Prosperity won’t come if we cut education, research

December 15, 2012 12:00 am • by Brady J. Deaton and Bernadette Gray-Little

Whatever you call them — fiscal cliff, austerity bomb, Debtpocalypse — the impending automatic federal spending cuts are likely to endanger the nation’s short-term economic recovery. But they also pose a real threat to the long-term prosperity of the United States.

Why? For starters, federal financial aid, without which many students couldn’t attend college, stands to be cut. At our universities, tens of thousands of students receive some sort of federal financial aid. Without it, many of these students will take longer to graduate, will have to take out more loans, and will simply drop out.

For these students, their future prosperity will be dimmed, and with it, the hopes of a nation that is facing serious workforce shortages in a range of fields. When the recovery does kick in, businesses simply won’t be able to find the workers they need to grow.

Also set to be cut: research that not only creates jobs directly and through the commercialization of discoveries, but that also saves lives.

At the University of Kansas, we just earned National Cancer Institute designation, which will provide cancer patients throughout the region with access to new treatments and clinical trials. This is on top of our federally supported research into Alzheimer’s, autism, and a range of other conditions, not to mention scholarship in a wide range of fields outside of health and wellness.

The University of Missouri is home to the nation’s most powerful university nuclear research reactor, the focal point for many federally sponsored projects, from work on nuclear medicine and pharmaceuticals to structural engineering. And just this month, the MU Sinclair School of Nursing announced a $14.8 million federal grant that will improve the lives of seniors by investigating ways to reduce re-hospitalizations of nursing home residents.

The automatic spending cuts would halt research in a range of areas, not only having immediate consequences for the researchers employed in these efforts, but harming the nation’s long-term growth and prosperity.

We agree with our fellow university leaders from around the country that all options — discretionary spending cuts and reforms to entitlements and taxes — need to be on the table.
There is no other way to not inhibit the economy’s short-term recovery while still addressing our long-term fiscal issues.

The best way to solve our long-term debt challenge is by creating an economy that has both the educated workers and new discoveries that lead to sustained growth. Universities can help, but not if our students and our researchers are hit with federal spending cuts that are preventable.

We’re confident our representatives in Washington can find a responsible, balanced solution to this challenge. If Jayhawks and Tigers can come together for the good of the nation, surely Democrats and Republicans can, too.

Brady J. Deaton is the chancellor of the University of Missouri. Bernadette Gray-Little is the chancellor of the University of Kansas.
Editorial: MU's heavy out-of-state recruitment letting policymakers off the hook

Illinois students now make up more than 20 percent of Mizzou’s freshman class, up from just 6 percent in 2000. Read more

Should it be a point of pride that more than 20 percent of the University of Missouri at Columbia’s freshman class is from Illinois, and that about 35 percent of the class overall is from out of state?

A decade ago the university had 318 freshmen from Illinois; this year’s total is 1,370.

This was the first year that MU received more out-of-state student applications than in-state ones.

On one hand, administrators at the University of Missouri should be commended for their creativity. But this is a bad trend for higher education.
There’s only one reason Missouri wants these students — and it has little to do with education. It’s all about the greenbacks.

Illinois students pay out-of-state tuition rates, which are roughly about twice as much as those paid by state residents. This year’s tuition at Mizzou for a state resident enrolled for 14 credit hours is $9,272. That same student from Illinois, or anywhere out of state, pays $22,440.

For a state that spends as little on higher education as Missouri, those dollars are important. Tuition accounts for 60 percent of Mizzou’s operating funds. Twenty years ago it was only 25 percent.

State funding has been declining as a percentage of overall funds for colleges and universities in Missouri for years, and long before the nation’s current economic difficulties.

That has made college less affordable for the middle class. It’s caused state universities to look outside their borders to meet expenses.

“It helps us balance our budget. If we had not brought in more out-of-state students, maybe we would be laying off people,” Ann Korschgen, a vice president at MU, told the Kansas City Star. “It’s extra millions of dollars. Huge.”

Ms. Korschgen said the high out-of-state enrollment does not mean qualified Missouri students are not welcomed. She said there is neither a waiting list nor a cap on admissions.

Another reason Missouri gives for recruiting so heavily in Illinois is that the state’s graduating classes are shrinking and the pool in the more heavily populated Illinois is not.

Missouri had 10,634 applications this year from out-of-state students, compared with slightly more than 8,000 last year.

A Chicago Tribune analysis of U.S. Department of Education data found that nearly a quarter of Illinois’ high school graduates are leaving the state to go to college, up from 17 percent 10 years ago. The University of Iowa has generally attracted the largest number of students from Illinois and was no exception this year with 1,500 students from Illinois.

Michael Barron, admissions director at the University of Iowa, says that while Missouri is the hot draw now for Illinois students, Iowa and Indiana have long gone head-to-head recruiting Illinois kids.

Mike Reilly, executive director of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, says Missouri is not unique and that recruiting across state lines has become a national trend in the wake of diminished state revenues.

Missouri hasn’t limited its out-of-state recruitment strategy to Illinois. The university is pressing hard in California, where high school students are looking to escape the state’s soaring college tuition rates. Tuition at California’s public universities has tripled in the past 10 years.
MU is also hard at work trolling for students in Texas, Colorado and Minnesota. While the school’s prestigious journalism program has long drawn students from across the country, today’s students are coming for programs across the board.

The college campus culture ought to be broad enough to embrace the Chicago dog as well as the St. Louis toasted ravioli and the Texas two-step. But depending on fishing expeditions to other states isn’t the right way to fund education.

Missouri officials are getting off the hook here, but they should be encouraged to stop turning to this resource and develop more ways to fund higher education out of the state budget.

After all, at some point Illinois policymakers are going to wake up and start working to curb their state’s brain drain. And then what will Missouri do?
Anne Deaton reads "The Night Before Christmas" to first-grade students from Lee Elementary School on Friday.

Saturday, December 15, 2012

Anne Deaton, adjunct faculty member in human development and family studies at the University of Missouri and wife of MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, reads "The Night Before Christmas" to first-grade students from Lee Elementary School yesterday. The students toured the University of Missouri chancellor’s residence, sang Christmas songs and viewed Hansel and Gretel ornaments they made for the chancellor’s Christmas tree.
Flights to Dallas, Chicago could help MU recruit

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, December 15, 2012

Direct flights from Columbia to Chicago and Dallas could help the University of Missouri attract even more freshmen from those areas.

"We hope so," said Barbara Rupp, MU's director of admissions. "Certainly, it's something that families have expressed an interest in for years from the Chicago area."

MU has had recruiters stationed in both cities for years. This month, MU made headlines for its Illinois population, which made up 20 percent of this year's freshmen class, according to an analysis that ran in the Chicago Tribune.

MU contributed $500,000 to a $3 million revenue guarantee that helped Columbia Regional Airport snag American Airline connections to O'Hare and Dallas/Fort Worth. The flights are set to start Feb. 14.

Although Chicago wasn't first on a list of priority destinations, MU's enrollment was a factor. In an email to United Airlines in May, Mayor Bob McDavid wrote that Chicago was a priority, in part, because of the student market.

"Chicago will soon surpass Kansas City as a source of new students at the University of Missouri," he wrote. McDavid pointed out that about 5,000 out of 9,000 out-of-state applicants this past year were from Illinois. "We expect significant expansion in this market."

Frontier Airlines is now providing twice-weekly service to Orlando, Fla., but that won't affect future recruitment decisions, Rupp said. She does not expect that flight to up efforts to attract students from that area.

In the process of luring American Airlines, Columbia leaders lost Delta Air Lines' service to Memphis and Atlanta. Those cuts could affect rival fans coming to MU home games or Tigers fans going to away games in the Southeastern Conference, but Chad Moller, spokesman for MU Athletics Department, said it's too early to speculate how.
"The biggest thing is we play at Georgia next fall in football, so obviously a flight directly to Atlanta would be most convenient for fans in Columbia," he said. "But I don't think that's really going to dissuade somebody who really wants to go to that game if the flight is not there."

MU's football and basketball teams travel on chartered flights, so the changes won't affect them. Smaller teams typically fly out of Kansas City or St. Louis because planes flying out of Columbia aren't large enough to accommodate everyone, Moller said.

MU administrators and faculty consider Columbia Regional Airport when traveling to conferences, but there are other considerations, university spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said. Mostly, it depends on where the event is being held and on prices.

"We are encouraged to fly out of the Columbia airport if at all possible," she said, "but we have to work with schedules and price ranges, too."

Ticket prices also will factor for families and students traveling from Chicago and Dallas, Rupp said.

"The key will be convenience and, of course, how they're priced is obviously going to determine to some extent whether people will ultimately use them," she said. If the price is right, "even if students don't choose to use it all the time, families do come down to see their sons and daughters. They may really be interested in the convenience of a direct flight into Columbia."
City was in talks with United Airlines before American deal

By Jacob Barker
Sunday, December 16, 2012

Before the city made its October announcement about a deal with American Airlines, it had been in discussions for months with United Airlines for flights to Chicago, emails obtained from the city show.

"What it came down to, which I think is fairly rare, it came down to the point where we had a choice to make," City Manager Mike Matthes said. "If we had enough money, we likely could have had both airlines."

The Tribune obtained numerous emails from the city relating to its discussions with various airlines. The city's negotiations with United were first reported by the Columbia Missourian.

The emails show a concentrated effort from city officials to reach out to various carriers — an effort that has been a top priority for city officials concerned that a lack of flight options hurts the city's competitiveness. The efforts resulted in an October announcement that American would begin a daily flight to Chicago and two to Dallas in February with the help of a $3 million revenue guarantee.

However, the city had spent months negotiating with United Airlines. As late as Sept. 7, the city had a proposal from United for two daily flights to Chicago. American and Columbia had been talking about service for years, said Ron McNeill, an airline consultant with Mead & Hunt who works with the city. Those talks had stalled until American came back with renewed interest this summer.

The deal Columbia ended up taking with American appears to be better. If American doesn't sell $5,012 worth of tickets for each flight to or from Dallas, the city is on the hook for the shortfall. For Chicago, it's $4,403. United, on the other hand, was asking for a minimum worth more than $6,000 per flight to or from O'Hare International Airport, an amount that seemed "steep" to Matthes, according to an email he wrote to McNeill on Sept. 7.

The city focused on Chicago as a destination in large part because of the interest from the University of Missouri in its recruitment efforts there.
"Certainly the university, their needs can't be overstated here," Matthes said. "They have a tremendous student base in Chicago, and they have a growing student base in Dallas."

However, a report from Mead & Hunt this summer showed that Denver was the No. 1 destination of air travelers from Columbia, including those who leave the city to catch flights elsewhere. The second most popular was another western destination, Los Angeles. If both of the Chicago area's airports are combined, then Chicago would be the third most desired destination, according to the report.

"We certainly did discuss Denver," Matthes said. "Denver is still a destination we are very confident we will achieve in the future. But, again, we need to prove to the airlines that we can support the service we have achieved."

The emails also indicate that United is still interested in Columbia. Martin Kammerman, a senior market analysis manager for United Airlines, wrote in a Nov. 9 email that the airline would have to come to a decision in the next several weeks on Columbia.

"We are still sold on COU and wouldn't have wanted to do the original deal if we didn't believe that COU was a good idea for the future," he wrote.

McNeill said he doesn't think it would work for United or the city to continue pursuing Chicago connections through them, but he doesn't think the airline is done looking at the city.

"Their prime interest at that point in time was Columbia and Chicago," he said. "I don't think it precludes discussions with United down the road for other destinations, other hubs."

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Proliferation of student housing raises concerns

By Jacob Barker
Sunday, December 16, 2012

When the apartments started going up downtown a little more than two years ago, many people were excited.

It was in the midst of a down real estate market, and new housing hadn't been constructed downtown for years. Some saw it as part of the area's resurgence, coming as other property owners rehabbed buildings into lofts, retail and office space.

But a few dozen units on Tenth Street turned into hundreds more beds at College and Walnut, then hundreds more across the street. Other buildings near the University of Missouri campus went down to make way for more, and suddenly, any sizeable piece of downtown property became one of the most valuable assets in the city.

Now, some think Columbia might be seeing too much of a good thing. Although much of the initial boom in downtown student apartment development came from hometown groups, outside firms are now sniffing out anything big enough for high-end student accommodations.

The latest could be as tall as 15 stories and displace the Niedermeyer building, the oldest standing structure in the city. It likely won't be the last.

"I don't want to see us discourage development, but I don't want to see us jump at the first easy pickings here and hurt us later," said Deb Sheals, a historic preservation consultant and the chairwoman of the Downtown Community Improvement District board. "And I love having students downtown, but I don't want that to be our only demographic. And once you put a four-bedroom apartment in, you're pretty tied to student housing."

Much of downtown has permissive zoning with no parking requirements, height restrictions or road setbacks. The Odie family's project Brookside on College brought an influx of residents and their cars to the North Village Arts District, and a lot of those cars ended up in front of stores and on residential streets. That didn't sit well with property owner and developer John Ott, who has called for stricter zoning regulations that would require parking and make it harder for buildings with four-bedroom apartments to continue to go up downtown.
"We don't want to be exclusively a student downtown or we'll kill our retail businesses and our existing businesses," he said.

The ideas are on the radar of city planning staff, but Development Services Manager Pat Zenner said any changes will have to come at the direction of the Columbia City Council. "I don't tend to disagree with what some are saying that we are getting a little bit of out of balance downtown," he said.

However, he and others point out that having students downtown, close to the colleges that brought them to Columbia in the first place, is better than having them out on the urban fringe, straining city infrastructure and encouraging sprawl.

"Where better to put student housing than downtown," said CID board member Skip Walther. "It's right next to campus."

The city plans to embark on a huge overhaul of its zoning codes next year in conjunction with the completion of its comprehensive plan for city growth and land use. Zenner said he would prefer any changes as it relates to parking and downtown residential development be done as part of a comprehensive rewrite.

"I'm fairly certain that we're going to be asked to look at the parking issue," he said. "We're possibly going to be asked to look at it early in the zoning rewrite process."

But for an area that boosters were bemoaning as lacking residents just a few years ago, it doesn't make sense to try to discourage residential development, said John John, a commercial Realtor who works with student housing firms looking for sites.

"If they want to encourage the university to continue to expand and grow and do well, what are they thinking?" he said. "We're not thinking, we're reacting."

Reach Jacob Barker at 573-815-1722 or e-mail jtbarker@columbiatribune.com.
Autistic kids are graduating, ready for job market. And employers are starting to notice.

Story Highlights

• Social skills and reading social cues are a weakness in those with autism
• But they notice deviations in patterns, so quality control and computer jobs are a good fit
• You can help by getting a child vocational experience, volunteer work before graduation

An estimated 1.5 million people in the United States have autism spectrum disorder, so chances are you may be affected by autism in some way.

Your own child, a relative or even a friend may be dealing with the disorder.

But chances are good you soon may start to deal with autism in the workplace. The most visible generation with autism is getting ready to graduate from high school and will be looking for jobs, says Scott Standifer, a University of Missouri researcher who studies employment issues affecting adults with autism.

Some employers such as Walgreens, AMC Theatres and TIAA-CREF already are making efforts to hire and train autistic employees, finding such workers to be dependable and hardworking, Standifer says. These employers are making employment inclusive and don't isolate autistic workers or give them only limited tasks.

The companies are trying to level the playing field for applicants along the autism spectrum, he says. AMC Theaters learned that asking abstract questions often can be troublesome for autistic applicants.

"An abstract interview question might ask someone if they found $50, what would they do with it? So, someone with autism might say, 'I put it in my pocket,'" Standifer says. "But the key is that you have to show them what they should do with that money — such as give it to the manager — and then they will do it."

It's more effective to focus on showing autistic applicants what duties would be involved with a job and if they believe themselves capable performing those duties.

During interviews and on the job, one of the greatest challenges for those along the autism spectrum is reading social cues.
Job applicants who are told to answer questions honestly may be so blunt that they are considered rude or somehow socially unacceptable. When asked, "What brings you to the interview?" someone with autism might answer, "My truck."

That's why social-skills training and more detailed explanations of workplace culture can be helpful to those with autism, he says.

Jobs in noisy, hectic environments; positions with a lot of unstructured social contact with the public; and tasks with little or no routine often are not good fits for those with autism.

However, those with autism are adept at noticing deviations in patterns, so jobs in quality control and computer applications are a good fit, Standifer says. Walgreens' performance data finds that those with autism and other disabilities who work at company distribution centers performed as well as other workers, had lower turnover and required only minimal, inexpensive accommodations.

"The great thing about those with autism is that when they do a job, they're very focused," Standifer says. "They're going to do what they're told, every time. They're not going to stand around socializing instead of working. They often receive very high marks on performance evaluations."

"They're going to do what they're told, every time. They're not going to stand around socializing."

-- Scott Standifer, University of Missouri researcher

If your child has autism, get him or her some structured work or volunteer-related experience before high-school graduation, Standifer says. Vocational rehabilitation counselors can meet with a school's special education teams to ensure time to make changes or transitions, which can often be more difficult for those with autism.

While researchers have done many studies on children with autism, they have little data on autistic workers.

State vocational rehabilitation agencies are starting to make important strides in providing services for autism, he says. National autism advocacy groups and researchers are beginning to include adult issues such as employment in their studies.

Many employers — with leaders who often have been touched personally by someone with autism — are much more willing to take a look at hiring such workers.

"I'm excited," Standifer says. "I think a lot of cool things are happening."
Discovery might help muscular dystrophy sufferers

By Janese Silvey
Saturday, December 15, 2012

University of Missouri researchers have figured out how a specific protein makes another compound bind to muscle cells to keep them from degenerating, a discovery that could lead to a new therapy for patients suffering from muscular dystrophy.

Three years ago, MU researchers found a molecular compound that is vital to curing the disease, but they didn't know how to make the compound bind to muscle cells. In their new study, scientists Yi Lai and colleague Dongsheng Duan have discovered that particular sections of a gene must be present for the healing compound, nNOS, to bind to muscle cells.

Patients with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, the most common type of muscular dystrophy, have a gene mutation that disrupts the production of dystrophin, a protein essential for muscle cell survival. When dystrophin is absent, a chain reaction leads to muscle cell degeneration and death.

Although dystrophin is vital, the protein also needs help from nNOS, which produces nitric oxide that can keep muscle cells healthy.

In the new research, scientists found that dystrophin has a special "claw" that is used to grab nNOS and bring it close to muscle cells so it will bind and repair any damage. Without this claw, nNOS doesn't bind to and repair the cells.

For years, scientists have been attempting to find ways to make the body manufacture more dystrophin. In the recent study, scientists were able to modify another protein, utrophin, to give it a similar type of claw that would help nNOS bind to muscle cells.

The findings were published in the Proceedings of the National Academies of Science.

Studies have been successful in mice. If additional research using large animals is successful within the next few years, MU will request authority to begin human drug development in order to conduct human clinical trials and develop new treatments.

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MU graduates are ready for the work force

University of Missouri Sinclair School of Nursing graduates, from left, Carolyn Duddy, Mandy Jones, Claire Stolberg, Melissa Krampe, Maggie Schneider and Madison Klaus joke around as they pose for photos on the columns after their graduation ceremony at Jesse Hall Friday.

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, December 15, 2012

Laura Remy isn't going far after earning her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Missouri's Sinclair School of Nursing yesterday: The Rock Bridge High School graduate already has a job waiting for her in University Hospital's intensive care unit.

"I left for a while, but I came back," the Columbia resident said after commencement ceremonies yesterday. "I love the Mizzou family. It's home."
MU administrators yesterday awarded 2,352 undergraduate and graduate degrees, pumping more nurses, journalists, scientists and other soon-to-be professionals into the economy.

Remy plans to take a month off before returning to the hospital's ICU, where she spent most of her senior year learning the ropes. Nursing school was tough, she admitted, "but we're confident."

Maggie Schneider, who is considering two nursing job opportunities at hospitals in St. Louis, agreed. Sinclair students had to give up social lives to work hard, she said, but Schneider's education gives her "a foundation."

Graduation ceremonies began yesterday afternoon, continue today and wrap up tomorrow when MU's ROTC program will commission officers.

At the Missouri School of Journalism commencement ceremony yesterday, keynote speaker Brian Brooks, a former faculty member, urged graduates to learn from history, work hard and be honest. Those three things, he said, will prove keys to successful professions and lives.

For Greg Young, earning a bachelor's in journalism was more of a transition than an ending. He'll be starting a master's degree program there next semester before heading to Columbia University to add a public policy education to his strategic communication background. He ultimately hopes to work for a think tank.

The toughest part of his undergraduate experience, Young said, was juggling extracurricular activities and schoolwork. "Being able to balance everything — that's the challenge," he said.

Molly Bullock of Tulsa added a master's degree in journalism to her undergraduate degree in social work yesterday. "I was surprised how much work it was," she said, reflecting back on her four semesters at MU. "But it was also rewarding."

Although she doesn't have a job lined up, Bullock plans to return to Tulsa and is interested in pursuing print journalism.

Natasha Desai of San Jose, Calif., is ready to head back to her home state where she'd like to snag a public relations job in the entertainment business.

Wearing a sign reading "Thanks Mom & Dad" on her mortar board, Desai said she feels as though the Missouri School of Journalism has prepared her for that role.

"Absolutely," she said. "I've already interned at an agency" in Los Angeles "over the summer and that's exactly what I want to do."
MU to confer 2,352 degrees this weekend

By Alyssa Schueneman, Sarah Barr
December 14, 2012 | 6:51 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — MU is conferring 2,352 degrees this weekend in graduation ceremonies for a dozen schools and colleges. Among the degrees are 1,703 bachelor's degrees, 481 master's degrees, 155 doctoral degrees, four law degrees and nine education specialist degrees.

Four commencements took place Friday: The Sinclair School of Nursing, the Trulaske College of Business, the School of Journalism and the College of Engineering.

Saturday ceremonies begin with the Honors College at 8:30 a.m. in Jesse Auditorium, followed by the School of Natural Resources at 11:30 a.m.; School of Health Professions at 2 p.m.; and both the College of Human Environmental Sciences and the School of Social Work at 5 p.m.

Three ceremonies will be held in the Hearnes Center on Saturday: College of Arts and Science at 12:30 p.m.; College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources at 3:30 p.m.; and the Graduate School at 6:30 p.m.

Honorary degrees will be presented this weekend to actor Hal Holbrook, known for his Mark Twain roles; nonfiction writer Peter Hessler; and architect Antoine Predock.

Sinclair School of Nursing

Seventy-eight students from MU's Sinclair School of Nursing graduated on Friday afternoon. They joined more than 6,000 nurses who have graduated from MU's nursing school in the past. Judith Fitzgerald Miller, dean of the nursing school, presided over the ceremonies. She spoke to the graduates about the importance of always living fully, especially in their professional lives.

"Avoid the safety of sitting on the sidelines, and join the dance," Miller said.
The family and friends who filled Jesse Hall were enthusiastic — equipped with cowbells and even a vuvuzela. Graduate Caitlin Stumpe said her biggest lesson was time management.

"That’s something I acquired very quickly," she said. "I didn’t have a choice."

**School of Journalism**

Commencement ceremonies for 129 Missouri School of Journalism graduates began with a moment of silence for the victims of Friday’s shooting at an elementary school in Connecticut. Professor emeritus and former associate dean, Brian Brooks, fittingly gave this advice to graduates: "Learn from history, because he who ignores history is doomed to repeat it."

The list of journalism graduates in Jesse Auditorium Friday afternoon included 97 who received bachelor's degrees, 27 master's candidates and 97 doctoral candidates. Brooks referred to Walter Williams, founder and first dean of the Journalism School, and others when he drew a lesson about imperfection and greatness.

Although these notable figures in journalism were flawed human beings, he said, they were willing to stand up for what they believed in. Everyone makes mistakes, Brooks said, but everyone can also make a difference. Stacy Ike, the student graduation speaker and a broadcast student, offered a similar sentiment.

"Although fear of the unknown is everpresent, now is the time for us," she said. "We say we want to change the world, and right now, standing here, it seems possible." Colleen Archibald, a photojournalism student who transferred to MU two years ago, agreed, saying graduation means moving on to bigger and better things.

"This means growing up, and it means a solid future in the journalism industry," she said. Taylor Bell, a strategic communication student, also spoke about growing up.

"This is the culmination of the past 16 years of education and symbolic of all of the hard work I’ve put in," Bell said.

Brooks said graduates might forget his name in 10 years, but if they heed this advice, they will be rewarded.

"There are seven simple words that are the key to success in your profession and in life," Brooks said.

"Learn from history, work hard, be honest."
MU ROTC program has commissioning ceremonies for graduating seniors

By Alyssa Schueneman
December 16, 2012 | 6:05 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — MU graduations for winter semester are over, but on Sunday morning a select number of graduates were waiting to participate in one more ceremony.

The ROTC program at MU held commissioning ceremonies in which graduating members received officer status in their respective military branches.

"This is the culmination of four years of training and hard work," Master Sgt. Steven Rogers said. "They have aspired to this their whole college career, to become an officer."

Officers are leaders in the military and hold positions of authority. There are four ways for individuals to become officers: attend a military academy; attend Officer Candidate School after graduating from college or serving as an enlisted member; receive a direct commission after earning a professional degree; or participate in the ROTC program.

Two cadets with Army ROTC were commissioned and received the rank of second lieutenant in MU's Crowder Hall, and both will be serving in the Missouri National Guard.

"It's a huge relief to know I'm finally done. There have been some tough times between ROTC and school," 2nd Lt. Jamar Williams said. "I'm glad I made it through."

Williams plans to attend school at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., where he will train in military intelligence.

"I feel excited, exhilarated and very proud. He's a special young man. He's my baby," Williams' mother, Charmane Pearson, said. "He is just exceptional. He's on the Dean's List and a great example for his brothers, and I am just very proud."

Jamar Williams is continuing his family's involvement in the military, according to his dad, Sgt. Rodney Williams. Jamar Williams' grandfather served in World War II; his uncle served...
in Vietnam; and both of his parents served in the Air Force. His brother Jarvis Williams is in the Army, as well, and his father currently serves in the National Guard.

"It's an honor, watching him commission. His mother and I met in the military," Rodney Williams said. "There is a lot of family history there."

During the ceremony, Jamar Williams and 2nd Lt. Chris Shoemaker took the Oath of Commissioned Officers in which they pledged to defend the Constitution and the U.S.

After the oath, Lt. Col. Rob Boone said, "Kiss your moms; shake your dads' hands; and then thank them."

After the ceremony, Shoemaker reflected on his experience as part of MU's ROTC.

"It feels like I've been here my whole life but also like I just walked through the door yesterday," Shoemaker said. "It's pretty special here, and I'm gonna miss it, but all the hard work was worth it."

Shoemaker will attend school at Fort Leonard Wood and will be trained as an Army engineer.

"We are so proud. He has put in four-and-a-half years at MU," Shelley Shoemaker, his mother, said. "It has been a hard road, and he worked through it himself, working and paying for school. He worked his butt off."

Boone also expressed pride in the accomplishments of the the ROTC graduates.

"It is an honor and a privilege today to commission these two young men," Boone said. "They are going to be great officers, and you should be very proud."

MU's Air Force ROTC and Navy ROTC held ceremonies separately.

*Supervising editor is Emilie Stigliani.*
Alex Schoenbeck, a nursing student, was completely prepared for graduation. He arrived at
the ceremony on time, knew the location of his seat and how to exit the stage.

He didn't, however, think to wear his cap and gown.

"It was an honest mistake," his father, Charlie, said. "He wore it for his ceremony last night.
He had to borrow one from someone else. It's kind of funny to think he graduated wearing a
gown that wasn't even his."

Schoenbeck was one of 264 students who graduated with honors Saturday
morning. The students were accompanied by their faculty mentors and received
bronze medallions featuring an image of the Columns.

Michael Middleton, deputy chancellor, presided over the ceremonies.

Jim Gwinner, president of the Mizzou Alumni Association, told graduates in his greeting that
they would always know to return the "M-I-Z" chant.

"You'll know how to respond when someone yells 'M-I-Z' across an airport terminal at you,"
he said. "Because you were that 'M-I-Z,' just as now you'll be that 'Z-O-U.'"

Chuck Genova said he was proud of his daughter, Alex, a textiles and apparel management
graduate.

"It was a long journey," he said. "She went to Arizona State and transferred here. It only
added on one more semester, which was very nice."

But, Genova did have one complaint. "I still think we should have had an 'M-I-Z' chant at the
end of the ceremony," he said.

College of Arts and Sciences
Among the graduates walking across the stage in the Hearnes Center was a surprising sight: A small girl donning a miniature cap and gown, holding hands with an adult graduate.

Addyson Flowers, 3, accompanied her mother, Alana Flowers, who was graduating, across the stage.

"It was definitely a different experience," Flowers said, of walking with her daughter. "Being a mom in college was demanding but fun. But it is a blessing, and it feels amazing."

Flowers became pregnant while attending MU and made the decision to finish the communications program. She managed to graduate alongside many of her peers with whom she began the program.

"I completed a huge milestone," Flowers said. "Being a non-traditional student makes it mean so much more."

Flowers' story illustrates the messages Brian Foster, provost, and Justin Dyer, assistant professor and commencement speaker, touched on while addressing the 584 students who graduated from the College of Arts and Science.

"What is certain about life is that you can't know where it is going to take you," Foster said.

Dyer continued on in the same vain. He talked about how life can be difficult, tragedies can strike and some things are beyond an individual's control. He emphasized, however, that there is always hope for a better future, and time to strive for happiness.

"Happiness is not pleasure, or honor, or wealth. These are not the source of happiness," Dyer said. "What happiness is, is much harder to answer, but it can be found in your family, friends, and community. I wish you well on your own pursuits of happiness."

**Graduate School**

Of the 645 students receiving diplomas from the Graduate program, there were three who did not set foot on campus while pursuing their degrees.

Jessica Steward, who lives in Des Moines, Iowa, with her husband, Chris, completed her Master's degree in Career and Technical Education online while working full-time.
"I grew up in West Plains, Mo., and I have always loved MU," Steward said. "After I evaluated all of the programs, this one offered me a degree that would help in both education and business and I appreciated that I could do the entire thing online so I didn’t have to travel."

Steward only had to travel four hours for graduation, which was the shortest trip of the three students.

"It is an accomplishment that, as a child, I never pictured myself achieving," Steward said. "I am so grateful for the opportunity because some people don’t have these chances in life, but I have also worked hard to make this happen."

Adam Lewkowsky, who grew up in Missouri, came from Portland, Ore., to participate in the Graduate School commencement after completing his masters of arts in Library Science online.

John Hull of Elk Grove, Calif., made the trip thanks to a birthday present from his sister, Julie Hull, and his wife. Julie Hull and his mom, Shirley Hull, made the trek with him.

"I’m surprised, but here I am, graduating," John Hull said. "I actually did it."

John Hull graduated from the University of Northern Colorado in 1976 with a bachelor of Journalism and has spent the past 27 years working in radio and television. He currently works as a sports writer for the Elk Grove Citizen newspaper but has been teaching part-time as well since 2004. His desire to become a professor led to him getting his master’s.

"Even with 27 years of experience in journalism, I cannot become a full time professor without a master’s," John Hull said. "So I began looking for an online program. MU was the first place I looked because it is considered the best J-school, and I want to teach digital media and journalism."

All three online graduates expressed excitement, not just about getting their degrees but also about the professional opportunities that the degrees will help them pursue.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU's Anna Waldron spreads the word of science

By Olivia Hancock
December 17, 2012 | 6:00 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Some teenagers embark on their college educations with their majors already chosen, confident they know what they're going to do for the rest of their lives. Anna Waldron was one of those teenagers.

"I really thought I wanted to be a forest ranger," she said. "Even my placement test that I did in high school said that it'd be a good job for me." When she got to college, Waldron majored in environmental science. She said she did well in her biology classes but struggled with chemistry and math. Her grades began to drop.

"I think I got a C-plus one semester — I had never gotten a C-plus in my life so that was really traumatic," she said with a smile. Her academic adviser, an English professor, recommended a sharp turn in her educational path.

"He said, 'Your grades are much better in English and philosophy. Why don't you just switch your major?'" Waldron heeded his words and switched to English education.

Eventually she found her way back to science. She has been the director of science outreach at MU since 2008. As director, Waldron's jobs run the gamut from getting funding for science events for Columbia area kids to securing federal grants. All of them serve a common purpose: to make classes in science, technology, engineering and math — also known as STEM — accessible to the Columbia educational community.

"I feel like I need to have a tagline for my office: providing opportunities for STEM enrichment. I like that," Waldron said.

Early interest in science

Even though Waldron was interested in science early, she said she didn't realize it was science at the time.
Waldron was born in upstate New York and received her K-12 education while growing up in a couple of rural farming towns. She said her aunt, uncle and grandfather sparked an interest in bird-watching and astronomy for her when she was a girl.

"I can't name all of them anymore, but I used to be able to name whatever was in the sky at any time," she said. Waldron recalled spending lots of time on those and other science-related pursuits, like catching bugs, when she was young. She even tried to make a diamond from a piece of coal after her mother told her that's how they were made.

"I took some rocks and put a piece of coal in the middle, and I put all the rocks on top, and I buried it in the ground. I used to dig it up, and it wasn't a diamond yet, so I'd bury it again," she said. "So I was a geologist for a few minutes there." Waldron said a lot of her childhood was spent outdoors, something she tries to continue to do with her two young sons.

"I always push my own children outside, even if they don't want to. I say, 'Put on a hat, put on mittens, we're going,'" she said.

**Detouring to English**

After that fateful meeting with her college adviser, Waldron graduated from Ithaca College with a degree in English education. She got married the weekend before graduation and went with her husband to Tennessee, where he was attending graduate school. Waldron worked as a substitute teacher, waited tables and edited electronic books for a publishing company.

"They were CD-ROM books back then because there wasn't the Internet," she said with a laugh. After that, Waldron taught English and Spanish for a bit and then went back to New York. There, she got a job teaching gifted education at a school where she was substitute teaching. Her passion for science was re-ignited.

Waldron said her gifted students were really into science, so she sought out science-based projects for them. One project the class worked on for two years was about a Mars rover, automated vehicles scientists can direct to explore the surface of Mars.

"A couple of them were artsy, so we had a huge Mars mural on the wall in my office," she said. Two girls in the class were particularly interested in the project, so Waldron mentored them. The girls ended up getting a paper published on the subject, and Waldron accompanied them to a related conference in Houston.
"I guess I was kind of living vicariously through them when I look back at it, but they were so excited, and it was so easy for me to say, 'I will support you. I will take the time and do this with you because I didn't have that,'" Waldron said. Waldron said she thinks if she'd had a mentor to help her with her science career, she would have stuck with her environmental science major.

"I do think back on that and I think, 'Man, if I had had a little more academic support, I'm sure I wouldn't have switched my major,"' she said.

**Going back to science**

Through her work with the gifted education program, Waldron got to know a variety of scientists at Cornell University in Ithaca, near her home in Aurora, N.Y. When a job as an education director at the university opened up, Waldron took it. She said her job description was designing programs to get people excited about science, and she was psyched about it.

"I thought, 'I can do this! I've found the love of my life, here I am!'" she said. Waldron developed science programs dedicated specifically to K-12 girls, such as an after-school science club called Tri Sci. She would take the research given to her from scientists at Cornell and translate it for younger audiences. After seven years at the job, Waldron left for MU, taking a doctorate in education from Cornell with her. As director of science outreach, Waldron works with undergraduate and graduate students, K-12 teachers and students and just about anyone involved in education in Columbia. Her duties as director are substantial, including developing ideas for science literacy programs with faculty, writing federal grants to get the programs funded, implementing them once they get funding, hosting the statewide Science Olympiad and holding science education events for Columbia area K-12 students.

Waldron also volunteers to teach three classes for graduate students, serves as adviser to the National Science Teacher Association and Project Science organizations on campus and is co-director of GK-12, a National Science Foundation program. GK-12 is a partnership between graduate students and K-12 teachers and their students; the graduate students come to fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms in Columbia and teach them about science concepts the teachers want to work on. Six schools are participating: Mill Creek, Midway, Blue Ridge, Shepard Boulevard, Grant and Derby Ridge elementary schools.

Candace Galen, professor of biological science at MU, is the other director of the GK-12 program. Galen said working with Waldron on the GK-12 program has been great, and they've become "good buddies."
"On hard days when there's fires you need to put out, which there are always plenty, really what keeps you going is having that person by your side that you can have a lot of fun with, that you can laugh with, that you can be yourself around," Galen said. Tabitha Finch, an MU graduate student who has been both a student and collaborator with Waldron, echoes Galen's positive sentiments about Waldron.

"She is a great brain-stormer and helps me to articulate and form my ideas in a practical context," Finch said. "She has the experience to know what will work and what won't."

**Helping women in science**

Waldron said she's noticed that she has become a role model for women in STEM fields at MU.

"I'm kind of an educational mentor for a lot of the female scientists on campus," she said. Waldron said one of her passions is helping women be successful with STEM subjects. She believes instilling interest must start as early as possible because girls can start to lose interest even in elementary school.

"In education, there's a bias that, you know, the boys have the right answers. I see it in classrooms," she said. "The boys tend to be more confident and outspoken in science, and in the classroom in general, and so you call on them to give you all the 'right answers.'" Waldron thinks giving young girls female role models to look up to in the sciences is one way to increase their confidence and said she has seen a difference when observing classrooms taught by a female graduate fellow.

"I strongly believe you see a strong correlation between girls' motivation and interest in the science classrooms and those female fellows that are standing up in the front of the room," she said. Waldron's colleagues said she is a great role model herself.

"Anna easily does the work of three people," Finch said. "People in the field of science outreach, and scientists themselves, know the name Anna Waldron and respect the work she does."

"I know people with her talents at other universities that are heads of major STEM centers," Galen said. "The university has a real good deal in Anna Waldron."

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
Experts offer advice on how to discuss traumatic events with children

By Allison Prang
December 14, 2012 | 5:01 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA – Protecting children from the harsh reality of traumatic news can be wise, experts at MU advised Friday.

Parents should be mindful of the age and sensitivity of children before sharing news about incidents, such as the mass killing at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn.

If a child is told, keep the message simple.

In light of the shooting in Connecticut, the Columbia Missourian compiled advice from experts on how parents and adults can talk to children about deeply upsetting events.

"The advice to shield children, especially very young ones, from the news as much as possible is good advice," Jean Ispa, professor and co-chair of MU’s Department of Human Development and Family Studies, said in an email.

She also suggested reassuring them that this happened far away and that principals and teachers are doing everything they can to keep Columbia schools safe.

"Children under 8 especially cannot really comprehend what happened and [it] will depend a lot on how the adults around them handle things," she said.

"The advice to help older children think about ways they can help affected families and the ways in which school officials and others are keeping our schools safe is also important."

Parents need to consider the age of a child and how that affects the level of their understanding, said Gustavo Carlo, Millsap professor of diversity and multicultural studies and director of graduate studies for MU’s Department of Human Development and Family Studies.
If parents must talk about disturbing topics, their explanations should be short, concrete and simple to make sure they don’t overwhelm a child, he said.

Parents should also use analogies to help their children understand these situations, like comparing those who died to the death of someone the child knew or perhaps a pet who died.

“You definitely want to be sure that they’re satisfied with whatever response you give to their questions,” he said.

In situations like the Connecticut school shooting, children will feel inclined to go home and ask their parents about it, he said. It’s important to make sure the child guides the conversation.

Children are familiar with violence in the media and can understand the concept of a shooting, he said. Where the shooting happened geographically or the reality that someone is permanently gone can be harder for children to grasp.

Supervising editor is Jeanne Abbott.
With 108 wineries, is Missouri tapped out?

December 16, 2012 1:15 am • By Georgina Gustin ggustin@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8195

Shellie Gamel was a bank manager. Her husband, Matt, a salesman.

Then they got bitten by the wine bug.

While living in Washington, Mo., after college, the couple started visiting wineries in Hermann and Augusta, where they fell in love with wine and the possibility of producing it themselves. Someday, they thought, they'd make a go of it.

So in 2006 they planted 600 vines on their property west of the Mississippi River, in Friedheim, and just last month, after years of juggling jobs and a growing family, the winery opened its doors.

Their Apple Creek Vineyard and Winery, perched on a river bluff, is Missouri's newest. But it has plenty of company. Over the past 10 years, the number of wineries in the state — and the country — has shot up as more Americans, like the Gamels, decide to embrace a life in wine.

In 2000, the U.S. boasted 2,688 wineries, and by 2010 that had risen to 7,626. In Missouri during the same period, the number more than tripled, from 31 to 108. Most of these wineries, according to University of Missouri research, are small, and many are in emerging wine regions.

“It’s been phenomenal,” said Cary Greene, chief operating officer of Wine America, Washington-based wine trade association. “It feeds on itself. The reason there’s growth in wineries is that there’s a growing consumer base, and the reason there’s a growing consumer base is that there are more wineries.”

The forces behind that cycle go beyond the changing American palate, which has shifted away from beer in recent years: Barriers to entry have lowered, states have passed laws allowing more on-site purchasing of wine, and more newly formed groups have launched initiatives to capture the economic impact of winery-related tourism.

An even greater factor, perhaps, is the apparent desire to change professional course.

“I think it’s part of the zeitgeist of our age,” explained Fabio Chaddad, an agricultural economist at the University of Missouri who is studying the growth of the industry and
ways to sustain it. “Folks are wanting a better way of life, they’re trying a rural lifestyle, giving up 9-to-5 jobs to do something they love.”

But idealism may not be enough to help these new wineries survive, so Chaddad is taking a critical look at what they need to do to succeed.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Chaddad has spent two years tracking the industry’s growth and surveying winemakers. The next phase of his research will look at how wineries can stay afloat — and what the economic implications are.

“We are looking at potential vectors of development,” Chaddad explained, “especially in rural areas.”

In Missouri, Chaddad calculates, wineries have an economic impact of about $1.6 billion, thanks to a multiplier effect, as wineries tend to cluster in areas, luring tourists who patronize hotels, restaurants and festivals.

“We’re talking about Hermann, the Ozarks. This is not only generating jobs — it’s generating them in rural areas where they’re desperately needed,” Chaddad added. “To realize the economic impact in rural areas, we need these wineries to survive and grow.”

For Missouri producers, and others in emerging wine regions, the key to their individual successes rests with the region at large and acquainting consumers with lesser-known grapes, such as Missouri’s Norton and chardonel varietals.

“If we can get to where we have national recognition, it can really propel all these little wineries,” said Charles Dressel, president of Mount Pleasant Winery. “We need to create a regional identity. It’s always better to sing in a choir than by yourself.”

Chaddad’s research will look into how Missouri wineries can better band together to sell wine beyond the state’s borders.

“That’s the challenge for emerging regions. In addition to surviving as a sole winery, they have to build a reputation for the region,” he said.

“We’ll look at the collaboration between wineries and related business, and we want to understand how clusters evolve. How can we form co-ops to market wine from Hermann nationally?”

To get Missouri-grown varietals recognized beyond the state’s borders quality has to be a priority, winemakers acknowledge.

Five years ago, an organization called the Missouri Wine Technical Group began holding quarterly “brown bag” meetings, where winemakers submit wines and are critiqued by their peers.
“You fill in an 8-page document on how you made the wine, a panel tastes it, and then we ‘out’ the winemaker, and they have to stand up and take advice,” said Cory Bomgaars, head winemaker at Les Bourgeois Vineyards in Rocheport, 135 miles west of St. Louis. “It’s amazing what it’s done for some of the substandards, and it’s upped what we consider standard.”

Indeed, just growing grapes and putting wine in a bottle isn’t going to cut it.

“It needs to be very, very good and deliver a good value to the consumer,” Dressel said. “A lot of wineries say we’ve got a dynamite location, or a wonderful lake, and therefore we have a winery. That’s not a winery, that’s a wedding venue. You have to develop a product.”

Clearly more winemakers are at least trying to do that.

“There’s a growing number of these small winemakers out here in California, as well as across the country. Virginia is a big new growing area. Washington state, Oregon, New York are growing very quickly,” said Doug Minnick, co-founder of the Garagiste Festival in California, which showcases small-scale winemakers. “I think there are more ways to get into winemaking now. Once you source fruit, there are any number of ways to get wine made. There are services, places with shared equipment.”

In many states, including Missouri, government is helping winemakers clear some of the regulatory hurdles and helping promote their businesses.

“The state and federal governments see wine as key to rural development, so there’s lots of incentives,” said Peter Hofherr, chairman of the Missouri Wine and Grape Board, and head of St. James Winery, in St. James, near Rolla. “They have tax credits for winery and vineyard development. They have a program where one penny off every bottle goes to research and promotion and marketing for the wine industry.”

So, with a greater appetite for wine and more impetus for getting into the business, the number of small wineries will likely keep rising.

“The audience for this type of wine is growing,” Minnick said. “The wine tends to be better. This is hand-made wine, and wine benefits from this type of attention. Winemakers have their noses in it every day. It’s a labor of love, and it shows in the glass.”

For Shellie and Matt Gamel, the labor of love is only starting to pay off. Shellie just gave herself her first paycheck, and Matt is still working a full-time job. But they hope Apple Creek will be self-sustaining one day soon.

“We’re not looking to be the mega-giants of the state,” Shellie said. “We just want to make quality wine, make a little money doing it and let everyone know we can make good wine here.”
Should you rent or buy your home?

December 16, 2012 12:15 am • By Jim Gallagher jgallagher@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8390

If you’re renting your home, you might wonder if it’s time to buy.

On the one hand, houses may never be this affordable again. St. Louis homes are 13 percent cheaper than five years ago, according to government estimates. Mortgages last week averaged a measly 3.32 percent.

Right now, home prices in St. Louis seem to be bouncing around a bottom after a long slide. They’re rising in some neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, St. Louis landlords are raising rents as vacancy rates decline.

The takeaway: If you are waiting for the right moment to buy, this is it.

On the other hand, not everybody should own a house. Let’s look at dollars and cents first. Then we’ll get into softer factors, such as your new career as a groundskeeper, your endless list of honey-do’s and your bondage to a mortgage.

Jed Kolko is a numbers guy, a Harvard-educated economist for Trulia, the online real estate market place. When Kolko feeds St. Louis statistics into his computer, a big red flag pops out saying “Buy!”

By Trulia’s calculations, it costs $593 a month to own a typical home here, against $1,251 to rent a comparable place.

A $593 monthly payment for a house? Well, not really.

Trulia’s calculation is complex. It assumes you’ll get a 3.5 percent mortgage, available to people with good credit, and make a 20 percent down payment.

It assumes home prices and rents will rise 2 percent a year. It throws in the cost of repairs, taxes, insurance, closing costs, commissions and such. It calculates the interest a renter might earn on money that would go to a down payment.
Then it assumes that you sell the house after seven years. It looks at the amount of money you have left, and figures the true cost per month, considering the equity you've built in the home.

Change those assumptions and you change the bottom line, but the gap in the numbers is so wide that owning beats renting even with lower down payments, interest rates a point higher or slower price appreciation, Kolko says.

The benefits of owning grow over time. A fixed-rate mortgage freezes your loan payment. Taxes and insurance may rise, but they’re the smaller part of the deal. That means your monthly payment will probably rise more slowly than inflation and your paycheck. If rates fall, you can refinance.

That’s not true for rent.

Your mortgage payments also reduce your debt, although very slowly at first. “You build equity, and you don’t when you’re renting,” says Kolko.

The New York Times offers a terrific online calculator for rent-or-buy decisions. It lets you punch in your own numbers and get detailed results. The link nyti.ms/cjMOGK will take you to the calculator.

For St. Louis, figure between $1,600 and $2,000 in closing costs on a middle- to upper-middle-class house, plus a year’s fire insurance premiums.

Most sources assume you’ll spend 1 to 3 percent of the home’s value in yearly repair costs. Taxes and insurance costs vary with the house.

Before running down to the Realtor’s office, consider the change in your lifestyle.

On the one hand, you can indulge your weird decorating taste in your own house, notes Suzanne Gellman, family finance specialist at the University of Missouri. If you want to paint your living room in pink polka dots, no landlord will complain.

Then again, a homeowner is no longer footloose. You can’t just pick up and move if you’re locked in a mortgage. Considering closing costs and sales commissions, chances are that you’ll lose money if you sell in the first few years.

Six years used to be the rule of thumb for breaking even. But low interest rates shrink time, says Kolko.

“It makes financial sense to buy even if you only stay for three years,” he says.

There’s still risk for those who keep houses longer. Just ask the 16 percent of St. Louis mortgage holders sitting in homes that are worth less than they owe.
The home price bust seems to be over, and the consensus among experts is that home prices will begin a slow rise from here, but no one really knows. If the bust taught us anything, it’s that a home isn’t an investment. It’s a place to live.

Then there’s the loss of blessed leisure. As a homeowner, I am an amateur plumber, painter, electrician and gardener, and I do it all badly. After my last wrestle with a toilet’s innards, my wife called a plumber.

Renters just call the landlord.
Nixon promoting Missouri Medicaid expansion in Trenton today

December 14, 2012 8:00 am • By Elizabeth Crisp ecrisp@post-dispatch.com 573-635-6178

Gov. Jay Nixon is in Trenton today to promote Medicaid expansion.

The Democratic governor, who recently won a second term in office, is scheduled to discuss his support for the voluntary component of the federal Affordable Care Act at Wright Memorial Hospital this afternoon.

Nixon announced on Nov. 29 that he plans to include the expansion in the budget proposal he submits to lawmakers at the beginning of the 2013 legislative session.

"As governor, I have both the opportunity and obligation to keep Missouri moving forward," Nixon said last month. "It is the smart thing to do, and it is the right thing to do."

Republican legislative leaders — who ultimately control the state's budget — have come out firmly against the plan. The GOP controls both the House and the Senate.

Health care advocacy groups have come out in support of the expansion.

For states that opt in, much of the expansion will be covered by federal dollars, but the money has to be appropriated through Missouri’s legislative process.

For months, Nixon shied away from taking a stance on whether Missouri should expand its health care program for low income people. To announce his support, Nixon traveled to hospitals in St. Louis, Kansas City and Springfield last month.

He has touted an economic impact study conducted by the University of Missouri for the Missouri Hospital Association and Missouri Foundation for Health that claims 24,000 jobs could be created in 2014 if the state expands Medicaid coverage.
Enterprise Development Corp. leader Mike Crist is wrapping up nearly three decades of helping entrepreneurs

By Jacob Barker

Saturday, December 15, 2012

After more than 10 years in business, Carl and Wanda Vonderahe finally took the step most entrepreneurs strive toward: They bought their own building.

At the end of September, Vonderahe's Select Equipment and Repair moved from its rental space on Big Bear Boulevard to its new building at 815 Blue Ridge Road.

"I've been wanting to expand for a long time, but I just never had come across a building in Columbia here that quite fit my needs for the price," Carl Vonderahe said.

The construction and lawn-and-garden equipment shop got a little help on the transaction from an obscure Small Business Administration program and a local man who has worked to make the program a little less obscure. Vonderahe's won't be the last SBA 504 loan that Mike Crist, the head of Enterprise Development Corp., helps to put together for a local business. But it will be close.

At the end of January, Crist, who has led EDC since it was founded in 1983, will be stepping down as the director of the special not-for-profit corporation.

"I haven't found anybody that would work that well with me personally," Ron Sterchi said of Crist, who has helped the entrepreneur get low-interest loans for his flea market on Business Loop 70 and is now working on getting him a loan for his new family fun center, Lazer Lanes. "I kind of use him as a sounding board. ... He's been a real good resource for me. I hate to see him go."

Crist has developed relationships with small business owners, powerful developers, government officials and leaders in local finance in his position at an odd intersection of the public and private sectors. EDC is an independent company, the designated community development
company required by the SBA's 504 loan program to vet local companies seeking its help. Using a combination of private financing and a separate government loan, the program is designed to help smaller or riskier businesses obtain long-term, low-cost financing for new buildings or equipment.

Created in the early '80s, all sorts of companies have taken advantage of the program. Locally, health food retailers, restaurants, urgent care facilities and marketing agencies have used it to buy buildings and equipment. At one time in the '90s, Crist said, EDC was the largest lender in Mid-Missouri for convenience stores and hotels. And, like its recent work with Lazer Lanes, the "quirky" businesses often get pointed in Crist's direction.

"You name it, we've probably done it," Crist said.

Most of the companies EDC helps are referred to it and the SBA 504 by banks. To use the program, companies can't make more than $5 million in annual profits, and their tangible net worth can't be above $15 million. A bank will make its own loan worth as much as 50 percent of the price of real estate or equipment the company is purchasing. SBA makes a separate 40 percent loan through EDC or whatever the area's designated community development company is. The business puts up the remaining 10 percent.

Since 1983, EDC has helped 209 businesses with $230 million worth of projects, EDC Associate Director Donna Hamilton said. In fiscal 2012, EDC made six loans worth $4.85 million in Boone County, though its service area stretches south to Camdenton, up to Macon, west to Sedalia and east to Warrenton. It lends throughout the area, but most of EDC's deals come from Columbia, where it started.

A group of locals, including low-income housing developer Jeff Smith and University of Missouri Associate Law School Dean Robert Bailey, initially put together the funding for EDC and helped get it started.

"I've been pleased with what it's been able to do," said Bob Black, Columbia's assistant city manager at the time and another of the early drivers of the program. It's been particularly useful lately, he said. "Interest rates are low, but loans are also hard to get."

Mark Farnen, now the president of EDC's board of directors, has been on the board since the late 1980s, when he was the city of Mexico's economic development chief. "That was a time when we were seeing a lot of interest in a formal approach to economic development," he said.

So how did Crist get the job as its director? "I was the only person who read all the regulations," Crist said.

At the helm from the beginning, he has been through more than one business cycle. He started at the tail end of the early 1980s recession, and he recently got through his third. Even the 504 program doesn't make new expenditures attractive enough to entice businesses to spend in the midst of a downturn. In 1991, during the early '90s recession, he did one loan. In 2009, EDC made two Boone County loans.
When a deal goes sour, EDC is in charge of liquidating the business's assets to recoup money. One of the reasons lenders like the program is that the participating bank gets the first lien on the mortgage, so it can take back the assets to recoup its losses if something goes wrong.

"The way things are structured, if things go bad, we take the hit," Crist said.

Even so, the program is self-sustaining. EDC generates its funding through loan fees, and few of the deals go bad. Of the 209 loans EDC has put together over the years, 24 have required liquidation, Hamilton said.

"The banks don't bring us stupid stuff," Crist said. "They say, 'We think this has merit. What do you think?'"

Steve Erdel, CEO of Boone County National Bank, has worked with EDC and Crist for years. He likes the program more than the traditional SBA lending program — 7a loans, where the SBA provides a guarantee on a bank loan. The 504 program is a little easier to administer and puts a little less risk on the bank, he said.

"It lets us do deals that are more aggressive than we would normally do to help our customers," Erdel said.

The fixed interest rates the program provides — now at 4.009 percent for a 20-year loan — also are valuable because they can help a bank get the best deal possible for its regular customers.

"That's kind of key because banks are unwilling — are unable is a better word — to make long-rate fixed-rate loans and keep them on their books," Erdel said.

The types of businesses banks often consider riskier — restaurants, convenience stores and hotels, for example — also are often referred to EDC. Crist likes to think that the 504 program helped with downtown's resurgence as an entertainment district by helping one of the city's first high-class restaurants get off the ground: Trattoria Strada Nova, which Tom Rippeto started in 1990.

Before that, "if you wanted anything beyond Midwestern fare, you had to drive to St. Louis or Kansas City," Crist said.

Rippeto remembers going on faith that the loan would be approved, spending every cent he had to bring in equipment and get the property ready. Luckily, it came through, and even though the banks he had approached early on were skeptical a San Francisco-style, white-tablecloth restaurant would work in Columbia, Trattoria "exploded, Day One," he said.

"In a matter of two or three weeks, we had people waiting," Rippeto recalled. "People would sit on" our "stairwell step after step, waiting for tables."
New or different business models are often what EDC looks at because banks are less comfortable going out on a limb. "Banks realize we get exposed to more, a greater variety, perhaps, than they have seen," Hamilton said.

Crist and Hamilton think they could soon see even more demand for the program as business confidence picks up. That tends to happen when recessions end, Crist said. He remembers processing double his normal loan volume of 12 a year in 1993.

"I do agree that we should see greater volume," Hamilton said. "As for timing, that remains to be seen."

When it does occur, Hamilton will be at the helm. She has been with the organization since 1994, and she will succeed Crist when he leaves. For a while, at least, she'll be running it on her own, but she expects to find a second employee. "We'll need to have someone eventually," she said.

As for Crist, he plans to stay in Columbia, where he'll devote his full attention to his other venture — Tatanka Resources. That firm works with utilities, governments and other entities in the carbon credit markets, a growing industry as more states institute cap-and-trade laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"I've been working on this for a few years, and it's moving rather rapidly now," he said. "This one's wild and crazy and being made up as it goes. ... Enterprise was kind of like that at the beginning."
David Schramm, an assistant professor at the University of Missouri, reads his book “Tell Me about Truman the Tiger” Friday morning to 3-year-olds at Mother’s Morning Out preschool with his son Hayden, 5. Schramm’s book about the Missouri mascot was published in November.

By Janese Silvey

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A University of Missouri faculty member with a quartet of curious children has penned a book about the university's mascot that he hopes will encourage kids to read.
David Schramm is an assistant professor and state specialist in human environmental sciences whose first children's book, "Tell Me About Truman the Tiger," came out last month. The idea stemmed from an experience in 2011 when he attempted to take his four children to an MU volleyball game.

Beforehand, the kids had a chance to interact with Truman and were fascinated by him, Schramm said. When the game began, he had a tough time getting them to focus on anything other than the oversized tiger. "They kept asking where Truman was," he said.

That's when his oldest, Chandler, now 11, asked how the mascot got his name. Schramm wasn't sure, so he decided to research it.

Making that research public was second nature for Schramm.

"I'm an Extension specialist, so a lot of what I do is try to make research practical and useful for citizens of Missouri," he said.

Schramm cast his two youngest children, Hayden, 5, and Aubrey, 7, as the main characters, who ask their Grandpa Johnson to tell them about Truman. Grandpa begins by telling them about how Columbia residents banded together to ward off raids during the Civil War and eventually became known as the "fightin' tigers." The MU mascot that followed was simply known as "tiger" until 1986, when he was named after President Harry Truman after a naming contest. The book concludes with Truman's adventures today — spraying water on fans in the stadium, eating Tiger Stripe ice cream and hanging out at Shakespeare's Pizza. Each page also provides an interactive game with an "M" hidden among the illustrations.

Schramm has sold about 700 copies of the book, which was self-published and is being sold on his website and at local Hy-Vee stores. The book is officially licensed with MU, and 10 percent of proceeds go back to the university.

Schramm is also taking the book to local schools, including his son's preschool, Mother's Morning Out, where he read to several classes this morning.

"It's been a really fun experience for our family," Schramm's wife, Jamie, said. "It's been a good example of following your dreams."

The Schramms have used it to show their children — they also have a 9-year-old daughter, Mallory — how to follow through with an idea.

The Truman-themed book might become the first in a series. Already, Schramm has drafted a second book about his alma mater's mascot, Cosmo the Cougar from Brigham Young University, expected to come out next fall. He has also begun looking into the history of other mascots.

"Some are a little more interesting than others," he said. "I think it's a fun idea to get pride in your school and teach people, as well, about history."