alcohol.
One method taught by the Wellness Resource Center is called the "circle of six." This is a theory that when students go out to a social gathering where alcohol is involved, one out of every six friends should be sober. This person would serve as more than a designated driver, but also a "designated friend." Minor said he thinks students look out for each other more than they might be given credit for.

"There's often this fear that students won't help peers," Minor said, "We find it's not really true. There's no evidence that I'm aware of that students aren't reporting situations from fear of getting in trouble."

If students are caught violating the alcohol policy in the residence halls, they go to a Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students workshop. The workshop is peer-based, and discussions revolve around how to make smart decisions with alcohol. Alcohol awareness is addressed using programs through the Wellness Resource Center such as GAMMA and "Life is Not a Spectator Sport," which is a bystander intervention program.

"We take the issue of the potential for alcohol poisoning very seriously," Dude said. For her, the focus isn't just on dealing with alcohol poisoning; the focus is to keep students from getting to that point in the first place. Focus on responsible alcohol use will be emphasized during Alcohol Responsibility Month. A variety of activities will be offered.

The activities for Alcohol Responsibility Month include:

- 12 Hour "Tigers Assemble" Walk: noon - midnight Friday at Stankowski Field
- ARM Keynote Speaker Erica Upshaw "Keeping Friendship Alive": 8 p.m. Monday, Oct. 15 in Jesse Hall
- Legal Issues "Justice Panel": 3 p.m. - 4 p.m. Thursday, October 18 in Jesse Wrench Auditorium
- Hydration Station: 11 p.m. - 1 a.m. Thursday, October 25 in downtown Columbia
- Alcohol Screening "Tigers First Class": 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Tuesday, October 30, in the MU Student Recreation Complex
- ARM Lunchbag "Ordinary to Extraordinary": noon - 1 p.m. Wednesday, October 31 in Memorial Student Union S203

Supervising editor Emilie Stigliani.