Ex-Army leader facing MU protests defends his Guantanamo Bay record

Wednesday, February 6, 2013
By ALAN SCHER ZAGIER ~ The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A quick glance at Larry James' packed resume suggests the retired Army colonel is eminently qualified for a top administrative job at the University of Missouri.

He holds a doctorate in counseling psychology from the University of Iowa, is dean of professional psychology at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio and coordinated mental health resources at the Pentagon after the Sept. 11 terror attacks as part of a 22-year military career.

But it's the 16 months he spent during two stints overseeing interrogations at the U.S. military detention center at Guantanamo Bay that has shifted an otherwise obscure academic hiring into the broader debate about terror and torture, and drew a packed room of professors, protesters and TV cameras to a campus ballroom Tuesday as James participated in a public interview.

James is one of two finalists for a job overseeing more than 60 people as division director in the College of Education. He spent 20 minutes of the allotted hour sharing his vision for the job.

James described his "servant leadership style," outlined his hopes to recruit and support student veterans and laid out plans for an interdisciplinary research center focusing on gun violence in schools.

After the presentation, just two members of the education faculty asked questions of James. That left the bulk of time for public scrutiny of his military service. And when organizers sought to end the interview, James agreed to remain behind the microphone to field additional questions.

Human rights activists and several psychologists have filed complaints against James alleging that he witnessed the "systematically" abusive interrogation of Guantanamo prisoners but failed to intervene. In one instance, James is accused of initially watching without intervening while an interrogator and three guards subjected a near-naked man to sexual humiliation by forcing him to wear women's underwear.

As he has in the past, including in the 2008 memoir "Fixing Hell," James told the crowd he went to Guantanamo, as well as the Abu Ghraib detention center in Iraq in 2004, to clean up what
James referred to not as abuse but "some diabolical things" at both prisons. In the sexual humiliation incident, James said he disrupted the interrogation after a 5-minute coffee break.

"I was sent to Guantanamo not to aid these CIA operatives, but to teach these young men and women, how do you sit down and interview someone without any abusive practices whatsoever," he said. "That's what my mission was."

Other audience members, including members of the university's Muslim Student Organization, asked James about his characterization in his book of the International Committee of the Red Cross as "a bunch of radical left do-gooders" who consider military detainees "completely innocent, and only needed to be hugged more."

Some suggested that while James has not been found to have violated professional standards or the law, the university should hold its prospective employees to a higher standard. A state licensing board in Ohio has declined to discipline James, as did a similar panel in Louisiana, where he also is licensed.

"I'm disappointed," said Evan Prost, an assistant professor of physical therapy who opposes James' hiring. "It's a smirch on the university."

The second finalist is Matthew Burns, an educational psychology professor at the University of Minnesota. He interviewed in Columbia last week. A six-member search committee will forward its recommendation to education Dean Daniel Clay, who expects to make a decision by next month.

James' possible hiring prompted a Feb.1 campus protest by the mid-Missouri chapter of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an anti-war group. On Wednesday, another protest is planned at Mizzou by the St. Louis chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, as well as other civil rights and academic groups.
Finalist for MU post faces questioning

By Catherine Martin

Tuesday, February 5, 2013 at 6:30 pm

Students, faculty, activists and community members packed a room at the Reynolds Alumni Center on Tuesday afternoon for the chance to question a controversial candidate for a University of Missouri administrative post.

Larry James, who served as the director of behavioral science division at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib, is one of two finalists being considered for an administrative position at the MU College of Education. James’ consideration for the post has been criticized by staff in the College of Education, who read news reports linking James to torture, and sparked a protest last week.

Tuesday’s forum started with a presentation by James and was followed by staff and student questions, which mostly focused on aspects of the job of division executive director. In the MU position, James would be “responsible for the leadership and administration” of three departments — the School of Information Sciences and Learning Technologies, department of school and counseling psychology and the department of educational leadership and policy analysis.

When questioning was opened to the community, the conversation focused entirely on James’ time at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib.

Faizan Syed, executive director of the St. Louis Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, posed the first question, asking James about standard operating procedures written during his time at Guantanamo Bay. Some of the procedures included isolation and sleep deprivation as protocol for new prisoners.

James said he only wrote about five pages of what was a 300- to 500-page document, and those pages focused on “mundane day-to-day issues” such as uniforms and work hours.

“We know from some other programs … what isolation and sleep deprivation can do,” he said, explaining that he advised those stationed at Guantanamo “not to do those things.”

It seemed clear that James had heard similar questions before. He remained calm and had a response for each questioner.
To some in attendance, however, his answers weren’t enough. During the end of the forum, which was extended to accommodate the volume of questions, Jeff Stack, coordinator for the Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation, pushed James on why he didn’t do more about torture or leave his military post. James said in the military “you don’t have the luxury of quitting without going to a federal penitentiary.”

Stack said he appreciated that James stayed late to field more questions, but he said he thought James’ military approach was not conducive to a university environment. He also wasn’t satisfied with James’ answers.

“His response too easily ... was” that “he was just following orders and doing what was legal. Torture was legal through the Patriotic Act,” Stack said. “He kind of seemed not to see the higher moral obligation to do no harm as a psychologist.”

Daniel Clay, dean of the College of Education, could make a decision on the job this month or early next month after a recommendation from a search committee. Committee members are: Michael Pullis, John Lannin, James Laffey, Lisa Flores, Sarah Diem and Brenda Cook.
Larry James addresses Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib concerns at MU forum

Larry James, on campus this week to interview for a key position with the MU College of Education, fielded questions Tuesday afternoon about his past involvement at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prison.

A retired Army psychologist and current dean of the Wright State School of Professional Psychology in Dayton, Ohio, James is one of two finalists for a position as division executive director. If chosen, he would oversee three academic units with about 65 faculty.

At a 75-minute public forum Tuesday, audience members questioned him on topics ranging from his involvement in coercive tactics used on terrorism suspects after 9/11 to his vision for the position he is seeking at MU.

The forum came at the midpoint in James' interview process. His visit concludes Wednesday, and a selection will be announced in early March, according to Education Dean Daniel Clay.

James' candidacy has prompted protest from community members. Also Tuesday, about 30 MU faculty and staff signed a letter requesting revocation of his candidacy.

The letter, addressed to Chancellor Brady Deaton, noted that "his possible appointment raises unresolved and extremely controversial issues. An ethical and moral cloud hangs over Dr. James's work and reputation, and, if he assumed a high-profile position here, that cloud would hang over MU, generally."

At the forum, a number of questions referred to passages in "Fixing Hell: An Army Psychologist Confronts Abu Ghraib," a book James wrote about enhanced interrogation techniques used on detainees there and in Cuba.

MU graduate student Aamer Trambu cited one example from the book — James' presence during an interrogation where four men held down a prisoner and attempted to dress him in a wig, pink nightgown and lipstick.

"How terrible did the torture have to be for you to stop it?" asked Trambu, who is also vice president of the MU Muslim Students Organization.
James said he intervened about five minutes after he first witnessed the event. He said multiple times throughout the forum that he did not have the authority to stop the enhanced interrogation techniques he witnessed. He said he worked hard to teach investigators not to use such techniques.

“In order to write this book, I had to retire at great personal cost to me,” James said. “The work I did there literally changed and outlawed all of those abusive tactics.”

**Envisioning the future**

In the first 30 minutes of the forum, James addressed his vision for the future of the position he is pursuing if he were to be selected.

“This is a nationally and internationally recognized college and university,” James said. “I will do everything I can to help expand its richness and experience.”

If he were to receive the job, James said he hoped to foster a diverse environment and propose the creation of a National Center for the Prevention of Gun Violence at the College of Education.

“This division has unique talent and expertise in educational leadership and administrations,” James said. “Our colleagues in this division will help us determine what are the best instructional methods to discourage a young child from wanting to bring a gun to school.”

John Wedman previously held the job for which James is interviewing, said Steven Adams, spokesman for the MU College of Education. Wedman, who is retiring, was paid $162,314 during the 2011-2012 school year, according to the UM System payroll.

James said he believes he has the skill set and background to guide the College of Education through any financial challenge. He cited a budget surplus at his school at Wright State University under his leadership as an example of his qualifications.

At the forum, faculty and staff also expressed concern that James would have trouble in a leadership role considering the controversy surrounding his past.

“Given that we’ve heard all of these questions, if you are selected for this job, how would you keep your appointment from being a lightning rod for the press?” College of Education associate professor Denice Adkins asked.

“I would support having a one-time, open forum,” James responded. “The one that I did at my university was only supposed to be one hour and ended up lasting four.”

He said the forum at Wright State University allowed him to address any lingering questions to the best of his ability.

After the discussion, Adkins said in an interview that she was divided between her professional perspective and personal opinion.
“We need someone who can do the job, whether that be James or the other candidate,” said Adkins, who will be one of the faculty members under the new division director.

“I think it’s important to hear all sides of the story. I would hate to be judged for something I did 10 years ago for the rest of my life.”

**A letter of protest**

James’ background would continue to taint his position, MU Spanish professor Michael Ugarte said before the forum.

“The question is, why bring a person of such controversy here to begin with?” asked Ugarte, who co-authored the letter directed to the chancellor.

Ugarte said he will continue to collect signatures before sending it to Deaton. He and other members of the MU academic community will join a news conference Wednesday morning at the MU Student Center.

Led by the St. Louis chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the news conference will bring together individuals speaking out against James’ candidacy, he said.

"The best possible outcome is that they hire someone qualified professionally and morally," Ugarte said.

"We as an academic community are very concerned about the people we hire and the ability they have to further our university."
UM President Wolfe testifies in support of state bond legislation

BY Fedor Zarkhin

JEFFERSON CITY — UM System President Tim Wolfe testified at a statehouse hearing Tuesday in support of a $950 million bond issue that could pay for projects at state institutions of higher education, at state parks and at other state facilities.

Wolfe was among a host of university officials who testified at the hearing, held by the House committee for Appropriations-Infrastructure and Job Creation. If passed in its current form, the bond issue also would provide money for state buildings, for state parks and for highways. Exactly what will be included in the final version remains to be seen.

The resolution, HJRI4, is sponsored by House Speaker Tim Jones, R-Eureka. It calls for a constitutional amendment authorizing the bonds. That amendment would be subject to a vote of the people.

Jones has said that now is the time to issue bonds, given Missouri’s AAA credit rating, historically low interest rates and the state’s critical infrastructure needs.

Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, is one of many co-sponsors of the bill and chairs the Appropriations-Infrastructure and Job Creation Committee. Reps. Stephen Webber and John Wright, both Columbia Democrats; Rep. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia; and Rep. Caleb Jones, R-California, also are co-sponsors.

Wolfe said on Tuesday that UM would be able to put the money to good use and create jobs at the same time. He cited many needs across the UM system, including an expansion of facilities at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Medicine and renovation of the MU College of Engineering’s Lafferre Hall.

Lafferre Hall was built in 1892 and has seen no major renovations since 1950, Wolfe said.

Overall, the backlog of necessary capital projects on the UM system’s four campuses totals $1.3 billion, Wolfe testified.

"Some students that are graduating from high school, and they take the tours of our campuses, see space that is not as current as what they’ve experienced at a high school," Wolfe said.
Wolfe also said he would like to double the number of students graduating in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"It's hard to prepare this work force when the buildings that they're taking classes in are crumbling around them," he said.

Wolfe estimated renovations made possible by the bond issue could create more than 3,000 jobs.

Numerous other university officials attended the hearing, including Truman State University President Troy Paino, Northwest Missouri State University President John Jasinski and Missouri Western State University President Robert Vartabedian. All cited the desire to fix aging facilities and to attract more students as reasons to support the bond issue.

About 30 people total testified in favor of the bond issue; none spoke against it.

Representatives of two labor unions and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce spoke in favor of the resolution. So did Steve Mahfood, a former director of the state Department of Natural Resources who was representing the Nature Conservancy in Missouri at the hearing.

Mahfood said he is acutely aware of the effects of financial neglect on the state park system. He underscored the fact that Missouri state parks are a significant economic asset to the state.

Considering the needs of all those who testified — and those who did not — Kelly said it would be a challenge to determine how exactly to divvy up any bond proceeds.

"Every single one of us will be disappointed," he said. "But every single one of us will also be delighted."

Kelly declined to predict whether the bond issue will have a better chance of passing this legislative session than it did in previous years.

Gov. Jay Nixon also proposed a bond issue during his State of the State address last week. Like Jones' bill, Nixon called for funding projects at colleges, universities and state parks. He also would use it to pay for renovations at Fulton State Hospital and to help pay for building projects in public school districts.

Nixon's proposal, however, does not include using bond proceeds for highway projects.
After growing nearly 20 percent the previous year, the nation’s colleges had a rather lackluster year on the endowment front in 2012.

The endowments of 831 U.S. colleges and universities suffered a slight decline in value — down 0.3 percent — during the 2012 fiscal year, according to an annual survey by the National Association of College and University Business Officers and the Commonfund Institute.

The stagnant growth, which takes into account investment returns, spending and new gifts, was not unexpected. When last year’s report was released, the authors predicted a downturn was likely, based on the struggling stock market.

While most of the larger local foundations suffered losses, there were a couple of bright spots.

**The University of Missouri system reported a 4.7 percent increase, with its endowment growing to $1.17 billion.**

Nikki Krawitz, the system’s vice president of finance, said the performance was boosted by the Columbia campus’ decision to sell its Research Animal Diagnostic Laboratory.

The unit, founded in 1968, provides services to companies that use animals in their research. Maine-based IDEXX Laboratories paid $43 million for the lab, which is staying in Columbia.

**That money is now being used to support Mizzou’s College of Veterinary Medicine.**

Krawitz said the system is looking at a stronger 2013, with significant gifts earmarked for Mizzou’s journalism program and its athletic department.

“If the market keeps going the way it is, it should be a good year,” Krawitz said.

The University of Illinois Foundation was in the closing months of its eight-year Brilliant Futures campaign, which brought in $2.43 billion in donations and pledges. Some of that money helped push the university’s foundation to $1.67 billion, a 4.2 percent increase over 2011.

Spokesman Don Kojich said 2012 marked the fifth consecutive year in which the foundation brought in more than $200 million in cash gifts: “It was a very strong year for us.”
And as with the UM system, 2013 is showing considerable promise. Just last week, the foundation announced a $100 million gift from the Grainger Foundation for the engineering college on the Urbana-Champaign campus.

These endowments often represent a significant source of money for schools, which use them for everything from scholarships to professorships to new academic buildings. Schools in the endowment survey said they get an average of 8.7 percent of their operating budgets from their endowments.

Among other local schools:

Washington University, with the nation’s 17th largest endowment, lost 1 percent of its value, falling to $5.23 billion; St. Louis University fell 3.1 percent to $853 million; the Principia Corporation dropped 12.7 percent to $593 million; and the Southern Illinois University Foundation fell 3.6 percent to $93 million.
WASHINGTON: Bossy mothers may limit their children's creativity, possibly making the kids enjoy being with them less, according to a new study. Researchers at the University of Missouri have found that the more directive the mothers were during play, the less engaged children were with them and more negative emotion the children displayed toward their mothers.

The study included children up to five years old and found that mothers’ directiveness, the extent to which they try to control the content and pace of young children’s play, varies based on the children’s ages and the mothers’ ethnicities.

"Children flourish when they have opportunities to make choices about what they do, particularly in play situations," said Jean Ispa, lead author of the study.

"Mothers who are highly directive do not allow that kind of choice. In our study, the children were playing with some toys, and the very directive mothers were making the decisions about how to play, what to play and how quickly to play," Ispa said.

For example, during play with her child, a highly directive mother might make her toddler put the plastic cow in the toy barn through the barn's door instead of through its window. If a child is playing with a pretend kitchen set, the mom might not let the child touch the fake burners on the stove.

Mothers often think they are helping their children by correcting them, but they are limiting the children's creativity and possibly making their children enjoy being with them less, Ispa said in a statement.

"It's often noted that European-American mothers are less directive generally than African-American and Mexican-American mothers, and that's also what we found," Ispa said.
Kids tune out when mom controls play

U. MISSOURI (US) — Children are less engaged when moms tell them how to play, according to a study that finds kids have more negative feelings toward “directive” moms.

Mothers’ directiveness, the extent to which they try to control the content and pace of young children’s play, varies based on the children’s ages and the mothers’ ethnicities, according to the research.

“Children flourish when they have opportunities to make choices about what they do, particularly in play situations,” says Jean Ispa, lead author of the study and professor of human development and family studies at University of Missouri.

“Mothers who are highly directive do not allow that kind of choice. In our study, the children were playing with some toys, and the very directive mothers were making the decisions about how to play, what to play, and how quickly to play.”

For example, during play with her child, a highly directive mother might make her toddler put the plastic cow in the toy barn through the barn’s door instead of through its window. If a child is playing with a pretend kitchen set, the mom might not let the child touch the fake burners on the stove.

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“It’s often noted that European-American mothers are less directive generally than African-American and Mexican-American mothers, and that’s also what we found,” Ispa says.

“When children were only a year old, on average, African-American mothers were the most directive, Mexican-American mothers were second, and European-American mothers were third. As children got older, mothers of all ethnicities displayed less directiveness.”
When mothers were highly directive during playtime, children expressed less positive regard for their moms and more negative feelings toward them, Ispa says.

The researchers also evaluated how affectionate the mothers were to their children and found that higher levels of warmth reduced the negative effects of directiveness.

"Even if mothers were very directive, if they were also warm, the negative effects of high directiveness lessened in every one of the ethnic groups we studied," Ispa says. "If mothers were negative or seemed critical of their kids, then the negative effects of directiveness increased."

To benefit their children’s development, mothers should show affection to their children while supporting their play and being careful to limit the extent to which they dictate exactly how their children should play, Ispa says.

“We know that children, regardless of culture, need to feel loved,” says Ispa. “Children take in the meaning of what their mothers are trying to do, so if a mom is being very directive and is generally a very warm person, I think the child feels, ‘My mom is doing this because she cares about me, and she’s trying to do the best for me.’ If that warmth is missing, then the child might feel, ‘My mom is trying to control me, and I don’t like it.’”

Ispa and her colleagues used pre-recorded videos to analyze pairs of mothers and children interacting in play environments when the children were 1, 2, 3, and 5 years old.

The mothers and children in the study all participated in the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation project, a federal study of Early Head Start, a nationwide program designed to help the cognitive, social, and emotional development of children from low-income families.

Additional researchers from University of Missouri, Arizona State University, the University of California, Los Angeles, the University of Connecticut, the University of Maryland, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro contributed to the study, which is published in Parenting: Science and Practice.
Facebook updates could reveal mental illness

Between all the TGIF posts and baby pictures, your Facebook friend could be dropping clues about their mental state.

**In fact, social networking profiles could help give therapists a better look at patient health, according to a study from the University of Missouri.**

“This study is a first step to using social networking information to possibly providing a more complete clinical picture,” study leader Elizabeth Martin, doctoral student in the university’s psychological science department, told the Star.

The idea for the study came through a conversation with co-author Drew Bailey, who does not have a Facebook account, said Martin. “He and I were talking about why some people would choose not to have one. That lead to a long discussion about Facebook pages content, which spurred the study idea.”

The study, published in the journal Psychiatry Research, asked more than 200 college students to print their Facebook activity and fill out a questionnaire about their personality and beliefs. Only two of the students refused to print their pages.

Researchers compared the results to the individual’s signs of schizotypy — a range of symptoms including social withdrawal and odd beliefs.

“The internet is novel way to study human psychology because it can ameliorate some of the self-report biases associated with paper-and-pencil reports,” said Martin.
“Because of the real or imagined perception of anonymity, the internet may allow access to the unique access to the psyche. One’s social networking information can be understood as an example of one’s naturalistic behaviour.”

People with social anhedonia — the inability to experience pleasure from usually enjoyable activities — had fewer Facebook friends, communicated less frequently and shared fewer photos, the researchers said. However, these participants also had larger profiles.

While participants had the option of hiding items from their timeline before submitting it to researchers — a sign of paranoia, according to the study — the information they chose to reveal suggests people may be more comfortable sharing information — or their true feelings — online than in person.

“This study suggests that social networking activity is related to personality characteristics. Thus, it isn't necessarily implying that some people are ‘more open’ online but that they are actual their true selves,” says Martin.

Whether therapists could use services such as Twitter or Facebook for treatment requires more study, but researchers say the social networks could be helpful for evaluating health.

“In the future, it is possible that social networking information could help provide a more complete clinical picture,” Martin says. “This could possibly aid in treatment.”
Mizzou Alumni Association’s Legislative Network lobbies for higher education in Jefferson City, Mo.

By Vivian Qian

While politicians in Jefferson City discuss how to delegate funding and resources for public higher education, MU has its own grassroots advocacy coalition lobbying to steer the results in the best interest of the university.

The Mizzou Legislative Network is a grassroots advocacy coalition and committee in the Mizzou Alumni Association with a mission to uphold higher education by influencing public policy and shaping political events.

“The organization was formed to give the alumni and friends of the university the opportunity to influence the legislature on behalf the university,” MU Legislative Network Chair Wally Pfeffer said.

The MLN has a long history of uniting the MU community, M. Dianne Drainer, Mizzou Network Legislative Liaison and Advocacy Director, said.

“The Mizzou Legislative Network committee was initially called LINC, Legislative Information Network Committee,” Drainer said. “The name was changed to Mizzou Legislative Network. The committee is a family of alumni, students, parents, faculty staff and friends of the university. Over the last four years, we have grown to over 4,500 Mizzou advocates.”

The network’s main responsibility is to contact the legislators about university funding and particular bills that would be important for the university.

“For instance, the network allowed the state to sell bonds to do construction to elevate the university buildings, not only at Mizzou, but also at (other) higher education institutions,” Pfeffer said.

To put everyone under its umbrella and benefits, the committee works together to make sure that everybody is well educated on the legislative issues that combine higher education and MU, Pfeffer said.
"The spirit of the organization is to strengthen our Mizzou advocates to stand up for Mizzou, which is a campaign we started one year ago," Drainer said. "The goal is to reach out to everyone, to put the emphasis on and support for the best higher education public policy for our flagship university."

Drainer said that the factual information on legislative issues is the most meaningful part because it can impact higher education and higher education policy.

Pfeffer said the essence of the network is influence, and people who join in the network can get a lot from it.

"We have Mizzou family to reach out to their legislators to influence things positively, which can benefit our university, and that is the core mission we need to accomplish," Pfeffer said. "Also, people can get a great deal of satisfaction in helping the committee and (the MLN members) push the legislation that we need to see done."

Although the coalition has exerted a lot of effort to do a good job, by attending the university-wide Legislative Day at the Capitol for instance, Drainer said, it still has a long-term plan for the future.

"The future of the organization is to continue to be proactive in supporting higher education public policies and strengthening the university," Drainer said.
MU will be hosting the 2014 Southeastern Conference Exchange next January. Having attended the event for the past two years, 2014 will be only the third time the university has been part of the exchange.

The exchange is a chance for the student governments of SEC schools to gather, bounce ideas off of one another and talk about how their systems tick. Representatives are selected from each student government body and meet annually at a host school, most recently Texas A&M.

At the most recent exchange held last weekend in College Station, Texas, Missouri Students Association representatives asked for the bid to host the next edition of the event and received it with ease, MSA President Nick Droege said. A presentation of MU and the city of Columbia was unnecessary after other SEC schools left the decision to hand the reins to MU uncontested.

“We had enough time down there to talk to the other representatives and their advisers about who wanted to host the conference, and we put our name out there early,” Droege said.

Now that it has been announced that MU will host the next conference, it means back-to-back new additions to the SEC will have had the opportunity to display their schools to a different group of institutions. The introduction of MU and Texas A&M to the SEC has been a large proponent as to why each school has been selected, Droege said.

Despite having to host to a slew of still-unfamiliar universities, Droege said he is excited about the prospect and is prepared to show the rest of the SEC’s student representatives what MU brings to the table. Points of emphasis at the conference will be the connectedness of MU and its strong foundation of tradition, Droege said.

The conference has also fueled the creative power of MSA and its president. After attending the conference the past two years, Droege came up with the idea of Tiger Pantry when he attended his first exchange. Other pending policies such as emergency loan and business attire lending programs took root at conferences. Droege used both of these ideas as campaign platforms this past semester.
Director of Student Communications Jimmy Hibsch and Maneater staff member, fresh from his first conference in College Station, said he shares with Droege the creative bug that comes from the direct interaction with fellow representatives.

"Just being in that environment with so many student leaders who care so much about their school — it’s almost toxic to not want to come back and be the best student government you can be," Hibsch said.

Having just been appointed as part of Droege’s cabinet, Hibsch said being new to MSA and the student government process has made the experience all the more exciting. He and fellow cabinet members came away with a number of ideas that far exceeded their expectations, Hibsch said.

Despite having just recently learned that the next conference would be at MU, Droege and his cabinet have began preparing for the January date. By the end of March, applications will be released for a committee designated to planning the upcoming event, Droege said.

“We really want to get people on that committee from all over campus, not just MSA,” Droege said. “It’s important to make sure that we’re putting all those people who are so great and so prideful of our university in the position to show the top leaders (of other schools) what we have to offer.”
ASUM to focus on legislative issues

By Andrew Graham

After a successful voter registration campaign, ASUM plans to change focus.

The Associated Students of the University of Missouri registered more than 5,000 students in the fall semester to vote and plans to continue this work in the spring semester.

With events such as “Let Your Vote Roar,” the organization’s main initiative in the fall semester was working on student voter registration before the presidential election. With the second semester upon them, ASUM has switched its focus from voter registration to the spring legislative session.

The organization strives to have a voice in local politics, and its main goal of the semester will be to lobby at the capitol for the interests of the student body of the UM System, executive director Corbin Evans said.

The group recruits interns from all four University of Missouri campuses, and those interns are trained during the fall semester. During the spring semester they spend two days a week at the capitol lobbying for student interests.

“What our organization does, the kind of uniqueness of it, is that we actually write policy, and then we lobby on that policy on behalf of the students,” Evans said.

The group is registered through the Missouri Ethics Commission as lobbyists in Missouri. They essentially do what professional lobbying groups in the state do during the spring session, which runs from January to May, Evans said.

When the group is at the capitol, they are in constant discussion every day with state senators and representatives, Evans said.

“While (ASUM President Roshaunda McLean) and the ASUM MU campus chapter are planning to do great things on campus, the ASUM Legislative Internship Team, headed by Legislative Director Abigail Thomas, is working hard lobbying for students in Jefferson City,” Evans said.

According to Steven Dickherber, a former MSA Legislative Advocacy Officer who worked with ASUM, the group has done a good job managing their money, which will give them advantages in the spring session. The lobbying work has generated a great working relationship with the state of Missouri.
“Essentially, if Mizzou can raise enough private donorship to build a non-revenue building, academic building . . . If Mizzou can raise enough for capitol for half the funding, the state will match them, given that there’s the money,” Dickherber said.

While ASUM is a fairly new organization, it continues to grow significantly every year.

McLean said the role of the president isn’t even fully defined as the group continues to grow on campus. This growth includes its first MU executive board: McLean, Vice President Ted Hammers, public relations organizer Daniela Sirtori and clerk Jennifer Pagan.

With every student paying into the organization as part of tuition, the group is obligated to lobby for what a majority of the students want in the spring. As spring approaches, those issues will start to come to light and will be addressed by the group, Evans said. One issue that is likely to come up is landlord-tenant relations.

“The landlord-tenant relations issue is something that ASUM continues to try and solve with legislation,” Evans said. “This year, however, we have decided to also attempt to address the problem through an education campaign. Information is being compiled and distributed on how students can register complaints about their landlords through the Consumer Protections Division of the Attorney General’s office.”

ASUM will also be collecting student input with a survey.

“Additionally, ASUM will be administering a legislative issues survey this semester to engage the students on what they would like to see ASUM lobby for,” Evans said. “This survey will be distributed across the UM System and gives students a chance to tell us what we are doing right and what they would like for us to spend more time on.
Commission to honor city’s notable properties

Six buildings to be recognized.

By Andrew Denney

Tuesday, February 5, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Although its days could be numbered, the Niedermeyer building at 920 Cherry St. will be recognized Tuesday night along with five other properties during the Columbia Historic Preservation Commission’s annual Most Notable Properties gala.

The Niedermeyer, of which portions were first constructed in 1837, had first been suggested for a notable properties designation in 2010, said preservation commission Chairman Brian Treece.

But he said the owner of the building asked to hold off for that year’s gala because a crane fell through the roof of the apartment building just before it was set to be recognized.

Last year, however, St. Louis developer Collegiate Housing Partners proposed to demolish the Niedermeyer, owned by Niedermeyer LC, a company controlled by Fred Hinshaw, and construct high-rise student apartments in its place.

"We thought it was better to recognize the Niedermeyer in its current state rather than posthumously," Treece said.

Demolition cannot begin until utilities are shut down and tenants are out of the building, and the earliest that could happen is the end of July because of leases that are in place.

Wally Bley, an attorney for Hinshaw, said the property owner is still working out the details of a purchase contract, but he declined to elaborate, saying the deal is a private matter. Messages left with a spokesman for Collegiate Housing Partners and for local attorney Robert Hollis, an attorney who is representing the company, were not returned.

Meanwhile, historic preservationists have begun a process of applying for historic tax credits in an effort to save the building. The Niedermeyer served as the first site of the Columbia Female Academy, a precursor to Stephens College, and the first meeting of the University of Missouri Board of Curators was held there in 1839.
Among the other properties to be recognized tonight is Booches, a Ninth Street burger joint that stands as a Columbia landmark and is the city's longest operating commercial operations: It opened for business in 1884 and moved to its current location in 1927.

Also to be recognized is the Pi Beta Phi Alpha chapter sorority house on East Rollins Road, which has stood at its current location since 1930, and private residences at 1411 Anthony St., 703 Ingleside Drive and 916 W. Stewart Road.

Denise Kussman, president of the chapter's house corporation who attended the university from 1992 to 1996, said when she joined the corporation about seven years ago, its members conducted a feasibility study as to whether or not the building should be preserved or whether the building should be demolished to make way for a new chapter house.

They chose to preserve the structure, Kussman said, an effort that she says has cost about $1 million.

Work was performed on the house during summer and winter breaks, she said, to prevent disrupting school semesters. She said preservation efforts have focused mainly on modernizing the house while working to preserve its historic elements.

"That was the original goal, to keep everything with the style of the house," Kussman said.

The gala will be held at 6:45 p.m. in the Historic Daniel Boone Building lobby of City Hall, 701 E. Broadway.
Downtown's future gets another boost

Kansas City Star Editorial

The steady push to increase downtown Kansas City’s population received more encouraging news in recent days.

Clearly, some investors are bullish on the prospects, willing to create new housing in the urban core. And people still have good reasons to move into the area.

- **The Missouri Board of Curators approved plans to seek development of a $30 million apartment complex to serve the nearly 3,000 University of Missouri-Kansas City health care students near Hospital Hill.**
- A city panel endorsed property tax breaks for the reuse of buildings in the Crossroads Arts District. One would add seven units in the 1500 block of Walnut Street. The other would produce 14 apartments at 2100 Central St.

Downtown’s population has boomed from 6,300 residents in 2002 to 19,590 by 2012. Still, downtown’s promoters want to hit the 40,000 mark in another few decades, and it’s going to take a combination of public subsidies and private dollars to get the job done.

City officials need to control the tax incentives poured into apartment construction. With current occupancy close to 100 percent, and strong demand for more downtown living spaces, City Hall should not go overboard in handing out taxpayer giveaways to housing developers.

Instead, officials should demand strong private investment in return for access to limited taxpayer funds. The city must use the most cost-effective ways to grow downtown’s population.