UM System President Tim Wolfe reflects on his first year

By Katie Yaeger
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COLUMBIA — In reflecting on his first year leading the University of Missouri System, Tim Wolfe said its biggest focus now is strategic planning.

Each campus is creating a plan to show what it will look like in 2018, which will influence all decisions the campus makes in the next five years, the UM System president said during a meeting with reporters Tuesday morning. As part of the plan, each campus is asked to identify its strongest areas to "define the brand" of each.

Wolfe said there are no plans to cut jobs.

"We're going to take every measure that we possibly can to continue to employ the wonderful employees that we've got right now, but the strategic planning will drive what resources we need, where, to accomplish the objectives defined by each of the four campuses," he said.

All campuses have prioritized online learning, which is growing twice as fast in the UM System as the market is growing, Wolfe said.

"We are recruiting a student that now has expectations for online learning, and they're very comfortable with that because it's customized and it's individual, and we're supporting that," Wolfe said. "The marketplace of potential students is demanding this as well."

Wolfe said online learning also assists with capacity challenges in classrooms. In the past 12 years, UM System enrollment has grown by 19,000 students — enough students to form an additional four-year college that would be the third-largest in Missouri — and the system does not plan to place caps on enrollment.

Last year, the system brought its e-Iearning portal online, which allows a current or prospective student to search more than 1,200 classes and more than 100 degrees available. The system is continuing to enhance online learning with course development and awareness campaigns.
Wolfe sees partnerships with universities around the world as another growth area. Chancellors have been traveling internationally to look for new opportunities and strengthen existing relationships for all four campuses; previously, each campus individually approached global relationships.

As Wolfe promised in his acceptance speech in December 2011, he spent the weeks before taking office Feb. 15, 2012, talking with people about the system. These conversations have allowed him to make more informed decisions as president, he said.

Wolfe said he has learned more interacting with students and faculty on campuses than being in University Hall. "You have to experience it firsthand and see what the challenges are," he said.

He said he also learned how complex the UM System is and how to get input from faculty to make better-informed decisions for the system.

"We have brilliant faculty that are very eager to be part of the decision-making across the four campuses, and we need to take advantage of that," he said.

Wolfe, a career businessman, said he's learned not to use terms such as "customer," "profit" and "loss" in discussions about higher education; they don't translate well, he said.

At a different point in his remarks, Wolfe said that although the University of Missouri Press is in a better place than it was, he would have handled the situation differently and talked with more people to make the press's transition more smooth. Last year, Wolfe initially announced that the press would close, then said it would continue under MU's operation and with an increased digital presence.

*Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.*
Thomas Wolfe wrote that you can't go home again, but for Tim Wolfe, it seems to be working out pretty well so far.

Wolfe is the hometown high school football star and Mizzou alum who returned to Columbia last February as president of the University of Missouri system after a career in telecommunications. With no experience in academia, he took over a four-campus system that has seen a constant growth in enrollment and a steady decline in state support in recent years.

Those challenges still remain, but as he completes his first year in office, Wolfe says that he is energized by the message he has for the residents of Missouri: Their public university system is engaged in work that enriches their lives every day, and he wants to make sure that value is recognized in all corners of the state.

“Our future is bright,” he told reporters Tuesday at a session recapping his first 12 months at the helm of the university system. “The work we do is valuable.”

Wolfe spoke enthusiastically about the people he has met on the system’s four campuses and those who have been touched by its outreach programs.

“In my wildest imagination,” he said, “I never would have imagined the creativity and the life-changing research that is going on. It’s just eye opening, and that research is going to translate to improvements in quality of life and new businesses. It’s what is special and unique about the University of Missouri system.”

He admitted to a bit of a learning curve making the transition from the business world, where decisions are made more quickly and with less discussion, and academia, where shared governance and collaboration are more of a watchword.

And he acknowledged that a lack of consultation helped lead to what may have been the biggest negative mark on his record so far: His ill-fated move to close the University of Missouri Press.
First the press was closing, then it was moving to the Columbia campus, then it was changed again to a model more like what it has always been, though it will now operate on the campus level, not the system level.

“I believe the decision we made in terms of moving the press closer to the academic research mission here on the MU campus was the right decision,” he said. “How we went about it could have improved, to bring more people into the process to make that transition smoother.”

**Learning at college**

In various forums where he has talked recently about his first year in office, Wolfe has mentioned how much he has learned as president of the system. He said the university’s complexity is something that is hard to understand or appreciate until you are working on the inside.

What specifically has he learned?

Wolfe ticked off the contributions of faculty members and the political aspects of the job.

“There are a lot of political influences and a lot of people who need to be convinced of the value of higher education and specifically the University of Missouri system,” he said. “But the amount of time you have to spend in influencing political leadership was surprising.”

As far as professors go, he noted that because both of his parents were members of the university faculty, the concerns of academia were not foreign to him, but he has now seen them from a new perspective.

“We have brilliant faculty that are very eager to be part of the decision making across the four campuses,” Wolfe said. “We need to take advantage of that. They have expertise and ideas about how we can be better at teaching and research and development. The opportunity for us is to reach out to those faculty as much as we possibly can and get their input to make better decisions.”

He said his transition was made easier by the fact that the university is in good shape and already benefitted from strong leadership. But, he added, he has sometimes had to change his vocabulary to fit more into the academic mindset. Referring to students as customers, for example, doesn’t always sit well; neither does talking in terms of profit and loss.

“They’re not words that are used in higher education,” Wolfe said, “so I’ve changed the vernacular.”

And, he said, the pace on campus is often more deliberate and more deliberative than he was used to in the business world.

“You always want to do things faster,” he said. “It just takes a lot of time to move because you have to bring everybody along. A lot of conversations have to take place.”
“That’s the nature of our industry. Change is difficult.”

But having grown up in a college town and lived in college towns for much of his life, he said that still being able to work among students is a benefit that comes with the job.

“There is a thrill to walking on the campus,” Wolfe said, “and feeling the energy you get from the students and the faculty. That continues to be a thrill.”

**Good grades**

Those who he has worked with closely during the past year seem pretty happy as well.

David Bradley of St. Joseph, who headed the university’s Board of Curators during most of Wolfe’s first year in office, said the transition from Wolfe’s corporate world to academia was successful, for the most part.

“I think he did a fine job of getting to understand the broad reach of the whole system and all of the things it does,” Bradley said. “To get your arms around all of the locations that have something to do with the University of Missouri is an enormous task in itself.

“He loves the job. He enjoys being involved with the biggest economic driver for the state of Missouri. He loves going out and meeting with its various constituencies.”

The next phase, Bradley said, will be for Wolfe and his newly revamped administration to complete a strategic planning process, then put it into place.

“I think he’s putting together the strategic plan that is going to be a great idea and get all the campuses focused on the university’s primary mission, so we can be held accountable.

“He’s done some things with the reorganization of his staff. All of his moves have been very solid moves to help him function better. It’s his show now. He needs to run it the way he wants to.”

Bradley did acknowledge that Wolfe has hit “a few bumps on the road, and I think he’s learned from them.”

One of the biggest bumps, Bradley said, involved the press. What did Wolfe learn from the experience? Bradley put it this way:

“He learned to bring together the various folks who are going to be affected by it and talk to them about how he would like to change a situation to improve it. He probably could have had better communication with the MU campus about it.

“It’s not the end of the world. We still have a university press, and we’re doing things to improve it. That kind of shakeup gets the juices flowing, and it might mean a better future for the University of Missouri Press.”
Unlike the strife at Saint Louis University, where professors have complained about the administration’s refusal to include them in decision making, Wolfe seems to have adopted a much more accepting view of shared governance with faculty members.

Stephen Moehrle, an accounting professor at the St. Louis campus and chair of the university’s Interfaculty Council, says there may be a good reason for that.

“His parents were academics,” Moehrle noted, “and he’s been a quick study. People emphasized to him the importance of it, and he’s embraced that for sure.”

Adds Susan Brownell, an anthropology professor at UMSL and also an IFC member:

“It’s been an interesting working relationship. We had a president, that came out of the academic system, Elson Floyd, then we had a president out of the corporate world, Gary Forsee.

“Now we have a president who combines the best of both worlds. He has a corporate background that certainly shapes some of his concerns, but at the same time he does seem to recognize the academic world does not work like the corporate world, and there may be things he doesn’t have the proper preparation for. He’s open to new ideas. He recognizes that he has an entrepreneurial approach, but he needs someone who has experience implementing it in the academic world.”

Brownell is part of a new shared governance subcommittee of the IFC to help make sure the new relationship stays productive.

“So far he has been quite a listener,” she said. “On issues he feels strongly about, he can be quite passionate. Business as usual is just not going to be happening anymore. We’re in a difficult financial situation. Hard decisions have to be made. He wants more of an entrepreneurial approach.”

Moehrle put it this way:

“I think people overblow the academic nature of that position. It is the head of a huge organization and it’s also very political. I think that position takes a special skill set that may or may not be best served by an academic.”

Pressed on the UM Press

One of the chief critics of the way the situation involving the university press was handled isn’t as charitable toward Wolfe as Bradley and others have been.

“It should have never happened,” said Ned Stuckey-French, an assistant professor of English at Florida State University who led the charge to save the press. “It was frustrating. It was a long hard struggle. He came in as someone with no graduate degrees, no teaching experience, no university administrative experience. I think he got used by some of the people who were advising him and already had a plan in mind to close the press.
"I think he would have served himself better by doing a listening tour for a while. He probably didn’t think it was a decision of this magnitude, but it was striking at the very heart of the university."

Stuckey-French gives Wolfe credit for coming around, though he wishes the battle had not been so protracted.

“He did recognize, I think, that he had made a mistake,” he said, “and the press was saved. It just took 5,300 signatures on an internationally circulated petition, 2,800 Facebook followers, rallies and meetings and press releases and op-ed pieces and letters and letters and letters to the editor.

“He came from the private sector, where he was the boss, and it’s my way or the highway. Now, he’s dealing with faculty and shared governance and people who have committed their lives to the university in a way that he hasn’t. I think he didn’t understand that he couldn’t just issue this edict that he saw as a cost-cutting measure and not run into the trouble he ran into.”

Moehrle says that while the Press closure issue drew a lot of attention, it may not have merited it.

“I think they blew it out of proportion,” he said of the opponents of the closure. “In retrospect, I’m sure it was a very loud minority making a lot of noise.”

So, has the lesson been learned once and for all? Stuckey-French hopes so, but he and his allies in the university press are keeping an eye out, just in case.

“I think we’re wary,” he said. “For me, and for a lot of people who got really involved in this struggle and this campaign, the thing that kept us going is that we saw this as an attack on public higher education. State funding has gone down nationally, since the ‘90s, and this was just one more kind of fallout from that.

“If you believe in public higher education and its importance to America and to our culture, you don’t think it should be run on a private model. That’s what I was fighting for. It was bigger than the press, in my mind.”
The Indiana Jones of Anthropology

Among the hazards Napoleon Chagnon encountered in the Venezuelan jungle were a jaguar that would have mauled him had it not become confused by his mosquito net and a 15-foot anaconda that lunged from a stream over which he bent to drink. There were also hairy black spiders, rats that clambered up and down his hammock ropes and a trio of Yanomami tribesmen who tried to smash his skull with an ax while he slept. (The men abandoned their plan when they realized that Chagnon, a light sleeper, kept a loaded shotgun within arm’s reach.) These are impressive adversaries — “Indiana Jones had nothing on me,” is how Chagnon puts it — but by far his most tenacious foes have been members of his own profession.

At 74, Chagnon may be this country’s best-known living anthropologist; he is certainly its most maligned. His monograph, “Yanomamö: The Fierce People,” which has sold nearly a million copies since it was first published in 1968, established him as a serious scientist in the swashbuckling mode — “I looked up and gasped when I saw a dozen burly, naked, filthy, hideous men staring at us down the shafts of their drawn arrows!” — but it also embroiled him in controversy.

In turning the Yanomami into the world’s most famous “unacculturated” tribe, Chagnon also turned the romantic image of the “noble savage” on its head. Far from living in harmony with one another, the tribe engaged in frequent chest-pounding duels and deadly inter-village raids; violence or threat of violence dominated social life. The Yanomami, he declared, “live in a state of chronic warfare.”

The phrase may be the most contested in the history of anthropology. Colleagues accused him of exaggerating the violence, even of imagining it — a projection of his aggressive personality. As Chagnon’s fame grew — his book became a standard text in college courses — so did the complaints. No detail was too small to be debated, including the transliteration of the tribe’s name. As one commentator wrote: “Those who refer to the group as Yanomamö generally tend to be supporters of Chagnon’s work. Those who prefer Yanomami or Yanomama tend to take a more neutral or anti-Chagnon stance.”
In 2000, the simmering criticisms erupted in public with the release of “Darkness in El Dorado,” by the journalist Patrick Tierney. A true-life jungle horror story redolent with allusions to Conrad, the book charged Chagnon with grave misdeeds: not just fomenting violence but also fabricating data, staging documentary films and, most sensational, participating in a biomedical expedition that may have caused or worsened a measles epidemic that resulted in hundreds of Yanomami deaths. Advance word of the book was enough to plunge anthropology into a global public-relations crisis — a typical headline: “Scientist Killed Amazon Indians to Test Race Theory.” But even today, after thousands of pages of discussion, including a lengthy investigation by the American Anthropological Association (A.A.A.), there is no consensus about what, if anything, Chagnon did wrong.

Shut out of the jungle because he was so polarizing, he took early retirement from the University of California at Santa Barbara in 1999. “The whole point of my existence as a human being and as an anthropologist was to do more and more research before this primitive world disappeared,” he told me bitterly. He spent much of the past decade working on a memoir instead, “Noble Savages: My Life Among Two Dangerous Tribes — the Yanomamó and the Anthropologists,” which comes out this month. It is less likely to settle the score than to reignite debate. “The subtitle is typical Chagnon,” says Leslie Sponsel, an anthropologist at the University of Hawaii and a longtime critic of Chagnon. “Some will interpret it as an insult to the Yanomami and to anthropology in general.” Sponsel despaired that what is known as “the fierce controversy” would ever be satisfactorily resolved. “It’s quicksand, a Pandora’s box,” he said. “It’s also to some degree a microcosm of anthropology.”

When Chagnon first went into the jungle, in 1964, the public image of anthropology was at its peak. Claude Lévi-Strauss’s “Tristes Tropiques,” his magisterial memoir of his years studying tribes in Brazil, had recently been translated into English, prompting Susan Sontag to declare anthropology “one of the rare intellectual vocations that do not demand a sacrifice of one’s manhood. Courage, love of adventure and physical hardiness — as well as brains — are used by it.” “Dead Birds” (1963), Robert Gardner’s depiction of ritual warfare among the Dani people of New Guinea, was greeted as a landmark of ethnographic filmmaking. In the “Stone Age” culture of the Dani, anthropologists believed they had a snapshot of human development at a crucial early stage, and rumors of other “uncontacted” tribes fueled fantasies of genuine discovery. Membership in the A.A.A. doubled between 1960, when Margaret Mead, the field’s pre-eminent authority, served a term as president, and 1968.

Chagnon was well cast for life in the field. A 26-year-old graduate student at the University of Michigan, he grew up poor in rural Port Austin, Mich., the second of 12 children. He was self-
sufficient and handy with a shotgun — minimum requirements for surviving on jungle terrain
where the nearest airstrip was several hours downstream by motorized canoe. "It's the harshest
environment in the world, physically speaking," Kenneth Good, an anthropologist at New Jersey
City University, who accompanied Chagnon to Venezuela in 1975 and eventually married a
teenage Yanomami woman, told me. "I nearly died of malaria several times."

Today, Chagnon's own health is fragile. He had open-heart surgery in 2006 — "a likely
consequence of the attacks on me," he says — and suffers from a lung condition that keeps him
tethered to a portable oxygen tank much of the time. Still, when I met him in January, at
his home in a wooded subdivision near the University of Missouri in Columbia,
where he and his wife, Carlene, had just moved so that he could take up a new
position in the anthropology department, he had half a dozen pheasants in his
freezer, quarry from a recent hunting expedition with his German shorthaired
pointer, Darwin. "Pheasant breast on toast with butter is one of the more delicious breakfasts
I've ever eaten," he said solemnly.

In his baseball cap and faded jeans, with a thermos of Heineken at his side, he seemed a pointed
rebuke to Ivory Tower decorum. The house, a cavernous brick two-story, was only partly
furnished — the Chagnons had lived there all of 10 days. But elegantly arrayed along a ledge
above the mantel were a couple dozen woven baskets, like so many households around the rim
of a shabono — the vine-and-leaf structure that encloses an entire Yanomami village.

Chagnon's account of his first encounter with the tribe is legendary: he crept through the low
entrance of a shabono, startling a group of Yanomami warriors — the dozen "filthy, hideous
men" — who had just concluded a bloody club fight with a neighboring village over the
abduction of seven women. "Immense wads of green tobacco were stuck between their lower
teeth and lips making them look even more hideous," Chagnon wrote, "and strands of dark­
green slime dripped or hung from their noses." (The green snot was a side effect of ebene, a
hallucinogen that the Yanomami blow into one another's nostrils.)

By the end of that first day, Chagnon knew he needed to rethink what he had been taught. Apart
from a handful of reports by missionaries and European ethnographers, little was known about
the Yanomami, who were scattered among several hundred shabonos across roughly 70,000
square miles on the Venezuelan-Brazilian border. According to the reigning "cultural
materialist" doctrine — which owed as much to Marx as to the noble-savage ideal — conflict
among groups arose only when there was competition for strategic resources: food, tools, land.
The Yanomami in Bisaasi-teri, the shabono that Chagnon had entered, appeared not to be
lacking these things. They shouldn't have been fighting with their neighbors, and certainly not
over women — that kind of reproductive competition, cultural materialists claimed, had nothing
to do with warfare. During Chagnon’s initial 17 months in the field, one nearby village was
raided 25 times. “I began realizing that my training in Michigan was not all that it was supposed
to be,” he said.

He spent his first few months trying to learn the villagers’ names and kinship ties, a standard
practice at the time and a particular challenge in this case, given the Yanomami’s name taboos:
to call someone by his name is often an insult, and the names of the dead aren’t supposed to be
uttered at all. Chagnon rewarded informants with fish hooks, matches and, for men who really
dished, knives and machetes. (The Yanomami made no metal tools themselves.) Then, on a visit
to another village, Chagnon cautiously mentioned the names of the Bisaasi-teri headman and his
wife. The residents burst out laughing. He realized that he’d been had: the names he’d been
given were slang for genitalia.

Genealogies became Chagnon’s driving obsession. They were crucial for tracing patterns of
reproduction — determining which men had the most offspring or how many had wives from
other villages. By the end of his last trip to the jungle, in 1995, Chagnon had data on about 4,000
Yanomami, in some cases going back to the 19th century. “That’s what he lives for,” Raymond
Hames, an anthropologist at the University of Nebraska who worked with Chagnon as a
graduate student, told me. “To collect the data, update the data, crosscheck it. He’s incredibly
meticulous.”

Genealogies could also be useful for understanding genetic variations within social groups —
then a new avenue of research. Before leaving Ann Arbor, Chagnon met with James V. Neel, a
prominent geneticist at the university’s medical school, to propose a collaboration. Neel was best
known for his genetic studies of survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. But he was
interested in indigenous populations, in part because, having never been exposed to atomic
radiation, they could provide a base line for comparison. After taking samples of the Yanomani’s
blood, Neel discovered that the tribe’s levels of heavy metals and other environmental toxins
were similar to Westerners’. They also lacked immunity to measles. In 1968, Chagnon helped
Neel’s team vaccinate 1,000 Yanomami against the disease, just as it broke out near Bisaasi-teri.

**Chagnon believed that** biology was essential to understanding the tribe’s warfare over
women. After all, more women meant more opportunities to pass on genes through
reproduction — a basic tenet of evolutionary thought. But biology had no place in the cultural-
materialist paradigm. And explanations of human behavior that relied on evolutionary theory
were typically met with suspicion in anthropological circles, a legacy of the American eugenics
movement, which invoked Darwinian ideas to justify racist efforts to “improve” the gene pool.
“The last bastions of resistance to evolutionary theory,” Chagnon told me, “are organized religion and cultural anthropology.”

Marvin Harris, the leading cultural materialist and a professor at Columbia, was adamant that the Yanomami could not be fighting over women, and in 1975, he threw down a gauntlet. One of Harris’s former students, Daniel Gross, had just published a paper arguing that a scarcity of animal protein led to conditions that favored violence among Amazonian tribes, a theory Harris enthusiastically adopted. Chagnon, who had taken a job at Penn State, and three graduate students met with Harris in New York, on their way to Venezuela. "Harris said, ‘If you can show me that the Yanomami get the protein equivalent of one Big Mac per day, I’ll eat my hat.’" recalled Chagnon, who accepted the challenge.

By then Chagnon was waging battles on several fronts. That year, the Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson published “Sociobiology,” to the dismay of many anthropologists, who were appalled by what they perceived as Wilson’s attempt to reduce human social behavior to an effect of genes. But Chagnon was excited by Wilson’s ideas, and in 1976 he and a colleague arranged for two sessions on sociobiology to take place at the annual A.A.A. convention. The evening before the sessions, several scholars moved to prohibit them. “Impassioned accusations of racism, fascism and Nazism punctuated the frenzied business meeting that night,” Chagnon writes in “Noble Savages.” Only after Margaret Mead denounced the motion as a “book burning” was it defeated.

At the same time, Chagnon’s portrayal of Yanomami aggression was meeting with increasing resistance. One theory had it that his habit of rewarding cooperative subjects with steel tools — common practice at the time — worsened conflicts. Jacques Lizot, a French anthropologist who spent more than 15 years in a village near Bisaasi-teri, wrote that he hoped to “revise the exaggerated representation that has been given of Yanomami violence. The Yanomami are warriors; they can be brutal and cruel, but they can also be delicate, sensitive and loving.” These latter traits also appeared, though less prominently, in Chagnon’s work. In “The Fierce People,” he recounts the night he became “emotionally close to the Yanomamö for the first time.” A village headman had been killed in a raid, and his brothers were audibly mourning his death. Moved, Chagnon lay quietly in his hammock, not wanting to intrude with his tape recorder or notebook. When asked why he was not “making a nuisance of himself as usual,” Chagnon explained that he was sad. This news was quickly passed around, and for the rest of the night he was treated with great deference: “I was hushuo, in a state of emotional disequilibrium, and had finally begun to act like a human being as far as they were concerned.”
What could have been fruitful academic debates became personal and nasty. It didn’t help that Chagnon could be arrogant and impolitic. “Oh, God, did we have some fights in the field,” says Raymond Hames, who accompanied him on the 1975 protein-challenge trip. “He’s pretty damn sure of himself.” Hames, who remains a close friend, says he and Chagnon “made it work out.” But this was not the case with others.

Kenneth Good was also on the trip and was delegated to study protein consumption at a village far upstream from Bisaasi-teri. Chagnon, he says, refused to give him a steel boat or replenish his anti-malaria pills and didn’t care that he capsized and was stranded without food for three days. “If he had behaved in a civil way, we could have been lifelong allies,” Good told me. (Chagnon says that Good’s demands were unreasonable: “He wasn’t civil to me from the very beginning. I took him into the most exciting field opportunity that existed in anthropology at the time, and he never even sent me a progress report.”)

After Good returned to the United States, he left Chagnon’s department and finished his dissertation with Harris. When the protein studies were finally published, the findings, perhaps unsurprisingly, were split: Good showed that the Yanomami in his village ate slightly less protein than what’s in a Big Mac; Chagnon and Hames showed that their group ate much more. Daniel Gross, who recently retired from the World Bank, says the debate remains unresolved. He pointed out that the Yanomami are about five feet tall, on average. “You have to wonder what accounts for their low stature,” he said. “It’s most likely not a genetic trait.”

Chagnon also fell out with Lizot, the French anthropologist, and with Timothy Asch, an ethnographic filmmaker with whom he collaborated on more than a dozen documentaries. The partnership yielded ingenious work, including "A Man Called Bee" (1974), in which the camera turns, for once, on the ethnographer. Chagnon strides into the middle of a shabono in a loincloth and faded high tops and strikes a warrior pose — a bearded Tarzan aping his subjects, to their audible delight. (The film’s title comes from Chagnon’s Yanomami nickname, “Shaki,” their word for a particularly pesky species of bee.) But by 1975, with the release of "The Ax Fight," a prizewinning record of a Yanomami brawl, Chagnon and Asch’s own fighting, mostly over who should get top billing in the credits, had destroyed their relationship.

Nor did Chagnon manage to stay on good terms with the local Salesian priests, who, thanks to their influence in Caracas, had considerable say over which scientists got to work with the tribe. In 1993, Chagnon attacked the Salesians in an Op-Ed in The New York Times, charging that the Yanomami were using mission-issued guns to kill one another. The Salesians fought back, depositing anti-Chagnon leaflets at the annual A.A.A.A. convention and mailing packets of letters.
— including one from Lizot — to anthropology departments across the country, denouncing his claims.

**Chagnon sensed that** his access to the Yanomami was ending. Anthropology was changing, too. For more than a decade, the discipline had been engaged in a sweeping self-critique. In 1983, the New Zealand anthropologist Derek Freeman delivered a major blow when he published "Margaret Mead and Samoa," charging that Mead had been duped by informants in her pioneering ethnography, "Coming of Age in Samoa." Postmodern theory precipitated a crisis. Under the influence of Derrida and Foucault, cultural anthropologists turned their gaze on their own "texts" and were alarmed by what they saw. Ethnographies were not dispassionate records of cultural facts but rather unstable "fictions," shot through with ideology and observer bias.

This postmodern turn coincided with the disappearance of anthropology's traditional subjects — indigenous peoples. Even the Yanomami were becoming assimilated, going to mission schools, appearing on television in Caracas and flying to the United States to speak at academic conferences. Traditional fieldwork opportunities may have been drying up, but there was still plenty of work to do exposing anthropologists' complicity in oppressing "the other." As one scholar in the journal Current Anthropology put it, "Isn't it odd that the true enemy of society turns out to be that guy in the office down the hall?"

One way to confront the field's ethical dilemmas was to redefine the ethnographer's role. A new generation of anthropologists came to see activism on their subjects' behalf as a principal part of the job. Chagnon did not; to him, the Yanomami were invaluable data sets, not a human rights cause — at least not primarily. In 1988, he published a provocative article in Science. Drawing on his genealogies, he showed that Yanomami men who were killers had more wives and children than men who were not. Was the men's aggression the main reason for their greater reproductive success? Chagnon suggested that the question deserved serious consideration. "Violence," he speculated, "may be the principal driving force behind the evolution of culture."

The article was seized on by the press, including two newspapers in Brazil, where illegal gold miners had begun invading Yanomami lands. The Brazilian Anthropological Association warned that Chagnon's "dubious scientific conclusions" could have terrible political consequences: "Wide publicity about Yanomami 'violence' in racist terms . . . is being used by the powerful lobby of mining interests as an excuse for the invasion of these Indians' lands."

As Alcida Ramos, a Yanomami expert at the University of Brasilia, later explained to Science: "To do anthropology in Brazil is in itself a political act. We don't separate our interests as anthropologists from our responsibility as citizens." Her colleague Bruce Albert told Science that
a plan by the Brazilian government to divide the tribe’s land into a series of disconnected “islands” was being justified by claims that, as the reporter put it, the Yanomami “are violent and need to be kept separate so they will stop killing each other.” Nevertheless, the reporter noted, Albert “cannot demonstrate a direct connection between Chagnon’s writings and the government’s Indian policy.”

Scientists have since endorsed Chagnon’s Science article. “It shouldn’t be a shocking finding,” Steven Pinker, the Harvard evolutionary psychologist who cites the paper in his book, “The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined,” told me. “As a pattern in history, it’s well documented.” Pinker said that he was troubled by the notion that social scientists should suppress unflattering information about their subjects because it could be exploited by others. “This whole tactic is a terrible mistake: always putting your moral action in jeopardy of empirical findings,” he told me. “Once you have the equation that the Yanomami are nonviolent and deserve to be protected, the converse is that if they are violent they don’t deserve to be protected.”

Chagnon had alienated most of the anthropologists in Venezuela and Brazil who might have helped broker his visits to the tribe. In 1990, desperate to return to the jungle, he accepted an invitation from an old contact, Charles Brewer-Carias, to serve as an adviser to Fundafaci, a Venezuelan foundation established by Cecilia Matos, the consort of President Carlos Andrés Pérez, to help the country’s poor. The association proved disastrous for Chagnon. Brewer-Carias, a well-connected dentist and former Venezuelan youth minister, had been accused of illegally mining for gold on Yanomami land. (Brewer-Carias has denied the allegations.) “He’s a dapper opportunist,” Chagnon told me. “Charlie can talk his way into and out of just about everything.”

For months, Fundafaci helicopters flew in and out of some of the most pristine Yanomami settlements, ferrying researchers, television crews and the occasional wealthy tourist — as well as, inevitably, their germs. According to Patrick Tierney, during one helicopter landing, several Yanomami were injured when the roof of a shabono collapsed. Chagnon and Brewer-Carias also urged President Pérez to turn part of the region into a biosphere, which, Tierney writes, would have given them “a scientific monopoly over an area the size of Connecticut.” The A.A.A., which appointed an El Dorado task force to look into Tierney’s allegations, concluded that this charge could not be proved, since Pérez abandoned the Fundafaci proposal. But the task force was harshly critical of Chagnon, stating that his affiliation with Fundafaci “violated Venezuelan laws, associated his research with the activities of corrupt politicians and involved him in activities that endangered the health and well-being of the Yanomami.”
The adventure came to an end in 1993, when Pérez was impeached. Chagnon, characteristically, is unrepentant. "I got a year’s worth of data," he said. "It was worth it for that reason."

**Was Fundafaci an isolated** case of bad judgment, or part of a pattern of ethically egregious behavior? Tierney’s "Darkness in El Dorado," which he spent more than a decade reporting, took the latter view and was eagerly anticipated by Chagnon’s critics: the moment when a rogue anthropologist would get a rare public comeuppance. In August 2000, while the book was still in galleys, Leslie Sponsel, of the University of Hawaii, and Terence Turner, an anthropologist at Cornell, sent an e-mail to the A.A.A.’s leadership, warning of an “impending scandal,” unparalleled in its “scale, ramifications and sheer criminality and corruption.” In lurid detail, they laid out the book’s major allegations, concluding: “This nightmarish story — a real anthropological heart of darkness beyond the imagining of even a Josef [sic] Conrad (though not, perhaps, a Josef Mengele) — will be seen (rightly in our view) by the public, as well as most anthropologists, as putting the whole discipline on trial.”

By November, when the A.A.A. met for its annual meeting, the scandal had hit the press, and "Darkness in El Dorado" had been excerpted in The New Yorker and named a finalist for the National Book Award. Much of the coverage focused on Tierney’s most sensational charges regarding the 1968 measles epidemic.

In his galleys, Tierney speculated that Neel, who died in 2000, hoped to simulate a measles epidemic among the Yanomami as part of a genetics experiment. In the published book, this theory was no longer explicit — Tierney had made last-minute changes — but it was insinuated. "Measles," Tierney wrote, "was tailor-made for experiments." Moreover, Neel’s choice of vaccine, Edmonston B, “was a bold decision from a research perspective” because it “provided a model much closer to real measles than other, safer vaccines, in the attempt to resolve the great genetic question of selective adaptation.” Although he quoted a leading measles researcher emphatically denying that measles vaccine can transmit the virus, he nevertheless maintained that it was “unclear whether the Edmonston B became transmissible or not.” (This line was excised from the paperback edition.) Tierney repeatedly faulted the expedition’s members for putting their scientific objectives ahead of the tribe’s health. By vaccinating the Yanomami against measles, he maintained, Neel and Chagnon may have been responsible for needless illness and death.

At an open-mike A.A.A. session, attendees, few of whom had read the book, weighed in on the controversy. Thomas Gregor and Daniel Gross later described the event in a damning article in American Anthropologist: “Virtually every aspect of [Chagnon’s] behavior, relevant or otherwise, was open for public dissection. One participant took the microphone and claimed
that Chagnon had treated her rudely in the field during the 1960s. A colleague from Uganda praised Tierney's book and suggested that Westerners manufactured the Ebola virus and disseminated it in his country, just as Chagnon and Neel had started the measles epidemic. Members of the audience applauded both speakers. For Gregor, who recently retired as an anthropologist at Vanderbilt, the session was "a watershed moment." "These are people who are supposed to be scientists," he told me. "This had the look of an emotionally charged witch hunt."

Within a few months, half a dozen academic institutions had refuted aspects of Tierney's claims, including the International Genetic Epidemiology Society, whose statement reflected a growing consensus: "Far from causing an epidemic of measles, Neel did his utmost to protect the Yanomamö from the ravages of the impending epidemic by a vaccination program using a vaccine that was widely used at the time and administered in an appropriate manner." (In an e-mail to me, Tierney defended his book, acknowledging only "several small errors," concerning Neel's work in Japan.)

The A.A.A.'s El Dorado task force was the most ambitious investigation to date but was undermined by a lack of due process. The group went so far as to interview Yanomami in Venezuela but, according to Chagnon, failed to give him an opportunity to respond to its verdicts. As Gregor and Gross put it, what the inquiry most clearly demonstrated was not Chagnon's guilt or innocence but rather anthropology's "culture of accusation," a "tendency within the discipline to attack its own methods and practitioners."

At least one task-force member had doubts about the exercise. In April 2002, shortly before the group released its report, Jane Hill, the task force's chairwoman and a former president of the A.A.A. wrote an e-mail to a colleague in which she called Tierney's book "just a piece of sleaze, that's all there is to it (some cosmetic language will be used in the report, but we all agree on that)." Nevertheless, she said, the A.A.A. had to act: anthropologists' work with indigenous groups in Latin America "was put seriously at risk by its accusations," and "silence on the part of the A.A.A would have been interpreted as either assent or cowardice. Whether we're doing the right thing will have to be judged by posterity."

The e-mail is quoted in a paper by Alice Dreger that appeared in the journal Human Nature in 2011. Dreger, a professor of bioethics at Northwestern, was writing a book about scientific controversies in the Internet age, when she learned about the scandal in anthropology. She researched the case for a year, conducting 40 interviews, and by the time she published her paper, she considered Chagnon a friend, a fact reflected in her sometimes zealous tone. Among other things, she discovered that Tierney helped prepare a dossier critical of Chagnon, which he attributed to Leda Martins, a Brazilian anthropologist: "Leda's dossier was an important
resource for my research.” (Martins says that she translated the dossier into Portuguese.) But
Dreger reserves her most withering remarks for the A.A.A. She told me, “All these people knew
that Tierney’s book was a house of cards but proceeded anyway because they needed a ritualistic
cleansing.”

In fairness, Tierney seems to have gotten some things right. The task force called his account of
Chagnon’s Fundafaci episode one of the “better supported allegations.” And many have vouched
for Tierney’s description of Jacques Lizot, Chagnon’s French rival, ensconced in the jungle with
an entourage of Yanomami boys, whom he pried with trade goods in exchange for sex. (Lizot has
said that the sex was between consenting adults.)

Yet it’s possible to imagine how a discipline seeking to expiate its sins could have overreached in
Chagnon’s case. He was prominent and controversial, a sociobiologist who declined to put
activism on a par with research. On the rare occasions that he adopted the mantle of advocate,
the gesture typically backfired, as when he told a Brazilian magazine: “The real Indians get dirty,
smell bad, use drugs, belch after they eat, covet and sometimes steal each other’s women,
fornicate and make war. They are normal human beings. This is reason enough for them to
deserve care and attention.” His critics, appalled by the first sentence, typically ignored the rest.

In this charged atmosphere, Tierney was to play a vital role: that of the impartial journalist who
would give the discipline’s verdict on Chagnon the stamp of objectivity. Yet as Tierney himself
admitted, he was not impartial. “I gradually changed from being an observer to being an
advocate,” he wrote. “It was a completely inverted world, where traditional, objective journalism
was no longer an option for me.” Was objectivity possible for anyone?

In 2005, the A.A.A.’s members agreed to rescind the task-force report, by a vote of 846 to 338.
Daniel Gross called Chagnon to give him the news. “I saved that phone message for years,”
Chagnon told me. “That was the point at which my emotional stability began to ascend.” Last
spring, he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences — a prestigious honor that he took as
vindication. “A lot of anthropologists have red faces from the extent to which they advocated in
support of the accusations against me,” he said.

Not every critic has conceded. “The charges have not all been disproven by any means,” Leslie
Sponsel pointed out. Leda Martins, who teaches at Pitzer College in Los Angeles, was more
circumspect. “The controversy is so big, and the devil is all in the details,” she said. “Unless you
know where Chagnon was, in what village, and what he was doing — unless you know everything
— it’s really hard to talk about it.” I told her I thought that Tierney was sure he’d found another
Kurtz, another “Heart of Darkness.” “Patrick and Chagnon have some similar characteristics,”
Martins replied. “How ironic is it that Patrick got carried away in the same way that Chagnon got carried away?”

By now, at least a few Yanomami have read both “The Fierce People” and “Darkness in El Dorado,” and many more have been told about their contents by people with varied agendas. During an interview with a member of the A.A.A.’s task force, Davi Kopenawa, a Brazilian Yanomami leader, was invited to pose some questions of his own. “I want to ask you about these American anthropologists,” he said. “Why are they fighting among themselves? Is it because of this book?”

The interviewer answered in the affirmative, and Kopenawa went on: “So, Chagnon made money using the name of the Yanomami. He sold his book. Lizot, too. I want to know how much they are making each month. How much does any anthropologist earn? And how much is Patrick making? Patrick must be happy. This is a lot of money. They may be fighting, but they are happy. They fight, and this makes them happy.”
When the 150-pound anaconda burst upward from the river, nearly seizing him by the head, Napoleon A. Chagnon wasn’t fearful—he was furious. The famous anthropologist grabbed his double-barreled 12-gauge shotgun and pumped round after round into the snake, more shots than necessary for the kill, before dragging the still-twitching beast from the water and skinning it with his hunting knife.

Mr. Chagnon is, in other words, not easily cowed. He offers multiple examples of this fortitude in his new book, *Noble Savages: My Life Among Two Dangerous Tribes—the Yanomamo and the Anthropologists* (Simon & Schuster), including when a tiger leans over his hammock and when a leopard stalks him silently on a long hike. He does not run screaming from the jungle to the anaconda-free comforts of civilization. He toughs it out. It’s not until Page 452 that he really shows weakness, admitting that he tried and failed for years to write his life story. Those early drafts were too depressing, he admits, and he was too emotional.

It was the second tribe mentioned in the subtitle, those barbarous anthropologists, that finally got to him, with an assist from a now-notorious journalist named Patrick Tierney. In 2000, Mr. Tierney’s book *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon* was published to acclaim. An adapted excerpt ran in *The New Yorker*. It was a finalist for a National Book Award.

Before the book was published, two anthropologists—Terence Turner and Leslie E. Sponsel—sent an e-mail to the president of the American Anthropological Association, raising fears about what the book would do to the discipline: "This nightmarish story—a real anthropological heart of darkness beyond the imagining of even a Josef [sic] Conrad (though not, perhaps, a Josef Mengele)—will be seen (rightly in our view) by the public, as well as most anthropologists, as putting the whole
discipline on trial." The e-mail leaked and was soon everywhere. Mr. Chagnon was going down, and he was bringing anthropology with him.

**Challenging Rousseau**

Among Mr. Tierney's allegations was that the late James V. Neel, who founded the human-genetics department at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, had experimented on the Yanomami, an indigenous people who live in the Amazon rain forest. The book suggested that he and Mr. Chagnon had started or exacerbated a measles epidemic in 1968 by giving the Yanomami a vaccine, called Edmonston B, that killed hundreds or perhaps thousands. Mr. Tierney essentially accused them of genocide. The book inspired exciting headlines like this one in *The Guardian*: "Scientist 'killed Amazon Indians to test race theory.'"

Lots of experts shot that idea down. In a detailed report in 2000, the president of the National Academy of Sciences countered that the vaccine (which contained attenuated live virus) had never been found to cause measles or to make the recipient contagious. And the vaccine had previously been given, without serious incident, to isolated populations like the Yanomami. Far from being some strange, experimental treatment, this was the vaccine that the World Health Organization recommended. In *Noble Savages*, Mr. Chagnon describes the race to vaccinate the Yanomami as measles swept through the region, and tells of an infected Brazilian man who probably exposed the tribe to the disease. The reactions from the vaccine itself, Mr. Chagnon writes, were mild.

Always in the background of the allegations against Mr. Chagnon were objections to his theories and his findings. His huge 1968 best seller, *Yanomamö: The Fierce People*, and films he made with Timothy Asch paint a portrait of a tribe where killing was commonplace—challenging Rousseau's notion, dear to some fellow anthropologists, of the peaceful, noble savage. In a 1988 article in *Science*, Mr. Chagnon reported that 45 percent of adult males in the tribe had participated in at least one killing. Perhaps even more provocatively, he found that the killers had acquired, on average, more wives and had produced more offspring. There seemed to be an evolutionary upside to violence.

"Had I been discussing wild boars, yaks, ground squirrels, armadillos, or bats, nobody in the several subfields of biology would have been surprised with my findings," Mr. Chagnon writes.

In the book, he remembers how he first came into contact with the Yanomani. As a graduate student, he expected to spend a short time with them, write his dissertation, and perhaps a popular book. He didn't know they would become his life's work. But he came to believe the Yanomani were a "very
special people" in part because they were "one of the last remaining large tribes that were still locked in intervillage warfare." Also, their contact with the outside world had been extremely limited. They perhaps offered an unspoiled peek into how all of us once lived.

In 'the Hands of the Triple A'

Those making the most noise about the alleged ethical breaches Mr. Tierney reported were also those who found Mr. Chagnon's discoveries distasteful. They wondered whether the anthropologist himself, by trading tools like axes for cooperation in his research, had turned the natives vicious. But Mr. Chagnon had done more than collect horrible anecdotes (though he had plenty of those). He had hard data—information that, for example, Steven Pinker uses to help make his case for civilization in his recent book *The Better Angels of Our Nature.* Mr. Chagnon wasn't interested in vilifying the Yanomami (indeed, he writes that he had "grown to love and admire" them). But he wasn't romanticizing them either.

Dissections of Mr. Tierney's book started appearing soon after it was published. John Tooby, a professor of anthropology at the University of California at Santa Barbara, wrote a long article in *Slate* that thoroughly picked apart *Darkness at El Dorado,* concluding that it was "demonstrably, sometimes hilariously, false."

Yet nearly a decade later, it was still enough of an issue to be the topic of a session at the 2009 meeting of the anthropology association. At that session, Alice D. Dreger, a professor of clinical medical humanities and bioethics at Northwestern University, chastised the association for, in her view, credulously accepting some of Mr. Tierney's dubious allegations. "I can't imagine how any scholar feels safe at the hands of the Triple A," she said at the time. The association later rescinded its original report that had criticized Mr. Chagnon, saying he had not been given due process.

If you're in a debate, you want Alice Dreger on your side. She has no shortage of passion, and, more important, she's a diligent researcher, bordering on obsessive. She interviewed nearly all the major players, except for Mr. Tierney, who has granted few such requests. Her paper on the controversy, published in 2011, cataloged the numerous problems others had found with *Darkness at El Dorado* and disclosed more, including that many of Mr. Tierney's own footnotes led to sources that contradicted his assertions. Wrote Ms. Dreger: "I had to wonder when I came upon this story years after all this, given the reality as evidenced by so very many documentary sources, how did Tierney's falsehoods get as far as they did?"
When questions about his book surfaced, Mr. Tierney initially explained that "experts I spoke to then had very different opinions than the ones they are expressing now." But such defenses don't explain faulty footnotes. Mr. Tierney didn't show up to defend his research at the 2009 session.

Case closed, right? Ancient history, over and done.

Except it's never over. In 2010 a documentary titled Secrets of the Tribe was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival. The filmmakers interview top anthropologists, including Mr. Chagnon, and also venture into the rain forest to meet the Yanomami. It's fascinating stuff. It's also, if you know anything about the history of Mr. Chagnon's case, misleading and rife with omissions. Mr. Tierney is held up as a credible investigator, not the author of a book that's been debunked. Allegations that were refuted years ago are dusted off and presented as new. The viewer who comes to that film fresh has no hope of separating truth from bull.

Mr. Chagnon, who is now at the University of Missouri at Columbia, has called the documentary "just a piece of trash." But you sense the sigh in that statement, and in the last 75 pages of his book, which deal mostly with the fallout from Darkness at El Dorado. He writes that the scandal took over and colored every aspect of his professional and personal life, sapping his time and energy. And he's almost surely correct when he writes, with what must be weary resignation, that his new book won't be the end of this very long discussion.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU professor calls North Korean nuclear test 'long-term concern'

By Alissa Fisher
February 12, 2013 | 6:59 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Following the confirmation of North Korea's nuclear test Tuesday, the specifics of that incident can be confusing given the country's history of secrecy.

Sudarshan Loyalka, curators' professor of nuclear engineering at the MU Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute, answered the Missourian's questions about the latest move by the country's new leader, Kim Jong-un.

What is a nuclear test?

North Korea is trying to build a bomb small enough to fit on a missile that could reach the United States.

"The nuclear test was conducted as part of measures to protect our national security and sovereignty against the reckless hostility of the United States that violated our republic's right for a peaceful satellite launch," the state-run Korean Central News Agency said.

Following a 1953 armistice that ended hostilities in the Korean War, the United States has maintained thousands of troops in South Korea.

Early Tuesday, the country conducted an underground nuclear test in a remote area on the northeastern part of the peninsula. In a nuclear test, a trial device is detonated to test the efficiency of its materials, Loyalka said. There is an explosive release of large energy and thermal radiation followed by a shock wave.

Nuclear bombs are created in two distinct ways, Loyalka said. Uranium-235 or plutonium-239 are the key isotopes needed to create the weapons. While U-235 is found naturally, it needs to be separated from another, more abundant isotope, U-238. Pu-239 is created from U-238 in a reactor, thus both require the addition of man-made technology to be harvested.
It is unclear whether the bomb detonated by North Korea was made of uranium or plutonium, Loyalka said. The two previous nuclear devices tested, in 2006 and 2009, were plutonium, and their yields were estimated at 1 kiloton and 2 to 6 kilotons, respectively.

If this latest device was made of uranium, the country has diversified its source of bomb making materials, meaning scientists there are on their way to making more powerful bombs, Loyalka said. South Korea’s Defense Ministry estimated the yield of Tuesday’s bomb could be larger than previous tests, at 6 to 7 kilotons.

**What does it mean for Americans?**

Because the test was conducted underground, we won’t be affected by any radiation, Loyalka said.

"It’s not today's worry," he said. "It's not tomorrow's worry. It is a long-term concern."

The country is not close to creating a nuclear bomb that it could use on the United States, Loyalka said.

"It’s hard to imagine that anyone would be so desperate to invite their own total annihilation," he said, referring to any successful future North Korean launch against another country.

**What's next?**

Loyalka said the United States is engaged in the matter.

"We should feel comfort in that," he said.

In an emergency session convened by the United Nations Tuesday, the body pledged to take further action against North Korea. Previously, it has passed three resolutions punishing the country for its nuclear activities.

"We should support all efforts that curtail the creation of nuclear weapons," Loyalka said. "We should recognize that this threat is out there and that it could become far worse."

*Information from The Associated Press is included in this report.*

*Supervising editor is Jacob Kirn.*
MU wrestling coach among those stunned by IOC decision

February 12

By TEREZ A. PAYLOR

The Kansas City Star

The texts, calls and emails poured in to Missouri wrestling coach Brian Smith on Tuesday, all from people wondering the same thing he was. How could wrestling really be in jeopardy as an Olympic sport?

It made no sense to Smith, who has coached two wrestlers who became Olympians, Jason Gleasman at Syracuse and Ben Askren at Mizzou. The International Olympic Committee announced Tuesday it would drop wrestling — one of the most Olympic sports there is — starting with the 2020 Summer Games.

"When I saw the news today, I literally got about 25 texts and emails and phone calls," Smith said. "It's not small news."

Barring an unlikely reversal, Freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling will be contested for the final time in the Olympics at the 2016 Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro. A 15-member executive board voted by secret ballot to exclude wrestling, and the IOC did not explain the decision in detail.

Smith grasped at the chance wrestling may survive after 2016. Wrestling and seven other sports — baseball and softball as a combined entry, karate, squash, roller sports, sport climbing, wakeboarding and wushu — will compete for one spot to be included as a new sport in 2020. The executive board will meet in May and the final vote will be in September.

"Your first reaction is you're really disappointed," Smith said.

Smith said he heard rumblings the IOC might drop wrestling, but he didn't believe it because of its status as one of the Olympics' most ancient sports.

"I know they've been adding different sports and they didn't want it to get too bad so they'd cut some out," Smith said of the IOC. "But you kind of take it for granted ... wrestling has been in the Olympics forever. Why would they cut out one of their originals? It would be like cutting out track and field. It's been there since the beginning."

Smith, who has been to the last two Olympics, said he's seen firsthand how much other countries love wrestling.
"I can’t imagine what’s going on in Russia and countries like that right now," Smith said. "They love wrestling over there. That’s their sport, their wrestlers are like NFL guys. They’re that popular."

U.S. wrestlers have won a record 113 freestyle Olympic medals, including Rulon Gardner’s upset of Russian Alexander Karelin in 2000 for the gold medal.

"It’s the IOC trying to change the Olympics to make it more mainstream and more viewer-friendly instead of sticking to what they founded the Olympics on, and that was basically amateur sports," Gardner told The Associated Press by phone from Logan, Utah. "To get the death penalty out of nowhere."

Smith expects the IOC decision to be a widely discussed topic this week in Columbia, where the Missouri state wrestling tournament and NWCA/Cliff Keen National Duals will both take place.

"The wrestling community will be here together, so it’s going to be talked about a lot," Smith said.

While Smith doesn’t know what he can do yet, as one of the leaders of the sport in the state of Missouri, he’s hopeful those who love the sport — from coaches to wrestlers to parents, etc. — will do all they can to save it on the Olympic level.

"I don’t think we’re going to let this be a final decision," Smith said. "A lot of people think it’s over, but not a lot of people in the wrestling community. I saw a Facebook page that just started up called Save Olympic Wrestling and 20 minutes ago it already had 28,000 people. ... the IOC can make a decision like that, but it’s not going to be kept quiet."
Brighter futures: Two students receive scholarships awarded to those overcoming challenges.

February 12 By TRACI ANGEL Special to The Star

Two students from the Kansas City area are among this year's national scholars, chosen for persevering through obstacles during their academic careers. They are Edna McCrary of Cristo Rey Kansas City high school and Katie Bartels of William Chrisman High in Independence. For eligibility, students must pursue a bachelor's degree at an accredited U.S. institution and have a "critical financial need." They must show integrity, have at least 2.0 GPA and demonstrate handling adversity in their past. The students receive a $20,000 scholarship.

Katie Bartels dropped the phone in shock when she learned she was an Alger recipient. "I just didn't think I was going to get it," the William Chrisman senior said. Another student there, Zac Zumwalt received the scholarship last year. Her selection was no surprise to counselor Dee Hurt, who watched Bartels grow up.

"Katie has faced several challenges during her school years and most of them have come outside of school," Hurt said. "As an unaccompanied homeless youth, Katie has had to find emotional, financial, and mental support in non-traditional ways. "While she has struggled to overcome many unfortunate circumstances, she has been blessed to have some very caring adults stand by her side."

Hurt described Bartels as one of the hardest-working students she has encountered. "Despite everything that's happened in her personal life from an early age, she knew academics was her opportunity to change (her circumstances). She is driven and she is first in her class for academic achievement."

Bartels founded the school's environmental club and took courses in the Project Lead the Way program, which focuses on science, technology, engineering and math. She participates in robotics and plans to study environmental engineering in college.
The environmental club planted a rain garden and promoted recycling under Bartels' direction.

Hurt knew Bartels deserved the honor, but she had to convince her student that she was Alger scholarship material.

“(She) really didn’t know what she’s overcome and what she’s accomplished,” Hurt said. “Whatever your life is, it is your normal and you don’t always recognize what you are accomplishing. It takes people from the outside to say, ‘Wow.’”

The award reminds Bartels that others have made it through with perseverance.

“It makes me feel validated,” she said. “Everything I tried to do and set my mind to, and all those nights that I didn’t party with friends … the hard work has paid off.”

At Cristo Rey, other students learned about McCrary’s honor during one of the school’s daily assemblies. They called her name from a microphone and asked her to stand.

McCrary’s mom, with help from a stepfather, has raised her. She moved from Las Vegas to Kansas City in elementary school. Shy and quiet, she found that making friends was one of her first challenges.

“I got settled in eventually and started talking to people,” she said. “My family helped.”

**She wants to be a nurse and has worked toward that since the beginning of high school.**

A trip to the University of Missouri gave her hands-on health care training where she learned how to secure IVs and go over vital signs. That experience reinforced McCrary’s decision to go into health care.

Her work-study program at Cristo Rey, where she earns a salary to offset costs at the private Catholic school, took her to the University of Kansas Hospital where she worked in various departments, including organ transplants. Now she knows she wants to be a nurse.

“I feel like I’m ready for any job now,” she said. “I got a taste of everything.”

Adviser Catherine Sparks has known McCrary for three years and watched her blossom.

“When I first met her she lacked self-confidence and then she was able to see that she has a lot of support and people cheering for her at Cristo Rey,” Sparks said.

One of McCrary’s personal goals was to become more involved with school — and meet her fear of speaking out.

“I wanted to change, so I sat with my adviser and she recommended that I become the girls’ volleyball manager. It helped me become involved and stay busy.”

She learned she was part of the volleyball family and others were depending on her.

“That helped her blossom,” said Sparks, who is also co-director of the corporate work-study program.

McCrary’s school activities include National Honor Society, student ambassador, Senior Christian Leader and other service projects. She also takes college-prep classes.

“What makes her stand out is that she’s not afraid to be herself,” Sparks said. “She knows who she is and what she wants to do. She’s still shy, but once comfortable, she lets everyone see her personality.”