More Illinois students leaving state for freshman year

A student strolls the University of Missouri campus. In the background are the six columns that once supported Academic Hall. (Antonio Perez, Chicago Tribune / October 24, 2012)

By Jodi S. Cohen and Alex Richards Chicago Tribune reporters

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COLUMBIA, Mo. —

— Take a walk around Lathrop Hall at the University of Missouri, and it won't take long before you meet someone from the Chicago area.

There are the roommates from Barrington and Cary, and, two doors down, freshmen from Lemont and Mount Prospect. The peer adviser, a junior, is from Plainfield and the front desk attendant is from Naperville.

"I had no idea how many people came here from Chicago," said freshman Madi Ahsmann, 18, from Crystal Lake, who has a Blackhawks towel hanging in the room she shares with a student from Kildeer. "It's really crazy how many of us are here."

Illinois students now make up more than 20 percent of the Missouri school's freshman class —
up from 6 percent in 2000 — just one sign of the growing number of students crossing the border for college, attracted in large part by competitive pricing in nearby states.

The Tribune analyzed U.S. Department of Education data to determine where Illinois’ high school graduates are going to college, and how that has changed over time. The newspaper found that for the fall 2010 semester, nearly one-quarter of all first-time students left the state — up from 17 percent a decade earlier.

The approximately 30,000 freshmen who left fanned out across the country, but they were concentrated most heavily at schools in neighboring states. Half ended up in Iowa, Indiana, Missouri or Wisconsin. Meanwhile, Illinois imported about 17,000 students from elsewhere in the United States.

Illinois policymakers should pay attention — and work to keep the brightest students from leaving, said Diane Dean, an Illinois State University education professor who studies college student migration.

"Other schools cherry-pick — and they are recruiting them with money," Dean said. "These aren't just any students who are leaving; these are the highly talented students. We are not talking about 20 people who went to the University of Denver because they loved skiing."

And when they leave, there's a good chance they might not come back.

"If you consider the public investment (in elementary and secondary school) we have made in these individuals over the course of their life span, and then they are taking the investment elsewhere ... that gives me cause for deep concern," Dean said.

Over the past decade, no college in the country has had as large an increase in the number of students from Illinois as the University of Missouri at Columbia. It welcomed 1,370 freshmen from Illinois this fall — a record 21 percent of the class. Ten years ago, it enrolled 318 freshmen from Illinois.

It hasn't happened by accident. The university developed a Chicago-specific recruiting strategy and hired two full-time recruiters to pitch the school's competitive tuition prices and convenient location about six hours away. It capitalized on the fact that there is increasing competition and a steeper price tag at Illinois' flagship public school, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and that some students are looking for an alternative to the popular Big 10 schools.

Although Missouri is on a hot streak, the University of Iowa has long attracted the largest number of Illinois graduates. About 1,500 students, or 33 percent of last fall’s freshman class,
were from Illinois. That’s about the same number as were in Eastern Illinois University's entire freshman class.

Other favorites include Indiana University, where Illinois students make up about 12 percent of freshmen, and Iowa State University, with about 11 percent of the class. Popular private schools include St. Louis University, St. Ambrose University in Iowa and Marquette University in Milwaukee.

"There are a lot of universities that have targeted Chicagoland as the land of plenty," said Michael Barron, admissions director at the University of Iowa. Facing increasing competition, Iowa assigned a full-time admissions officer to Chicago last year.

Barron conceded that although his school still draws the most students from Illinois, Missouri is currently the "hot item."

"Iowa and Indiana have always sort of gone head to head, particularly in suburban schools. Missouri has moved into that territory," Barron said.

That trend was clear on a recent fall day, when about one-quarter of the prospective students on admissions tours at Missouri were from Illinois.

The increase in Illinois students means there are more conversations about the Cubs-Cardinals baseball rivalry, and students celebrated a friend’s birthday with a chocolate cake from Portillo’s, a popular Chicagoland restaurant with locations throughout the suburbs. A fraternity recently added a position of Illinois rush chair just to recruit students from the Chicago area.

And when the 34,000-student university announced on its Facebook page that direct flights would begin next year between the Columbia regional airport and O’Hare International Airport in Chicago, more than 800 people liked the post. It was top news in town for weeks.

"I am very excited about it. It will be so much more convenient," said Saeda Aljazara, 19, a freshman from Lemont High School. Earlier this semester, she took the Megabus home for $54 and then flew back to St. Louis, about an hour and a half drive to Columbia.

Aljazara, who receives a nonresident academic scholarship, was discussing the new flights while studying for a midterm in her dorm lounge, and every few minutes she interrupted the conversation to point out another student who came from the Chicago area.

"On the first day of class, everyone went around the room and said where you are from, and it was like half the class was from Chicago," said Racquel Federighi, 18, of Barrington. She was one of 79 applicants from Barrington High School last year, up from seven in 2002.
Mizzou has long drawn students from throughout the country to its top-notch journalism school. But in 2002, university officials realized they needed to broaden their applicant pool as the number of Missouri high school graduates was expected to decline at the same time the university hoped to boost enrollment.

Officials decided to focus on Illinois. The school started sending more literature to high school students and visiting more college fairs. In 2004 it assigned a full-time recruiter to work exclusively in Chicago. In 2007, it assigned another.

"It has all been deliberate," said Ann Korschgen, the university's vice provost for enrollment management. Indeed, no state comes close to Illinois when exporting students to Mizzou. There are more freshmen from Illinois than all other states outside Missouri combined.

The Chicago-specific admissions brochure highlights some of the selling points. It features a map showing the distance from Chicago (384 miles), laudatory quotes from Chicago-area students and information about automatic tuition scholarships for high-achieving students from other states.

The strategy has worked. In 2002, 11 students applied from Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire. This past year, 174 students applied, making it the largest feeder school in Illinois. Applications from New Trier Township High School have jumped to 111, from 23, over the same time.

"Colleges identify where they should spend their recruitment resources, and it is not at all unusual to give priority to particular markets," said Barmak Nassirian, a longtime authority on college admissions. "University of Missouri has identified Chicago as such a place. It makes perfect sense in some ways."

One student who has been wooed by that strategy is Zac Shenderovsky, 17, a senior at Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein. During a tour, he was impressed by the picturesque campus, school spirit and strong academics. He also liked that the school has standard admissions requirements that allow prospective students to know whether they will get in. He already has been admitted to next year's freshman class.

"It just has this good feel to it," said Shenderovsky, who also is looking at Iowa, Iowa State University, the University of Minnesota and the University of Dayton. There were 74 applicants from his high school last year, up from four a decade ago.

As for his part, his father, Irv, said he liked that non-Missouri students can qualify relatively easily for in-state tuition, saving $12,000 off the $22,440 annual nonresident tuition. To do so,
students are required to live in Missouri for 12 consecutive months, meaning they must stay the
summer after their freshman year. They also have to earn at least $2,000 a year, have a Missouri
driver's license and voter registration card and meet a few other requirements.

"If you can get the in-state tuition, it is less than Illinois schools or about the same," Irv
Shenderovsky said. His son also hopes to get one of the automatic $2,000 to $5,500 scholarships
provided to nonresident students who score at least a 27 on the ACT college-entrance exam.

Senior Ali Burgoon, a graduate of Barrington High School, stayed with a cousin in St. Louis the
summer after her freshman year— a tactic that students call "staying for residency." Now a
student tour guide, Burgoon said she has noticed the increase in Chicago-area students — and
with it, the number of Lou Malnati's pizzas shipped to campus.

"Everybody loves deep-dish here, and nobody around here has it," Burgoon said.

Fellow tour guide Bryan Dykes, 21, from Country Club Hills, chose Mizzou over U. of I., which
he said would have cost more to attend.

"I wanted to go somewhere different," said Dykes, a psychology major and member of the black
pre-law students association. "I love the atmosphere here."

At the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity house, 34 of the 97 brothers are from Illinois. The fraternity
has a member who is responsible for recruiting students from Illinois, and on a recent visit to the
house, a student sitting on the porch was wearing Stevenson High running shorts.

The influx of students can lead to some culture clashes and friendly ribbing.

"They always talk about the Chicago hot dogs like they're something special," joked senior Alon
Gilboa, a fraternity member from St. Louis. "They bring their strange foods and strange customs. I
guess we have to get used to it now."
COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - Suspended Missouri guard Michael Dixon has left the team after two sexual assault claims by a female student and a Mizzou graduate who said he threatened to "kick her in the stomach and push her down the stairs" if she became pregnant.

School officials confirmed Dixon's intent to transfer Thursday night. He has been benched all season for No. 13 Missouri's (5-1). The senior averaged 13.5 points as Missouri's sixth man last season and was a projected starter.

Neither Dixon nor the university addressed the allegations, which didn't result in criminal charges, in the university's two-sentence announcement.

"It's been a challenging few months and while I appreciate the support of many in the Mizzou community, including my coaches and teammates, it's in the best interest of me, my family and the University of Missouri for me to finish my career elsewhere," Dixon said.

The former prep star from suburban Kansas City also was briefly suspended for violating unspecified team rules in December 2010 by former Missouri coach Mike Anderson, who is now at Arkansas. That suspension involved a woman who told The Associated Press on Thursday that she declined to press charges in part to protect her family - but also to avoid the scorn of Missouri basketball players, four of whom lived next door.

The woman, who is now 25 and a university employee, asked that her name not be used because of safety concerns. At the time of Dixon's alleged assault, she was a recent graduate who worked for the school's athletics department. She reported her concerns to campus police, who encouraged her to file charges, and complained to school officials, including Anderson and Sarah Reesman, an executive associate athletics director who is essentially second-in-command under athletic director Mike Alden.

One of the players warned the woman "to keep her mouth shut," she said.

"At the time, I did what was right for me by not pressing charges," she said. "It was a very personal decision."
Over the weekend, a second female student accused Dixon of sexual assault in a Twitter exchange with former Missouri guard Kim English, now a Detroit Pistons reserve. The woman filed a Columbia police report in August, copies of which were publicly released this week, but Boone County prosecutors decided on Nov. 16 to not file charges.

The absence of criminal charges in both cases prompted a groundswell of support for Dixon's reinstatement among Missouri fans, with some Twitter posts calling for the school to "Free Mike Dixon."

English was among the most vocal supporters, defending his former teammate's "poise, class and professionalism" while also praising Missouri coach Frank Haith and chancellor Brady Deaton. But he called a university disciplinary board apparently investigating Dixon "a joke" and said his alma mater "should be ashamed!" Those criticisms were later deleted - as was the 19-year-old sophomore's online accusation that prompted English's comments.

But under the federal gender-equity law known as Title IX, the university must prevent sex-based discrimination that denies access to educational opportunity.

A recent change in interpretation of that 40-year-old law, which is more commonly known for its role in elevating women's sports on campus, has Missouri and other campuses applying that standard to specific complaints of sexual assault. That would explain why Dixon's conduct was the subject of an internal campus review even absent a criminal offense.

Dixon posted his own defense that "I've done nothing wrong!" on Twitter after an 84-61 loss to No. 2 Louisville one week ago at the Battle 4 Atlantis tournament in the Bahamas - a tournament at which he accompanied the team - but later had it removed.

Haith had consistently declined to discuss the reasons for Dixon's suspension, which he said did not involve NCAA matters or legal issues - a characterization subject to interpretation given that the case remained under review by local prosecutors until two weeks ago. Most recently, Haith said he would not talk about the "rumors and allegations" involving Dixon.

Dixon's initial accuser said she struggled with the mostly unwavering support he received while suspended.

"It's really difficult for me to see someone praised by such a large group of people when I know how he hurt me," she said.
Dixon transferring from Mizzou

By Vahe Gregorian

Suspended and embattled Mizzou senior guard Michael Dixon will transfer from MU, the school announced in a statement Thursday night attributed to Dixon.

“It’s been a challenging few months,” the statement began. “And while I appreciate the support of many in the Mizzou community, including my coaches and teammates, it’s in the best interest of me, my family and the University of Missouri for me to finish my career elsewhere.”

The announcement came hours after the Post-Dispatch posted online a story about a second rape accusation against Dixon coming to light in a two-day period. It’s uncertain whether the story precipitated Dixon’s departure.

Dixon, one of only two players to return from last season’s team, had been on indefinite suspension by MU coach Frank Haith since at least early October.

Last season, Dixon was voted sixth man of the year in the Big 12 and was expected to be a vital part of Mizzou’s first season in the Southeastern Conference.

But now his MU career is over.

Less than 48 hours after a rape accusation against Dixon in August became public in the wake of that case being closed for insufficient evidence, another documented accusation of rape surfaced Thursday in a 2010 University of Missouri police incident report obtained by the Post-Dispatch.

That report also led to no charges against Dixon, as the alleged victim declined to press charges out of what she said was fear of retaliation and being ostracized by family. But a nurse who examined the woman said afterward that from the injuries sustained she “believes force was involved,” according to the report.

The earlier case could have been a pivotal factor in Dixon’s future at Mizzou. His indefinite suspension apparently hinged on an appeal of an apparent Student Conduct Committee ruling to be rendered by Chancellor Brady Deaton.

Speaking in broad terms not specific to the Dixon case, MU news bureau executive director Mary Jo Banken on Thursday said, “When a case is brought before the Student Conduct Committee, any previous accusations against the same student can be taken into account and may affect the final decision.”
Some believe Dixon’s case may have been bolstered by the closing on Nov. 16 of the accusation against him made in August, an accusation made by the same woman whose recent posts on Twitter suggested Dixon’s suspension was related to her allegations against him.

Boone County prosecutors determined that a police investigation lacked sufficient evidence to even interview Dixon.

It’s believed that the conduct committee had information about the previous accusation reported to university police on Jan. 11, 2010.

According to the report, a recently graduated MU student described a sexual assault by Dixon to University of Missouri police from an episode late the night of Jan. 9, 2010.

The alleged victim declined to press charges, she said in a supplemental follow-up interview conducted by Det. Sam Easley, for various reasons “including not wanting her family to know and not going through the pressure and harassment from outside sources.

“(She) stated she was concerned that since Dixon is a basketball player (for Mizzou) that no one would believe her about what happened and she may be persecuted for it.”

That fear included concern about reprisal from Dixon, who she said with descriptions consistent in both interviews forced intercourse upon her despite her protests and struggle.

A nurse who attended the initial interview indicated that “from the injuries sustained, she believes force was involved,” the report summarized.

Dixon also allegedly disregarded being told the accuser was not on birth control, something she said in hopes of deterring him. Afterward, she reported, Dixon said, “If you’re pregnant, you can’t be.”

“She told Dixon she would never get an abortion, and she stated Dixon told her that if he found out she was pregnant he would ‘kick her in the stomach and push her down the stairs,’” the report said. She “stated Dixon was laughing as he was saying this and did not think anything was a big deal.”

But she did, and that influenced some of her thinking as she tried to determine what to do afterward.

“‘If he’s going to threaten to do this to me if I get pregnant, what would he threaten to do if I pressed charges or pursued it?’” a source close to the woman said Wednesday, explaining what he believed her thinking to be.

It’s uncertain whether the MU athletic department knew about the incident report itself, the source said.
But the alleged victim, then an MU employee, told the source close to her that at least two Mizzou athletics officials knew about it soon after she shared the information with authorities.

That led, she believed, to it being discussed at a broader athletic department meeting.

Though she was unsure of who attended the meeting, soon thereafter she apparently was invited to meet with then-MU basketball coach Mike Anderson.

Anderson was sympathetic, she said in a past interview with the Post-Dispatch and the source verified Thursday, to the point where the coach cried as she told her story.

Each source said Anderson also told her he could take no action unless she moved forward with the accusation, presumably meaning into the legal process though possibly also meaning entering into a complaint to Mizzou — such as the one that engaged the Student Conduct Committee more recently.

Anderson in no way tried to pressure her not to take it forward, each source said.

It was later suggested she move on from her MU job, the source said Thursday, though specifying that she wasn’t forced out and that she seemed to take the suggestion as in her best interests.

On the final page of the report, written on Jan. 21, 2010, Easley writes that the alleged victim did not wish to prosecute or want Dixon to be contacted concerning the case.

He concluded, “At this time I request this case remain open.”

MU police department spokesman Brian Weimer said Thursday the case would remain open in the event the alleged victim changed her mind about pressing charges or new evidence became available.

The source close to the alleged victim said it was doubtful she would ever press charges. But the source was not certain of that and noted there is no statute of limitations on forcible rape in the state of Missouri.

An attorney representing Dixon did not immediately return a phone message on Thursday afternoon.

Dixon did not respond to a text message seeking comment, but the Columbia Missourian reported earlier that Dixon had texted the following to a friend who asked to remain anonymous:

“Yea I’m done here bro I’m not gonna be here anymore another girl my freshman year pulled this ... on me now it’s coming out and everyone is gonna think it’s real so I’m thru bro I appreciate you tho just let as many (people) as u can know.”

In a second text, the paper reported, Dixon wrote, “I have never harmed anyone.”
MU men’s basketball spokesman Dave Reiter declined comment on behalf of coach Haith. Anderson declined comment through a spokesman at Arkansas, where he is the current coach.
Dixon says he's done at Missouri; 2nd allegation surfaces

By TEREZ A. PAYLOR

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- On the same day a second documented allegation of rape surfaced regarding Missouri guard Michael Dixon Jr., he announced that he was leaving the Tigers' basketball team.

Dixon, who has been suspended by the team since October for what coach Frank Haith called "a violation of team rules," said in a statement released by the Tigers' athletic department Thursday night that he will look to play at another school.

"It's been a challenging few months and while I appreciate the support of many in the Mizzou community including my coaches and teammates," Dixon said, "it's in the best interest of me, my family and the University of Missouri to finish my career elsewhere."

According to a police report obtained Thursday by The Star, a woman who worked in the MU athletic department said she was sexually assaulted by Dixon on Jan. 9, 2010. The report, filed by the University of Missouri Police on Jan. 11, says the alleged assault took place at her apartment.

A source told The Star on Wednesday that the victim alerted former MU basketball coach Mike Anderson about the incident, who told her he would support her if she decided to press charges. She ultimately decided not to, the source said, because Dixon was a basketball player, and "she was afraid of what might happen." According to the police report, she told detective Sam Easley on Jan. 21 that she did not want to prosecute in this case, and she did not want Dixon to be contacted regarding the case.

An attorney for Dixon declined to comment on the police report, saying he had not seen it. Dixon's father also told The Star in a text message that he could not comment about the allegation.

MU athletic-department officials did not respond to a request asking for comment.

On Tuesday, The Star learned Dixon was accused by another woman of rape on Aug. 20 but not charged after a Columbia police investigation.
That case was closed Nov. 16 after Tracy Gonzalez of the Boone County Prosecuting Attorney's Office ruled there was insufficient evidence to file charges.

While Dixon isn't facing criminal charges in either case, it's believed he faced disciplinary action from the University of Missouri.

A student who is expelled, dismissed or suspended from the university by the Student Conduct Committee - which is made up of faculty members, not students, and decides cases in accordance with MU's standards of conduct in student disciplinary matters - can appeal to the chancellor, who has the authority to overturn the decision. While the appeal is being considered, the chancellor may then allow the student to continue in school.

Dixon had been allowed to practice and travel with the team during his suspension, and MU chancellor Brady Deaton was expected to return from an overseas trip this week.

Mary Jo Banken, the executive director of the MU News Bureau, declined comment when asked whether the most recent allegation was related to Dixon's suspension, citing The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Dixon arrived at Missouri in 2009 as a three-star rated guard out of Lee's Summit West High School, with scholarship offers from Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas State, Louisville and others. After averaging 7.5 points in 34 games as a freshman, he was suspended for two games as a sophomore but averaged 10.3 points and 3.5 assists while starting 17 games.

He built on that with an even better junior season, when he averaged 13.5 points and 3.3 assists in 35 games for a team that went 30-5 and won the Big 12 tournament title. For his efforts, Dixon was chosen Big 12 sixth man of the year and was also picked to the league's all-defensive team by the coaches.

Dixon was expected to play an even bigger role this season, as Haith said during the summer that he would finally put Dixon in the starting lineup. He was also selected on the preseason All-Southeastern Conference second team and a preseason second-team All-American by The Sporting News.

But shortly after participating in Mizzou Madness in October - and right before MU's first exhibition game - Haith announced that Dixon had been suspended indefinitely.
Missouri announces Dixon will transfer

Second accusation of sexual assault surfaces against senior guard.

By Steve Walentik
Updated November 30, 2012 at 7:36 a.m.

Senior guard Mike Dixon has played his final game as a member of the Missouri basketball program.

The school announced Dixon’s plans to transfer on Thursday night, hours after a second sexual assault accusation made against him became public in a St. Louis Post-Dispatch report, though it is unclear if the decision for Dixon and the school to part ways had been made before that story was published.

“It’s been a challenging few months and while I appreciate the support of many in the Mizzou community, including my coaches and teammates, it’s in the best interest of me, my family and the University of Missouri for me to finish my career elsewhere,” Dixon said in a statement announcing the move.

He had been serving an indefinite suspension for what Coach Frank Haith has only described as a violation of team rules, though sources told the Tribune that the MU Student Conduct Committee — made up of faculty members and students — met on a matter involving Dixon earlier this month.

The sources said the committee had made a recommendation and that Dixon was exercising his right, per university policy, to appeal it to Chancellor Brady Deaton, who has been in Thailand but is expected back in his office on Friday.

Another source confirmed that the matter involved a sexual assault accusation from Aug. 20 that became public earlier this week.

The Tribune on Thursday night also obtained a copy of the 2010 University of Missouri Police Department incident report upon which the Post-Dispatch report was based, and it detailed an accusation made by a now former MU student and employee about an assault said to have occurred on Jan. 9, 2010. It was first reported to MU police officers on Jan. 11, 2010.
As with the first accusation, no charges against Dixon were ever filed, though a supplement to the incident report states that the accuser elected not to pursue criminal charges because she didn’t want her family to know and was wary of pressure and harassment from outside sources. She told police she was concerned that no one would believe her because Dixon is a basketball player, the report said.

The incident report also stated that a nurse who examined the woman said afterward that from the injuries sustained she “believes force was involved.”

A source close to the accuser told the Tribune on Thursday night that at least two athletic department officials were made aware of the 2010 incident soon after the woman reported it to law enforcement, and that the woman — then an MU employee — met with then-Coach Mike Anderson about the matter.

The source said that Anderson was supportive of the woman but also made it clear that his hands were tied unless she took legal action, which she did not.

It is unknown if athletic department officials were aware of the existence of the incident report, but it’s believed the Student Conduct Committee was made aware of the 2010 accusation when it heard Dixon’s case and that information could have influenced the committee’s recommendation.

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act prohibits the university from releasing records of those proceedings.

The committee — nor the chancellor hearing an appeal — would be not bound by the same standard of proof as would exist in a criminal case, where guilt must be determined beyond a reasonable doubt to rule against a defendant.

Noel English, the director of MU’s Equity Center, said instead the standard of proof was more in line with a civil courts case, where a preponderance of the evidence must show a defendant to be guilty to make him liable for damages — or in the case of the conduct committee, punishment up to and including expulsion.

English, who in her position oversees issues related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, was not able to comment directly on a case involving a specific student but said sexual assault cases fall under the umbrella of that law because they simultaneously may constitute sexual harassment and criminal activity.

“It prohibits any kind of sex discrimination that interferes with the right to education or curricular activities or the right to participate in anything we do here,” said English, adding that assault could be viewed as a form of harassment. “When you’re talking sexual assault, clearly that rises to the level of something that interferes with your educational opportunity, so it’s covered by Title IX.”
English said there have been cases at other schools where one student alleged being raped by another but that schools were slow to take action against the accused because they didn’t think it fair to expel somebody unless they were sure the individual was guilty.

Last year the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights clarified the Title IX implications of sexual assault cases in a guidance letter to universities.

It reads in part that “conduct may constitute unlawful sexual harassment under Title IX even if the police do not have sufficient evidence of a criminal violation. In addition, a criminal investigation into allegations of sexual violence does not relieve the school of its duty under Title IX to resolve complaints promptly and equitably.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri guard Michael Dixon Jr. announces transfer from school

By Brendan Meyer, Shaina Cavazos
November 29, 2012 | 7:47 p.m. CST

In a Jan. 3, 2011, photograph, Michael Dixon Jr. plays in a Missouri basketball game against the Oklahoma Sooners at Mizzou Arena. / Matthew Busch

COLUMBIA — Missouri basketball guard Michael Dixon Jr. announced his transfer from the school Thursday evening, according to an email from Dave Reiter, director of strategic communications for the basketball team.

"It's been a challenging few months and while I appreciate the support of many in the Mizzou community, including my coaches and teammates, it's in the best interest of me, my family and the University of Missouri for me to finish my career elsewhere," Dixon said, according to the email.

Earlier, Dixon revealed in a text message sent to a friend Thursday afternoon that he is no longer with the basketball team.

This message was sent to Dixon's friend: "Yea I'm done here bro I'm not gonna be here anymore another girl my freshman year pulled this ... on me now it's coming out and everyone is gonna think it's real so I'm thru bro I appreciate you tho just let as many (people) as u can know"

He then wrote in a subsequent message: "I have never harmed anyone"
The texts were forwarded to a Missourian reporter by the recipient, who asked to remain anonymous.

According to a 2010 MU Police Department report the Missourian received Thursday evening, a woman accused Dixon of forcible rape on Jan. 11, 2010.

The news came just two days after a report that another woman tweeted she was also sexually assaulted by Dixon on Aug. 20 of this year.

Dixon has been suspended since Oct. 26 after Missouri coach Frank Haith announced that he had violated team policy. At the time, Haith said it was not a legal matter that was keeping Dixon on the bench.

On Saturday, allegations of an incident surfaced on Twitter when a woman tweeted that she was sexually assaulted by Dixon in August of this year. Columbia police released a report Tuesday detailing the allegations and subsequent investigation.

Boone County Assistant Prosecutor Tracy Gonzalez told the Missourian on Tuesday that after a Columbia police investigation, there was not enough evidence to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt in court.

In the 2010 report, the woman said she met Dixon on Jan. 9 at an apartment belonging to other basketball players. Later that night, the woman said Dixon and another player came to her apartment to ask for a ride home. Shortly after she dropped them off, Dixon called and said he left his keys at the other basketball players' apartment, so she picked him up and took him there to get them.

When no one answered the door, Dixon and the woman went back to her apartment to wait. At the woman's apartment, the report said Dixon was making "verbal advances" toward her, even when she said she did not want to have sex with him. When the woman went to her bedroom, Dixon followed her, the report said.

The woman reported that once there, Dixon "forcefully pulled her pants off and placed her on the bed." After, the report said, "Dixon then forcefully pinned his knee into her hip on the bed so she could not get away." The woman said she told him "no" several times, but Dixon continued to hold her down.

The report said that to make him stop, the woman told Dixon that she was not taking birth control and told him he was hurting her, but she could not get away, and he continued.
Eventually, the report said, she stopped fighting because she was in pain and closed her eyes until it was over.

A nurse who examined the woman afterward said in the report that she thought that given the injuries the woman sustained, force was involved.

The woman told Detective Sam Easley she was not going to press charges against Dixon because she did not want her family to know or deal with pressure or harassment from other people. She said in the report that she was worried that because Dixon was a basketball player, no one would believe her and she might be “persecuted” because of it.

In a page of the report dated Jan. 21, 2010, Easley said the woman still refused to press charges.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that the woman met with then-Missouri basketball coach Mike Anderson, and that he was sympathetic and even cried during their meeting. But Anderson also told the woman he could do nothing until she moved forward with the accusation, according to the Post-Dispatch.

According to a source who worked in the basketball office in 2010, Anderson said there was no substantial evidence to suspend Dixon indefinitely, but that Anderson knew that if he did not take any action, it would cause a backlash.

"Anderson was like, 'We're going to believe our players,'" said the source, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals. "It was important that they suspend Dixon those first few games because it wasn't in the real season, and they needed him to play during the actual games."

"They weren't adamant about finding the truth out," the source said. "It was good that she dropped it and they weren't going to push it any further."

On Wednesday, MU News Bureau executive director Mary Jo Banken told the Missourian that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act prohibits MU from disclosing whether Dixon's conduct was being reviewed by the university's Student Conduct Board.

The committee, which is composed of MU faculty members and students, decides cases using MU's Standard of Conduct.
Dixon, a senior, grew up in Kansas City and attended Lee’s Summit West High School, where he was named Mr. Show Me Basketball in 2009 as the state’s best player. He finished his high school career with 1,849 points, 532 assists and 245 career steals. He averaged 24.2 points and 5.5 assists as a senior, leading the Titans to 21 straight wins during the season.

Dixon was highly recruited out of high school, receiving offers from Arizona, Purdue, Oklahoma, Marquette, Louisville and California before committing to Missouri. He had previously played on AAU teams with Marcus Denmon and Steve Moore, both of whom were already on the Missouri roster when he made his decision.

He contributed immediately as a freshman at Missouri in 2009, starting eight games, averaging 16.6 minutes per game and scoring 7.5 points per game. As a junior in 2012, he averaged 13.5 points and 3.3 assists per game, coming off the bench in all 35 games he played.

Dixon, who will turn 22 Saturday, is a sports management major at MU and hopes to pursue coaching after his playing career is over.

The 6-foot-1 point guard scored a career-high 30 points in a win over William and Mary on Dec. 18, 2011. He also contributed 21 points apiece in wins over Iowa State and Texas last season, and recorded 22 points and five assists in Missouri’s loss to Norfolk State in the second round of the 2012 NCAA Tournament.

After the 2012 season, the conference’s coaches named Dixon the Big 12 Sixth Man of the Year. He was also named to the conference’s All-Defensive team.

Zach Murdock, Mike Vorel, Jacob Kirn and Eric Short contributed to this report.

Supervising editor is Greg Bowers.
Michael Dixon to leave Missouri basketball team

Senior guard Michael Dixon announced he would leave the Missouri basketball program Thursday after a police report implicated him in a rape investigation.

Dixon wrote in text messages obtained by the Columbia Missourian, “Yea I’m done here bro I’m not gonna be here anymore another girl my freshman year pulled this ... on me now it’s coming out and everyone is gonna think it’s real so I’m thru bro I appreciate you tho just let as many (people) as u can know.”

He added, “I have never harmed anyone,” in a later message.

The announcement comes after Dixon was linked to two sexual assault investigations, one occurring in January 2010, which surfaced Thursday, and another occurring in August of this year, which surfaced Tuesday.

No charges have been filed against Dixon in either case. Boone County prosecutors deemed the August 2012 case lacked sufficient evidence to charge Dixon and closed the case Nov. 16.

Prosecutors left the January 2010 case open in case the alleged victim, a recent MU graduate and former athletics department employee, wishes to press charges in the future. There is no statute of limitation for rape in Missouri.

According to the offense report for the 2010 incident, the alleged victim said she was afraid of physical retribution from Dixon if charges were filed and did not want her family to know.

Dixon also announced that he would seek to finish his basketball career at another university.

“It’s been a challenging few months and while I appreciate the support of many in the Mizzou community, including my coaches and teammates, it’s in the best interest of me, my family and the University of Missouri for me to finish my career elsewhere,” Dixon said in a statement released by the athletic department. Coach Frank Haith suspended Dixon indefinitely Oct. 26 for what Haith called a “violation of team rules.”

Dixon also announced that he would seek to finish his basketball career at another university.

Dixon, a Southeastern Conference preseason second-team honoree, averaged 13.5 points per game as a junior for Tigers and was named AP Sixth Man of the Year in 2012.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

GEORGE KENNEDY: Social media is not a substitute for real journalism

By George Kennedy
November 29, 2012 | 4:59 p.m. CST

*This column was updated late Thursday evening after Michael Dixon Jr. announced he was transferring from MU.

If you're a Missouri basketball fan, as I am, you've no doubt engaged along with the rest of us in speculating about just what "team rules" violation has kept Michael Dixon, one of last year's star players, off the court this season.

The Missourian's lead paragraph Wednesday summed up the situation succinctly: "Missouri senior guard Michael Dixon Jr. was accused of sexual assault Aug. 20, according to a report by the Kansas City Star."

The story went on to report that the Boone County prosecutor has decided not to file criminal charges because of insufficient evidence. The story also noted - and an excellent follow-up Thursday explained - that disciplinary action by the university is still possible. *Then Thursday, after a 2010 allegation was revealed, Dixon announced that he was transferring from the university.

It's a sad story, all too familiar to followers of big-time sports. It's also a story that provides a glimpse of the role the new social media play in journalism and in public discourse more broadly. For both consumers and practitioners of journalism – that's you and me – this case raises important questions to which there are no simple answers.

I'll begin with a confession. I'm no expert and not even a participant in the new communication channels. I've never tweeted on Twitter; I don't have a Facebook page; I decline all invitations to join LinkedIn. I seldom carry my cellphone, and it doesn't have the capacity for texting. But I can't ignore the role these tools play in our society's conversation with itself. Like it or not, you can't either.
In talking with Missourian editors over the past couple of days, I've learned a lot about just how the Dixon situation evolved from a topic of ill-informed gossip to heated exchanges on Twitter to fact-checked stories in actual newspapers.

Sports Editor Greg Bowers told me that his staff, like many fans who frequent the "insider" websites, had assumed that Dixon's problem was academic. That began to change Thanksgiving Day when Managing Editor Jeanne Abbott, who had the holiday duty, got a phone call from a woman who said she had been assaulted by Dixon. She left her phone number but not her name.

Attempts to reach her failed. Then Saturday, former Tiger Kim English, a Twitter regular, posted three tweets in which he criticized the university process, praised Dixon and hoped for his reinstatement by the "AMAZING chancellor." The woman, using the handle @armybeautyy, responded that she was the victim. She later deactivated her Twitter account.

(Letters have signatures, newspaper stories have bylines and tweets have account names, identifiers that may or may not be the true identities of the writers.)

Because of that uncertainty, Greg told me he feels "uneasy using tweets as sources." And so he, and all journalists, should. As a reader, I was uneasy with the Missourian's quote of an accusatory tweet in the Wednesday story. How could readers be sure the writer was who she claimed to be? City Editor Katherine Reed assured me that Missourian reporters were able to use the Twitter account, Facebook and phone number to identify the woman, an MU sophomore, before publishing her accusation.

Of course, the Missourian and nearly all news organizations have a policy of not revealing the names of victims of sexual assault. So Katherine said that on Wednesday morning, when editors got the Columbia police report and prepared to post it on the paper's website, they were horrified to discover that the police had inadvertently left the woman's name in one or two places. Those were quickly redacted, along with Dixon's cellphone number, which had also been left in.

That police report isn't pleasant reading. It suggests the problems a prosecutor might have and the possible grounds for further action by the university.

As one of its goals, the Missourian aims to reflect the community's conversation as well as the staff's work. In this case, the paper has published and posted only a selected fraction of the extensive chatter that continues on Twitter. Much of that chatter is pretty ugly, with most of the ugliness directed at the young woman.
The public conversation about this tragedy has been far from civil. Journalists can't and shouldn't ignore that conversation, but we don't have to amplify it.

Twitter can be, as it was in this case, a source for journalists. It can't be a substitute for real journalism.

George Kennedy is a former managing editor at the Missourian and professor emeritus at the Missouri School of Journalism. Questions? Contact Opinion editor Elizabeth Conner.
MU hosts inaugural forum for One Health/One Medicine series

By Catherine Rolwes, Taylor Weatherby
November 29, 2012 | 1:27 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — As a star diver for the MU women's swimming and diving team, Loren Figueroa can truly attest to the phrase "Life is motion, motion is life."

The phrase was the theme for the first forum of the One Health/One Medicine breakfast series presented Wednesday morning by Mizzou Advantage, a program with a mission to increase MU's visibility, stature and impact in higher education. It consists of four areas: One Health/One Medicine, Food for the Future, Sustainable Energy and Media of the Future.

Figueroa, a junior, spoke at the event about hyperextending her knee during practice at the NCAA Championships during her freshman year. She underwent surgery at the Missouri Orthopaedic Institute to replace cartilage and missed most of her sophomore season.

Figueroa announced she is back to full health, winning all of her recent competitions and looking ahead to the 2016 Olympics because her injury made her miss the London trials.

"I seriously don't know what I would do if I couldn't dive," she said.

More than 100 people were part of Wednesday's event. The purpose of the series is to inform the community about research within the MU Health Care System. A new forum will take place every semester, and the series will continue as long as each breakfast is a success, said Carolyn Henry, faculty facilitator for One Health/One Medicine.

"The next one will be about oncology and cancer care," she said. "We are timing it in the spring to line up with the opening of the new patient tower where the Ellis Fischel center will be housed."

Mizzou Advantage's One Health/One Medicine initiative works to form a collaboration between animal and human health research and care at the university — a topic that was also addressed at Wednesday's breakfast.
James Cook, director of the MU Comparative Orthopaedic Laboratory and a professor of orthopaedic surgery, spoke about his experience with One Health/One Medicine. Instead of replacing cartilage with metal or plastic, he stressed the benefit of using actual cartilage. He said because of the concept of converging animal and human research, advancements like this are possible.

Keeping with the theme of the morning, Cook said, "'Life is motion, motion is life' is true whether you're a two-legger or a four-legger."

*Supervising editor is Simina Mistreanu.*
Work of Missouri College Advising Corps is paying off

By Janese Silvey

Thursday, November 29, 2012

A University of Missouri program that stations recent graduates in high schools where college attendance isn't the norm has significantly boosted college-going rates in those schools.

The Missouri College Advising Corps was established five years ago. In the first three years, the number of students in participating high schools who went to college increased by 10.35 percent compared to the statewide average of 0.3 percent for all schools in the same time period.

"We know it is making a difference," said Beth Tankersley-Bankhead, program director.

More recent data are expected to be available in the coming months. Tankersley-Bankhead now plans to start tracking retention and success rates by teaming up with the 15 Missouri universities and colleges that participating students are most likely to attend. The idea is to make sure those same students not only attend college but also finish, Tankersley-Bankhead said during a presentation about the program yesterday.

The program has more than tripled in scope since it began in 2008, when advisers were stationed at seven schools. This year, MU has 25 advisers working at 26 high schools in Kansas City, St. Louis and rural parts of the state.

The goal is to get students who otherwise wouldn't consider what they would do after high school to consider college, trade school or other post-graduate alternatives. The advising corps is based at MU but is not an MU recruiting tool, Tankersley-Bankhead said, stressing that it is important for students to pick the "best fit" for them.

That doesn't mean the university isn't benefiting, though. In 2009, the first fall semester after advisers were stationed in the seven high schools the previous school year, eight students from those schools attended MU. This year, 160 students from 24 participating high schools last year came to MU.

Freshman Natosha Douglas said she likely wouldn't be here had it not been for the Missouri College Advising Corps recruiter stationed at her school, McCluer South-Berkeley in St. Louis.
"I wasn't even thinking about going to college. Without her, I wouldn't even be here — for real," she said, crediting her adviser, Cherelle Washington.

Natasha Mills from Kansas City said she wanted to go to college but being the first in her family to do so, she had no idea how to get started on the application and scholarship process. She said her adviser, Alechia Abioye, not only helped her with the forms but also kept her motivated.

Advisers spend the year working full time at the school. In addition to college counseling, they take student groups on at least four campus tours and work with parents, as well, to help them navigate financial information.

The program costs about $1.2 million a year with funding coming from about 20 external partners and some support from MU.
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Nice weather we're having, but the rivers keep falling

MU MENTION P. 2

7 hours ago • By Tim O'Neil toneil@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8132

ST. LOUIS • The weekend weather forecast is for pleasant Indian Summer. Too bad about the piddling chance for rain.

Highs are expected near 70 this weekend. There’s a slight chance for rain Saturday night, a better chance Monday or Tuesday.

But the Midwest remains in the long-term dry pattern that brought the scorching dry summer and now threatens barge traffic along the Mississippi River. There’s a decent chance the river at St. Louis will fall beneath its record low, set 72 years ago.

St. Louis has received only 1.4 inches of rain this month, 2.4 inches below normal. The last significant rain here fell Nov. 11. Through this year, St. Louis is almost 8 inches below normal — and would be even drier without Hurricane Isaac, which dumped heavy rains across the area Aug. 31 and Sept. 1.

The result is particularly telling on the river, which was at -1 foot and falling Thursday on the downtown gauge. The numbers are an arbitrary creation from 1863, but the “zero” reading means there is only about 14 feet of water running beneath the Eads Bridge.

The river is expected to continue falling another 4 feet over the next two weeks. That would get within a foot of the low-water record of -6.1 at St. Louis, set on Jan. 16, 1940.

“I’ll be surprised if we don’t break that this winter,” said Mark Fuchs, hydrologist at the National Weather Service office in Weldon Spring. “We’ve had record drought this summer and a little relief from Isaac. But, mainly, we’ve had very little rain.”

The weather service sees no major likelihood of a significant change in the rain pattern, which has prevailed across the Midwest since summer 2011. Occasional rain this fall relieved the exceptional drought conditions of the summer, but most of Missouri and Illinois remains in drought or abnormally dry.
The Mississippi will continue falling mainly because the Army Corps of Engineers on Nov. 23 began reducing the flow from the upper Missouri River reservoirs. That’s an annual event, but the Mississippi already is about 10 feet below normal for late November, according to the corps.

Barge companies and river valley congressional leaders have been urging the federal government to reopen the spillways to provide a sufficient flow on the Mississippi below St. Louis. That request runs into long-standing corps policy to hold water in the reservoirs during winter.

Ann McCulloch, spokeswoman for the American Waterways Operators, said river companies are concerned there won’t be enough water to move barges. If the Mississippi were to reach its low-water record at St. Louis, the flow would be only about eight 8 deep — not enough for normal barge operations, which usually require at least 9 feet.

“Things could come to a halt,” McCulloch said Thursday. “This is a historic situation. We’d have $7 billion in commerce hung up.”

Barges on the river carry grain, chemicals, petroleum and many other commodities.

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., said in a statement: “The President needs to take a look at what’s happening in the Midwest and act. The clock is ticking while jobs and businesses in the region are endangered. ...”

But Jody Farhart, chief of the Army Corps of Engineers’ Upper Missouri Basin water office in Omaha, Neb., said the corps is reducing the Missouri flow according to specific guidelines expressed by Congress. Farhart said the instructions include providing flow for river navigation during the warm seasons and preserving water in times of drought.

“We are saving water to serve those purposes in future years. We have to think in the long term,” she said. “The corps doesn’t have authority to make optional decisions to benefit the Mississippi.”

Meanwhile, most people on dry ground will like the weekend forecast. The weather service says highs will be near 70 Saturday through Monday. Record highs for this weekend are in the low 70s.

Meteorologist Ben Miller said there was a slight chance for light rain Saturday and a chance for a half-inch Monday night, when another cool front moves in. But he said high pressure east of the Mississippi River continues to block the flow of moisture up from the Gulf of Mexico.

“Drought tends to feed upon itself,” he said.

Anthony Lupo, a professor of meteorology at the University of Missouri-Columbia, said the pattern is “definitely not good news as we move toward next summer. When you’re dry, this is the time of year when you want to catch up.”
Bob Garino, acting director of the federal crop reporting service in Columbia, Mo., said many farmers continue to report shrinking ponds and dry subsoil. Garino said the summer drought reduced corn yields in Missouri by half of what is typical and soybeans by about 25 percent.

“You always want moisture in the ground when you get to planting season,” he said.
Mizzou to remain on KTRS

Missouri quarterback James Franklin rush for 14 yards and later fumbles and the ball is recoverd by James Franklin at the Georgia 14 for a first down in second quarter action during a game between Missouri and Georgia Saturday, September 8, 2012 at Faurot Field in Columbia, Mo. This is the University of Missouri Tigers' debut game in the SEC. Photo by Laurie Skrivan, lskrivan@post-dispatch.com

17 hours ago • By Dan Caesar dcaesar@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8175

Before coming to KTRS (550 AM) last year, University of Missouri football and basketball radio broadcasts were on KMOX (1120 AM) — well, some of the time. Because KMOX also carried Cardinals and Blues games, Mizzou contests sometimes were shuffled to another station including one that couldn’t be picked up in much of the area.
That confusing arrangement stopped with the move to KTRS that began with the 2011 football season, and will continue for at least three more school years under an extension announced this week. Because KTRS has no other play-by-play properties, it is able to concentrate on the Tigers by not only clearing time for all the broadcasts but also in providing a significant amount of ancillary programming.

KTRS President Mark Dorsey is ecstatic.

"I believe it speaks volumes that there are three all-sports stations in the market and they chose KTRS," Dorsey said. "Mizzou loves that we have a signal that covers 63,000 square miles and is the biggest daytime AM signal in the Midwest, Mizzou loves the fact that we brand KTRS as the "Home of the Tigers" around the clock and "Mizzou knows their football and basketball games never get pre-empted."

WXOS (101.1 FM) also was interested, but general manager John Kijowski said there was some concern from Learfield Sports, which produces the MU broadcasts, about potential conflicts with 101.1’s Rams schedule.

Had 101 landed MU, it probably would have dropped St. Louis U. basketball because of too much overlap. Kijowski said there now is a good possibility that the deal with SLU, which expires after this season, will be renewed.

**In the booths**

Broadcast assignments for major football games of local interest:

Pacific 12 championship, UCLA at Stanford, 7 tonight, KTVI (2) • Gus Johnson (play-by-play), Charles Davis (analysis), Julie Alexandria (reporter), Petros Papadakis (reporter).

Southeastern Conference championship, Alabama vs. Georgia, 3 p.m. Saturday, KMOV (4) • Verne Lundquist (play-by-play), Gary Danielson (analysis), Tracy Wolfson (reporter).

Big Ten championship, Nebraska vs. Wisconsin, 7:15 p.m. Saturday, KTVI (2) • Gus Johnson (play-by-play), Charles Davis (analysis), Julie Alexandria (reporter), Petros Papadakis (reporter).

Rams vs. 49ers, noon Sunday, KTVI (2) • Kenny Albert (play-by-play), Daryl Johnston (analysis), Tony Siragusa (analysis/reporter).

DAN CAESAR
MU sports

Moments of pain

By Henry J. Waters III

Thursday, November 29, 2012

Seems like trouble on the sports front comes in bunches.

At the same time the world wonders why University of Missouri basketball guard Michael Dixon is kept off the court by Coach Frank Haith, football Coach Gary Pinkel faces calls for his resignation, or at least a wholesale change in his coaching staff and the way he runs the team.

This is a scratchy moment at MU sports, but it's no time to pull out the long knives.

After weeks of wondering, information is leaking out about Dixon's predicament. He was accused of sexual assault. The charges were examined and dropped by the Boone County prosecutor's office, but an inquiry continues by student conduct officials on campus, a process that finally could end with a decision by Chancellor Brady Deaton.

Meanwhile, Coach Haith keeps Dixon on the team but stuck on the bench. This is the right decision. Even duly appointed law enforcement officials have difficulty assessing guilt or innocence after charges of rape, a "she said/he said" proposition. When the university student conduct process is completed, Haith can follow suit.

Over on the gridiron, Pinkel is in an awkward position. He and his team were under particularly intense scrutiny in their first year as members of the Southeastern Conference. They did not do well, particularly in comparison with Texas A&M, the other Big 12 refugee, which swooped through its SEC debut with a strong winning season and the leading Heisman Trophy candidate.

In contrast, Pinkel's squad was riddled with injuries, most damaging the disablement of quarterback James Franklin. Some will criticize the team's lack of depth, and others have griped for years about the predictable nature of the offense. However, a longer view supports the position of Athletic Director Mike Alden, who said recently that Pinkel remains his man. Since Pinkel has been on the job, MU football has done well. This one bad year is not ground for a change.
It is reason to cast a wary eye on Pinkel's next moves. He is notoriously loyal to his coaching staff and indicates no intention to change. How much of the team's trouble this year came from losses among players and how much, if any, from poor coaching?

We mere mortals on the sidelines are entitled to our opinions — brilliant all — but at the end of the day, if the team wins football games the coaches are heroes and if it loses, the coaches are dogs. We wizardly observers should operate under such pressure. Pinkel and his crew have enough of a winning tradition to weather a bad season, but they had better show a comeback next year. They are getting paid well for their efforts.

Meanwhile, let us sheathe those long knives. Granted, college football is out of proportion, but what's the point of going around in such a snit? It's bad for our mental health and unfair to the coaches and players who are doing their best and suffering most from failure.

HJW III

Rugby is a beastly game played by gentlemen; soccer is a gentleman's game played by beasts; football is a beastly game played by beasts.

— HENRY BLAHA
MU researchers develop alternative meat product, bring jobs to Columbia

After more than a decade of research, intellectual property created at the University of Missouri has been predicted to be the first competitor of its kind in a market that's growing over 100 percent in more than a dozen countries according to NationMaster — the meat industry. The twist? The product isn't meat.

MU researchers Fu-hung Hsieh, a biological engineering and food science professor, and Harold Huff, senior research specialist have created and patented a plant protein-based product that is expected to be a multibillion-dollar competitor in the meat industry, something no meat alternative has previously done.

The creators of the chicken strips, a dry mix of soy, pea powder, carrot fiber and gluten-free flour, have fooled even chicken lovers to fall for the new brand, Beyond Meat.

“You walk into the plant and it smells like you're walking into a chicken factory,” Huff said. “I walk into it and I get hungry. It smells good and it looks good.”

The product has garnered extensive media coverage, with headlines like “Beyond Meat: The Future of Meat Substitutes?”, “Meat for the Meatless: Fake Chicken So Real It ‘Gets Freaky’”, and “A Chicken Without Guilt” will appear.

As a part of the licensing agreement written by MU for the university's intellectual property, Beyond Meat, now a part of Savage River Inc., is required to make an investment in Missouri.

The investment, a 16,000-square-foot factory in Columbia on Commerce Street, is expected to hire at least 60 employees, in addition to the 20 that have been running the plant since October.

“It started as another way for Missouri farmers to market soybeans,” Huff said. “It's the perfect example of a university-derived product process for blending into industry to help the state of Missouri.”

The product already has contracts to be sold in stores from Connecticut to San Diego by 2013.

Ethan Brown, founder of Beyond Meat, has expressed interest in continuing to work with MU’s research to create a beef crumble alternative.

"It's something we're going to continue to harness," Brown said to the Columbia Daily Tribune about the university and its researchers.
Beyond Meat has been endorsed by the venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, which has been involved in wildly successful companies such as Twitter and Spotify. The firm also invests in many green tech solutions.

Hsieh pointed out the product's sustainability as one of its advantages.

"An alternative meat source is more resource efficient in terms of land, water, energy and protein (i.e. consumes plant protein directly instead of converting plant protein to animal protein before consumption). It could also alleviate livestock's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions," Hsieh said in an email.

Huff pointed out additional benefits the product carries.

"People give you different answers, but ... you're going to research that at a point you can't feed the world from animal protein," he said. "This is one way to reduce the impact of animals on the environment, which some people take very seriously."

Huff says he didn't fully realize what impact the research could have.

"You work on a project and you kind of have a blinder on and you don't look at the greater implications," he said.
MU penalized for minor violations

By Ross Dellenger

Thursday, November 29, 2012

The Missouri football and men’s basketball teams had recruiting periods slightly reduced in the last year for minor self-reported NCAA violations, according to public records obtained by the Tribune.

Missouri football coaches had four fewer days to evaluate prospects last spring — from 168 to 164. The NCAA penalized the program after an unnamed football coach had improper in-person, off-campus contact with a recruit in the spring of 2011.

The university self-imposed penalties for basketball, cutting the 2012-13 recruiting period from 130 to 126 days for two violations. A coach observed a recruit in a 2012 summer league game that was not certified by the NCAA, and the university allowed advanced skill campers in July 2011 to sleep and eat at different venues than other campers. As previously reported in the Tribune, that resulted in the school eliminating an advanced skill camp last summer.

Missouri reported other minor violations in several sports, with the most severe action coming in softball. Select softball coaches were not allowed to recruit off-campus for a month this fall, an SEC punishment stemming from coaches sending impermissible text messages to a four-year transfer in June.

The Big 12 and NCAA have yet to rule on another self-reported violation in softball. A Missouri coach spoke to a player from another school without that school’s permission.

NCAA and SEC action is also pending for a violation in football. A coach responded to a text message from a recruit who had already signed a National Letter of Intent with another school. That took place on Feb. 12. It was reported in October.