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Newly hired MU wine expert dies in car crash

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- A University of Missouri professor recently hired to help promote the state's wine industry died in a weekend car crash.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports that Anthony Peccoux, 32, died in a one-car crash Saturday night.

He came to the university from France in March as an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

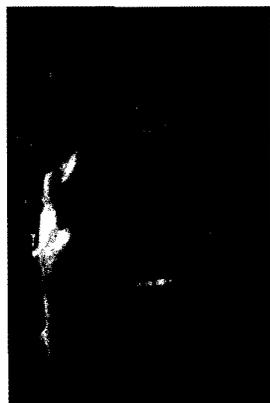
The Missouri State Highway Patrol reports that Peccoux was driving a 2013 Volkswagen Jetta north on US 63 around 6:35 p.m. Saturday when the car ran off the right side of the road and hit a concrete culvert. He was pronounced dead at University Hospital.

The Highway Patrol says Peccoux was wearing his seat belt.

MU professor dies in highway crash

By Janese Silvey

A newly hired faculty member at the University of Missouri who was expected to help boost the state's wine and grape industry was killed Saturday evening in a car crash on Highway 63 south of Turkey Creek.



A. Peccoux

Anthony Peccoux, 32, came to MU from France in March as an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and was leader of the viticulture and wine and grape programs.

Since then, he had participated in wine conferences and provided expertise to reporters and the industry this fall about the effects of the drought on the wine industry.

"He'd been here a little over a half a year and started doing what our grape and wine industry wanted us to do, and what our college wanted us to do, and that is to reach out to researchers around the state to really get the grape and wine industry, what he liked to call, back to the good old times when the Missouri wine industry was renowned," said Ingolf Gruen, associate professor and program chair of food science. "He had huge enthusiasm. He was very exuberant, outgoing."

His death "hit us hard," Gruen said.

Peccoux was driving a 2013 Volkswagen Jetta northbound around 6:35 p.m. Saturday when the vehicle ran off the right side of the road and hit a concrete culvert, according to a Missouri State

Highway Patrol report. Peccoux was taken to University Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. He was wearing a seat belt at the time of the crash, the patrol said.

Peccoux had a longtime interest in grape-growing and winemaking. He received his diploma from the Wine School of Macon-Davaye in France, according to information from the college. He earned his doctorate in plant physiology from the University of Bordeaux Segalen in France about a year ago.

He was an up-and-coming faculty star, Gruen said.

Peccoux "really got the ball rolling for our institute," he said. "He had lots and lots of ideas."

Peccoux was working on a couple of grant proposals, as well as a white paper asking federal lawmakers for \$5.5 million to boost Missouri's wine industry. He also was slated to present information at a grape and wine symposium on campus next month.

In a statement this morning, Chancellor Brady Deaton said he "was saddened to learn of the death of one of our young, promising faculty members last night. Dr. Peccoux was an enthusiastic, respected and well-liked member of our university community although he had only been at MU for a short time. ... He will be greatly missed by his MU colleagues and friends."

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.

MU wine-research specialist dies in crash

By Dan Burley

November 19, 2012 | 4:10 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — A professor in charge of MU's viticulture program was killed in a car crash on U.S. 63 south of Turkey Creek on Saturday night.

Anthony Peccoux, 32, was hired by MU in March to help revitalize Missouri's wine and grape industry. He worked as an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources' division of plant sciences.

"He was a young scientist who was a go-getter," Ingolf Gruen, interim director of the Grape and Wine Institute at MU, said. "He believed Missouri had the genetic material, the native grapes necessary to support and allow the wine industry to survive worldwide despite global warming."

In just nine months with the university, Gruen said Peccoux had already proposed "hundreds" of research ideas and made connections with other researchers around the state and country, including California. He had also lent his expertise to wine industry magazines and journals who asked him about the effects of this summer's drought.

Peccoux thought the ability of Missouri's grapes to survive the state's challenging climate held the answer to the future of grape-growing in unpredictable weather, Gruen said.

At around 6:35 p.m. Saturday, Peccoux was driving a 2013 Volkswagen Jetta northbound on U.S. 63 when the car ran off the right side of the road and hit a concrete culvert, according to a Missouri State Highway Patrol Report. He was transported to University Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Originally from Annecy in eastern France, Peccoux received a two-year degree from the Wine School of Macon-Davaye in France. He also earned his doctorate in plant physiology from the University of Bordeaux in Bordeaux, France, according to Gruen.

Peccoux specialized in the study of grapevine roots and their ability to withstand harsh conditions. Gruen said Peccoux's experience studying grape-growing in Switzerland gave him first-hand knowledge on cultivating grapes in less than ideal conditions.

Peccoux believed Missouri's wine-making industry had great potential to return to its 19th century luster and become a worldwide leader in research, Gruen said.

"He had a vision," Gruen said. "That's what made him outstanding."

Peccoux's family resides in France. No funeral arrangements have been made at this time.

Supervising editor is Karen Miller.

Veterans train shelter dogs from Humane Society in study about PTSD

By Kaylie Denenberg

November 19, 2012 | 5:27 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA —Bryce Menges, 24, used to have to pay his neighbors to go to the grocery store for him.

When Menges returned from a 15-month operation in Baghdad, where he lost a team leader, he displayed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. He started counseling at the Truman Veterans Hospital at MU in 2010 and has been a patient there since.

"I'm just trying to get out there and be a normal 24-year-old," Menges said.

Participating in the Veterans and Shelter Dogs training program has helped the transition back into daily life for him, he said.

"That one hour, twice a week, completely resets me for the next couple of days," he said. "It helps me to know I'm helping the dogs."

The Veterans and Shelter Dogs program is a study run through the Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction at MU. The center is directed by Rebecca Johnson, professor at the Sinclair School of Nursing and College of Veterinary Medicine. The center conducts studies to explore the health benefits of human-animal interaction.

The study is meant to provide veterans with a stress-reducing experience while helping shelter dogs learn the skills they need to be adopted, explained Charlotte McKenney, assistant director of the research center.

"We want to help the veterans feel more comfortable coming back into society," she said.

The study has three parts. During the first part, the center selected veterans to give basic training to specially screened dogs from the Central Missouri Humane Society. Veterans who

have returned from service in Iraq or Afghanistan in the past five years are eligible. As dogs are adopted, another is added to the project.

The second part of the process is for the veterans to mentor new adopters of shelter dogs for six months with follow-up and support phone calls.

Only some participants will have the opportunity to advance to the last part of the program, which involves training dogs beyond the basics to be a post-traumatic stress disorder service dog.

Menges said he hopes to advance to find a dog that is compatible with his personality to train as a service dog for himself.

Getting outside of the facility gives the dogs a chance for socialization they wouldn't usually have, said Mary Pat Boatfield, executive director of the Central Missouri Humane Society.

Last year, participating veterans trained about 200 dogs.

"We find that when people are looking for a dog to adopt and they find out a veteran trained them, there's support for that," she said.

Boatfield also said the follow-up adoption support has helped keep dogs in their adoptive homes.

The project is only in the beginning of its second year so there are no conclusive results yet, McKenney said. It's supposed to be a mental release that improves the lives of the veterans and the dogs, she said.

"This program has been like therapy for me," participant Krystl Stroker, 25, said.

Stroker was a truck driver on two tours in Iraq. She is now studying social work at Columbia College and has re-enlisted in the Army Reserve. The program was a perfect fit for her because she has always felt the need to protect and help others, she said.

"Those dogs are like a lot of us vets, damaged."

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.

MU student president raises the bar

By Janese Silvey

When he wasn't being crowned University of Missouri Homecoming king, traveling to Russia or getting a shout-out from poet Maya Angelou, he was leading a campaign protesting proposed state budget cuts, pushing for a smoke-free campus and ramping up diversity efforts on campus.

It has been a good, albeit busy, year for Missouri Students Association President Xavier Billingsley.

Billingsley, whose term ends in January, has been one of the most active student body presidents in recent history. Just a couple of years ago, a former MSA president was in the news for an idea to bring a live tiger to football games. Billingsley since then has upped the professionalism of the position and the student group's public profile.

"MSA was in a bad spot with leadership," Billingsley said. "Starting with Eric" Woods, Billingsley's predecessor, "we elevated the MSA experience and became a bigger community presence."

Woods was president when racially charged incidents prompted the creation of One Mizzou, an initiative that aims to create community among diverse populations on campus. Billingsley this year created a One Mizzou Week to make more students aware of it. The campaign ended Friday with a concert by the band fun., a socially conscious group.

"If I had to pick one project as a favorite, it would be One Mizzou Week," Billingsley said. "It's my baby."

During her visit last week, Angelou recognized Billingsley by name twice during her talk at the Missouri Theatre Center for the Arts — a "huge honor," he said.

On Billingsley's watch, students successfully lobbied administrators to make MU completely smoke-free on July 1, six months before the original date. Students were able to snag a Homecoming concert for the first time, and he and fellow student leaders led a campaign that called on lawmakers to keep the budget knife away from university funding.

"He had a couple of things he really wanted to accomplish, like the no-smoking policy," said Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs. "He wanted to make a Homecoming concert a

reality — students have talked about that for years but have not been able to pull it off. I give him a lot of credit."

Billingsley is quick to share credit with his MSA Cabinet, as well as Scroggs and other administrators. "We wouldn't have been able to do what we have done if we hadn't had the team and awesome support," he said.

Billingsley has had personal successes this year, too. He was crowned Homecoming king, and he spent two weeks in Russia this summer, one of a dozen college student body presidents chosen for an exchange program. "That was amazing," he said. "It showed me I want to do something in international diplomacy."

He will get his chance after he graduates in May when he heads to an internship at the U.S. Embassy in Jamaica.

Billingsley, the second black man to serve as MSA president, said he hopes MSA's impact continues under future leadership. "I hope MSA is seen as a vessel that's needed in the Columbia community," he said.

He urged future leaders to "be open and willing to accept challenges. Don't be blindsided by the glitz and glamour. There's work to do, and if you do a good job, that will come."

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Successor takes aim at financial hurdles

By Janese Silvey

The incoming University of Missouri student body president wants to start a lending program to help peers overcome financial obstacles.

Nick Droege, who begins his term as Missouri Students Association president in January, is exploring the idea of creating a program that would provide short-term, interest-free loans.

“We don’t know the exact details, but basically if you had an unexpected expense, you’d have the option to take up to \$500 — it could be \$40, it could be \$200,” he said. “We haven’t set the term, whether it would be a month or 90 days, but if you paid it back by that time, there would be no interest.”

Loans would be available to any student in good standing regardless of income, he said.

He’s not sure where the money would come from but said he’s trying to secure external dollars to avoid using student fees.

Additionally, Droege wants to create a lending closet that would let students borrow suits and professional clothing.

Droege is the mastermind behind the campus pantry that opened last month. Tiger Pantry, located off Rock Quarry Road, provides food, toiletries and other necessities to students, faculty and staff. Although he doesn’t have concrete numbers yet, Droege said demand has been greater than expected, but the pantry has been able to keep up.

Activity at the food pantry highlights the need for more resources, he said.

“So many people tell me about the need for an emergency loan program,” he said. “If they need food, they could probably use an emergency loan and could use a professional suit.”

The emphasis on helping lower-income students fits well with the One Mizzou initiative that promotes community on campus, current MSA President Xavier Billingsley said. “It’s a huge extension of the diversity campaign,” he said.

Droege is a junior studying biological sciences and is director of student services for MSA.

He was elected as the next student body president the week of the national election. Campaigning on campus alongside state and national candidates was interesting, he said.

“It was impossible to out-market the real election,” he said. “But it ended up helping us in the end. People were already trying to tune in to where they could vote on campus for the election, so it was easy to tell them if they’d taken the time to vote, why not take the time to vote online for MSA?”

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The New York Times

Expanding Eastward Could Dilute Big Ten Brand

MU MENTION PAGE 3

By *NATE SILVER*

On Monday, the University of Maryland accepted an invitation to join the Big Ten Conference. Rutgers is expected to do the same on Tuesday, expanding the conference's roster to 14 teams and its footprint to the East Coast.

The new additions would bolster the Big Ten's reputation for strong academics. Both schools are members of the Association of American Universities (A.A.U.), as are all current Big Ten schools but the University of Nebraska.

Their athletic heritages are mixed, however. The Rutgers football team has finished the season ranked in the Associated Press Top 25 just once in the last 35 years, although it is on track to do so again this year.

Maryland's football team has finished the season as a ranked team eight times over the same period. Their basketball team has had more consistent success.

But the main rationale for adding the schools seems to be economic: the prospect that they would give the Big Ten, and its cable network, access to the New York and Washington, D.C., media markets.

On that account, the decision may be questionable. Although Rutgers and Maryland are in densely populated areas, they also compete against a number of other Division I football programs for fans and attention.

Moreover, affinity for college football is considerably lower on the East Coast than it is in the Midwest or the South. Thus, the schools have fewer fans than most other current Big Ten members.

Last year, I conducted an analysis of the 120 members of the N.C.A.A.'s Football Bowl Subdivision, attempting to estimate the number of fans devoted to each program.

The analysis relied on an Google search traffic for the term "college football," and information on the size of each of the 210 media markets in the United States.

Although New York is the nation's largest media market, and although Rutgers is the most popular team in the New York City area, their overall numbers were just average by this method.

That's because only about 15 percent of New Yorkers are avid college football fans, among the lower figures in the country.

In addition, although Rutgers might be the most popular team in the region, it hardly dominates the market, with many fans declaring allegiance to schools like Syracuse, Connecticut, Penn State or Notre Dame instead. Many New Yorkers are also transplants from other parts of the country, and bring their football allegiances with them. Only about 20 percent of college football fans in the New York region listed Rutgers as their favorite team, in fact.

Therefore, although there are approximately 20 million residents in New York's media market, only about 3 percent of these people are estimated to be fans of Rutgers football specifically. That's about 600,000 people.

There are also about 300,000 Rutgers football fans in other markets along the East Coast or elsewhere in the country, bringing their total to about 900,000.

But that's below the Big Ten average of 1.4 million to 1.5 million fans per team. Programs like the University of Wisconsin, which is close to the average with 1.4 million fans, might not seem to have as much media muscle. But these schools often have the affinity of whole states unto themselves, states where college football is a religion on Saturdays rather than an afterthought.

Maryland does somewhat worse still by this method. Although it is the predominant college football program in Maryland, the state has little avidity for college football. And the program has little following outside of Maryland's immediate borders, where higher-profile teams like Virginia, Virginia Tech, West Virginia and Penn State tend to dominate.

My method estimated that the University of Maryland has just shy of 500,000 college football fans, which ranks 58th in the country and which would be lower than any other school now in the Big Ten.

Nat'l Rank	Team	Estimated Number of Fans
1	Ohio St.	3,167,263
2	Michigan	2,921,066
3	Penn St.	2,642,275
12	Wisconsin	1,441,955
15	Iowa	1,273,954
18	Nebraska	1,230,558
20	Michigan St.	1,145,819
27	Illinois	965,087
28	Minnesota	963,581
32	Rutgers	937,874
44	Indiana	636,954
46	Purdue	624,944
54	Northwestern	514,540
58	Maryland	474,059

Maryland and Rutgers are not necessarily poor choices compared with some of the other logical alternatives.

I count five other universities that are A.A.U. members, that play in a major college football conference, and that are either within a current Big Ten state or border one.

Nat'l Rank	Team	Estimated Number of Fans
23	Missouri	1,084,889 
37	Pittsburgh	831,496 
40	Kansas	768,002 
52	Iowa State	535,267 
56	Colorado	494,873 

The University of Missouri, with about 1.1 million fans, is the most attractive of this group. But it recently joined the Southeastern Conference, after getting on-again, off-again attention from the Big Ten.

The University of Pittsburgh and the University of Kansas rank somewhere between Rutgers and Maryland in terms of their fan counts. The last two schools that qualify for the list, Iowa State and the University of Colorado, have about as many fans as Maryland does.

The question, rather, is what the Big Ten stands to gain at all by expanding. Fans of a current Big Ten team might find their new schedules less compelling. Wisconsin Badger fans, for example, will now have fewer opportunities to see their team play against regional rivals like Iowa, Michigan and Illinois, replaced instead by more games against Rutgers and Maryland.

Many college football fans also travel to road games, which bolsters business for local restaurants and hotels. It's about a three-hour drive from Madison, Wis., to Iowa City. But it's 15 hours to College Park, Md., and more than 16 hours to New Brunswick, N.J.

The sacrifice might be worth making for games against Notre Dame, Texas or perhaps even Missouri. But the Eastern schools seem to reduce both the geographical integrity of the conference and the quality of the average Big Ten football game.

It is probably no coincidence that the two most popular college football conferences – the Southeastern and the Big Ten – have until now been the most conservative about expansion. The most recent additions to the Big Ten, Penn State and the University of Nebraska, ranked as the 3rd and 18th most popular football programs in the country. The newest additions to the Southeastern Conference, Texas A&M and Missouri, were ranked 6th and 23rd.

Rutgers and Maryland are outstanding public universities – but they are just not in the same league in terms of football.

The Big Ten may have expanded the size of its revenue pie, but it will be dividing it 14 ways rather than 12, and among family members that have less history of sitting down at the table with one another. In seeking to expand its footprint eastward, the conference may have taken a step in the wrong direction.