MU paper takes aim at Fox News over religious events guide

February 22

The listing of eight Wiccan and pagan holidays in a religions guide at the University of Missouri caught the critical eye of someone at Fox News.

“Students at University of Missouri don’t need to cram for exams that fall on Wiccan and pagan holidays, now that the school has put them on par with Christmas, Thanksgiving and Hanukkah,” the network reported recently.

“It’s all part of the school’s effort to include everyone’s beliefs, although some critics say listing every holiday associated with fringe belief systems is a bit much.” The only “critic” quoted was Tammy Bruce, a nationally syndicated radio host and Fox News contributor.

“It almost seems as though we’re looking for excuses for people to not have to take their commitments seriously,” the Californian told FoxNews.com. “It’s beyond political correctness; it’s almost like an excuse to do nothing. It’s like societal nihilism, where nothing matters.”

The editorial staff at the Maneater, the Columbia campus newspaper run by students, bit back, calling the Fox piece “incredibly dumb … insulting to the hardworking students, faculty and staff of MU … (and) attacking our university’s religious tolerance and diversity.”

The Guide to Religions is meant as an awareness tool for faculty, not a First Amendment excuse for the almost 35,000 students to duck exams, the paper said.

“It is not intended to ‘absolve’ us of doing work, or to let students skip class (newsflash: many of them already do on occasion — that’s their choice and responsibility as adults). Even for students who may miss class or request special accommodation for religious holidays, that’s not a free pass — they must still complete their work or risk hurting their grade.”

Fox noted that the first of 43 holidays listed is the Hindu two-day festival in late August for the birth of Krishna, in which celebrants are likely to forgo sleep in order to, among other things,
sing traditional songs, so “scheduling major academic deadlines on this day” would not be productive.

“For Samhain, listed as a pagan and Wiccan celebration considered by some to be the Wiccan New Year, general practices include ‘paying respect to ancestors, family members, elders of the faith, friends, pets and other loved ones’ who have died,” Fox said, acknowledging that the holiday coincides with Halloween.

Fox also mentioned the Chinese New Year, which will fall within the usual winter break next year. It is celebrated as the most important holiday for many Asians, who make up a large part of the international student body at the school.

It wasn’t just stirring up the old stereotype of the lazy college student. The Maneater accused FoxNews.com of “a hit piece to rile up its readership and add fuel to the fire of some fabricated ‘War on Christmas’ or Christianity in general. The article derides MU for equating Wiccan and pagan holidays with Christmas and Hanukkah. That’s because, to students who practice Wicca or any of the ‘other’ religions in the guide, such holidays may be just as important as those celebrated by the ‘mainstream.’

“This isn’t just part of what makes Mizzou great,” the students wrote, “it’s part of what makes our country great.”

From the Maneater at the University of Missouri and Fox News
Fox fouls out on MU diversity

Religious tolerance nothing to sneer at.

Sunday, February 24, 2013 at 2:00 am

The following editorial appeared Feb. 19 in The Maneater.

Did you know that, as a University of Missouri student, you are entitled to skip class and blow off any assigned work or exam whenever there is any sort of religious holiday, be it Christian, Jewish, Hindu, even Wiccan or pagan, without any sort of repercussion from your professors?

We didn't either, until Fox News published an enlightening investigation about MU's "Guide to Religions: Major Holidays and Suggested Accommodations."

The story highlighted how the university's guide, which is distributed to faculty and staff and available online, lists dozens of important holy days and celebrations for a handful of religions and advises professors to avoid scheduling major events (such as exams) on many of these days.

"Students at University of Missouri don't need to cram for exams that fall on Wiccan and Pagan holidays, now that the school has put them on par with Christmas, Thanksgiving and Hanukkah," the article begins, before expanding on the guide and ending with quotes from Fox News radio host Tammy Bruce attacking MU for acting "beyond politically correct."

Apparently, as college students, we love taking advantage of every possible opportunity we can get to shirk our academic responsibilities. This groundbreaking Fox News report has opened up a treasure trove for us: Our university is just handing us the ability to skip classes and tests whenever we'd like, as long as we claim religious privilege!

Of course, this is incredibly dumb, not to mention insulting to the hardworking students, faculty and staff of MU.

The Guide to Religions is meant to be a handy reference for professors to be as accommodating and aware as possible. It is not intended to "absolve" us of doing work or to let students skip class (News flash: Many of them already do on occasion — that's their choice and responsibility as adults). Even for students who might miss class or request special accommodation for
religious holidays, that's not a free pass — they must still complete their work or risk hurting their grade.

In fact, the university should be commended for promoting our First Amendment freedom of religion, encouraging a healthy spiritual life for those who choose such, and being accepting of religions and lifestyles that aren't necessarily widely practiced on campus. A culture of religious diversity in our university's administration isn't hurting anyone, even if some in our state and our country might disagree, and we're proud of our university for actively working toward a more inclusive climate for students of all spiritual persuasions.

It's insulting for Fox News to use our university's Guide to Religions as a hit piece to rile up its readership and add fuel to the fire of some fabricated "War on Christmas" or Christianity in general. The article derides MU for equating Wiccan and pagan holidays with Christmas and Hanukkah. That's because, to students who practice Wicca or any of the "other" religions in the guide, such holidays might be just as important as those celebrated by the "mainstream."

At the core of religious diversity is the recognizance that religion deals with the most sacred and sensitive parts of human life — the way one sees the world and how that influences their thoughts, feelings and behaviors — and the understanding of just how important religions and spiritual movements are to their adherents.

With this in mind, it is inexcusable to ridicule students for following a certain religion or for requesting special accommodation from professors to fully practice their beliefs, especially using the stereotype of the lazy college student. We would like to suggest to Fox News and other media organizations to refrain from attacking our university's religious tolerance and diversity.

It isn't just part of what makes Mizzou great — it's part of what makes our country great.

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Posted in Oped, Wire on Sunday, February 24, 2013 2:00 am.
Winter storm over but problems persist in Missouri

February 22, 2013 11:47 am • Associated Press

The biggest winter storm in Missouri in two years has ended, but the problems it caused are lingering in some areas.

The storm on Thursday dumped more than a foot of snow in some areas of northern and western Missouri, and Gov. Jay Nixon declared a state of emergency.

The National Weather Service reported that Hannibal in northeast Missouri got 13 1/2 inches of snow, parts of Kansas City saw 12 inches and Columbia got 10 inches. The St. Louis area received about 5 inches of snow, but it was mixed with freezing rain and sleet that made driving virtually impossible during Thursday evening's rush hour.

By midday Friday, though, major roads throughout most of the state were mostly clear. Interstates and major highways were still partly snow-covered around Kansas City and in northwest Missouri.

Beth Wright of the Missouri Department of Transportation said above-freezing temperatures were helping and crews were expected to clear away most of the remaining snow by nightfall.

Capt. Tim Hull of the Missouri State Highway Patrol said accidents on Thursday were too numerous to count, but there were no reported fatalities.

"The calls we took ranged from slide-offs to minor crashes," Hull said. "We had several instances of stalled vehicles and jack-knifed tractor-trailers," which caused numerous temporary road closures.

Hull said there was concern about refreezing overnight as cleared snow seeps back onto roadways. He urged extra caution against "black ice" on bridges, overpasses and curves.

The University of Missouri cancelled classes for a second straight day. St. Louis and Kansas City airports reported numerous flight cancellations and delays.

The weather forced cancellation of several Kansas City-area blood drives, leaving the Community Blood Center of Greater Kansas City with less than a day's supply, spokesman Stann Tate said. Generally, the center prefers to have a supply of about five days.
Letter to the Editor: MU administrators made a grave mistake

By Elizabeth Tontz    Published as a part of Maneater v. 79, Issue 38

The Maneater reserves the right to edit letters and columns for style and length.

As I write this, I am sitting in a car that came to pick me up three hours ago. Traffic has been at a standstill for most of that time, and, in the span of three hours, I have traveled a mile. Stadium Boulevard is completely stalled; a mixture of cars and ambulances litter the road, which now has no definable lanes. From what I hear, there are now 9 inches of snow on the ground. I have no way of knowing whether those involved in the accident up ahead are MU students, but I do know that if the university had closed yesterday when they found out about the storm or early this morning when it began, traffic wouldn't be nearly as bad and emergency personnel wouldn't be struggling as much to reach the victims.

Quite honestly, I wonder what exactly the MU administrators were thinking when they refused to close campus until roads were nearly impassable. From what I've heard, the university has only cancelled class 5 or 6 times due to inclement weather. This is a matter of pride for the university, which refuses to close its doors unless absolutely necessary. The choice to keep the university open during extreme weather allows teachers to demand that their students attend class when snow has reached 6 or 7 inches and driving conditions are hazardous. I stayed on campus today to take a quiz under the threat of being awarded zero points and no makeup quiz should I fail to come. The teacher only canceled class when the university itself shut down. By that time, my car was buried under the snow and I had to call someone who had a four wheel drive to come get me. My car will be stuck in the Hearnes Center parking lot all night until I can dig it out in the morning. Several of my friends are tweeting and posting that they are stuck all night on campus.

I am outraged that the university put its pride and tradition above the safety of its students. Thanks to the administration, many students will be spending the night in the student center, which is not equipped to house several hundred students overnight. The safety of the students and their cars as well as the well being of the general public around campus was not considered at all today, and I'm at a loss to understand how the university could be so unprepared. We knew this was coming. Columbia public schools shut down a day early to prepare for the storm. I don't feel it would be an exaggeration to say that the university and its administrators were reckless with the lives of its students, faculty and staff. Hopefully next time there is a snowstorm, the university won't wait until the governor declares a state of emergency to send its students home.
Editorial: Despite MU’s blunders, storm brought out the best in people

Published as a part of Maneater v. 79, Issue 38

Editorials represent the majority opinion of The Maneater editorial board.

There is no getting around this basic fact of Thursday’s events: MU royally screwed up its handling of the large winter storm by refusing to close until shortly before noon. You may be of the opinion that the university should have cancelled classes earlier or that the storm was not truly bad enough to warrant a cancellation. But if there is one thing we should all agree on, it’s that by canceling halfway through the day, when students were still trying to drive to class and snowplows were out in full-force, the university became responsible for extremely dangerous and unnecessary traffic-jam conditions around the city of Columbia.

The hurried exodus of students, faculty and staff after the early-afternoon cancellation exacerbated the already poor driving conditions, causing traffic to grind to a halt and force many people to take several hours to get home. Cars and buses got stuck in the snow, further backing up traffic, and apparently some emergency workers were even forced to travel on foot to reach stranded and injured citizens. Because the university grossly overestimated its own preparedness, as well as the preparedness of city snow-clearing operations, the entire city became a mess. We hope university officials both apologize for Thursday’s situation and take notes for the next time inclement weather comes to town.

However, in the face of the university’s poor decision, we were heartened by the strong and selfless response of many members of the MU community. We saw a culture of helpfulness and altruism on Thursday — a culture that is not always readily apparent. Residential Life student staff took up shovels to clear paths for residents and some adult staff even spent the night on campus in order to ensure they could do their jobs and help students. All over Columbia, groups of people — strangers, fraternity brothers, friends — got out in the snow to help push stuck cars out of the snow, not because they felt compelled to, but because they wanted to. Missouri Students Association President Nick Droge created an informal team to assist stranded Columbians and got the word out via Twitter. University employees spent all night working to make sure utilities kept running so that we could have power and Internet throughout the storm. The Student Center stayed open all night, and leaders of the Women’s Center and Multicultural Center left their doors unlocked so students could camp out in the spaces they call their “second home.”

These stories can be found all over campus and the city as a whole, and it’s truly inspiring to see the good that can come out of such a difficult day. Although we certainly wouldn’t like to see a
major snowstorm hit Columbia each day, we wish the MU community would remember the good deeds that were done Thursday, either by themselves or by others. The kind of community and cooperative spirit we witnessed during the storm and its aftermath should always be present at MU, and we urge you to keep that spirit in mind even after the streets are cleared and the snow melts to once again reveal Missouri’s green grass.
Students, staff dig out amid rare closure for MU campus

By Brennan David

Friday, February 22, 2013 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri graduate student Drew Darr still had 60 feet of driveway to shovel when his wife and a visiting friend began making snow angels in his central Columbia yard.

Darr, 25, and his wife, Mary Beth, are Florida residents who relocated to Columbia last summer to continue his education. Yesterday was Darr’s first snowstorm. It was also the first time he shoveled snow or had to drive in it.

“I popped my tire trying to get into the driveway,” he said. “I gunned it to get through the snow and into my driveway. I didn’t realize I was on the curb.”

Classes at MU were canceled yesterday afternoon and all day today because of heavy snow. The early adjournment sent Darr to his home near Ann and McAlester streets, where he found 12 inches of snow in his driveway.

It took him about 10 minutes to shovel the first 18 feet of driveway, but he didn’t seem to mind. The newlyweds are renting a home instead of an apartment for the first time, and Darr said he enjoyed shoveling snow alongside his neighbors. Wearing boots and standing midcalf in snow, with his heart racing from intense shoveling, the former Southerner confirmed, “Yes, I’m now a Midwesterner.”

He continued to dig toward the street as his neighbor Kyle Blomenkamp pushed a snow-blowing machine through several inches of snow covering his sidewalk.

Blomenkamp and his wife have lived in the home across the street from Darr’s for seven years, and he was clearing the sidewalk for Darr and other neighbors.

“He’s a nice guy, but I don’t have to like him right now,” Darr said jokingly as he kept shoveling.
Residents throughout Columbia yesterday could be seen shoveling driveways and attempting to navigate the snow-filled streets.

At Amelia Street and Old 63, James Kelsey had just dropped off co-workers in his Ford Explorer when he attempted to cross 2 or 3 feet of compacted snow left behind by a plow. His vehicle bottomed out a block away from home, and he had only an extendable ice scraper with him to dig out.

Kelsey, an isotope specialist with the MU Research Reactor, admitted the attempt wasn’t a “brilliant” idea.

“It was a lot more” snow “than I thought it would be,” he said of yesterday’s storm. “I was getting around fine. I just got too cocky.”

At the Sigma Chi fraternity house on College Avenue, about 25 members celebrated their afternoon off the best way they knew how — a game of snow football.

Players barked calls and receiver routes — as if the plays had been practiced before — and ran viciously through the snow-covered front lawn for all the drivers on College to see. The only rule: Tackle the man with the ball.

“Exploit the fun so everyone on the street can see,” President Tim Pettey said.

All eyes were on sophomore James Leopold — not because of his play but his attire. Leopold ran through snow in a muscle shirt and shorts. His legs had turned bright red, but he didn’t mind rolling through the snow to make a play.

“I can’t feel my legs and feet,” he said.

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Posted in Local on Friday, February 22, 2013 2:00 pm.
MU, city offices join list of snow cancellations

MU shutdown continues today.

By THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Friday, February 22, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Students and staff on Columbia campuses were enjoying a rare snow day after yesterday’s storm, but the midday closures of campuses and other workplaces around town led to heavy traffic gridlock.

Columbia Public Schools canceled school all day yesterday and today. Early yesterday, Columbia and Stephens colleges announced their campuses would close early, and the University of Missouri followed suit after noon.

MU crew members monitored conditions yesterday morning, with forecasts predicting 4 to 6 inches of snow, campus spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said. However, conditions worsened throughout the day.

Gary Ward, associate vice chancellor for administrative services and head of campus facilities, “knew it was difficult to keep roadways and sidewalks clear,” Banken said. “In addition, we heard the city streets were getting worse and the bus service had been put on hold. We became concerned.”

Ward then recommended to Chancellor Brady Deaton that classes be canceled, and at 12:10 p.m., the online MU alert system notified students that classes were canceled for the rest of the day. By that point, traffic across town was in gridlock on snow-covered streets, but Banken said many people had already left campus before noon.

“I don’t think everyone left simultaneously,” she said.

Administrators then had to consider whether to close the entire campus. “That decision takes more time because we have areas we cannot close,” Banken said. “We have research animals that have to be taken care of,” and students living in residential halls “have to be fed,” Banken said.
Forty minutes later, MU went into full closure, with all classes, exams and events canceled. A few facilities, including the hospitals, remained open, as did the student center. Banken said anyone stuck on campus was offered a room in one of the residential facilities.

Last night, administrators decided to close campus again today. Campus will be open Saturday.

Columbia College, Stephens College and Columbia Public Schools are all closed today as well. The school district’s snow club child care service also was canceled today, and school-related activities tomorrow were called off as well. However, Rock Bridge High School girls varsity and junior varsity basketball games starting at 1 p.m. Saturday were still scheduled to take place.

The Hickman High School courtwarming dance and boys basketball game scheduled for tonight were canceled and will not be rescheduled.

“Watching traffic flows and the rates of roads being cleared, we didn’t want to put anyone in a position that wouldn’t be safe,” district spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark said.

Around town, one of the biggest problems was the number of people who were all trying to get home around the same time from late morning into the afternoon. City and county governments began releasing employees about noon, and the county courthouse also closed.

When people left home for work yesterday, no snow was falling, Boone County Presiding Commissioner Dan Atwill said. “By 10 o’clock, it was apparent it was going to be a significant event.”

County offices were not closed in advance of the snow because it wouldn’t have been a prudent use of taxpayer money, he said.

“I think we are very interested in keeping county offices open, so that is a primary concern,” Atwill said.

The city has the same concerns, City Manager Mike Matthes said. Giving employees a paid day off because of weather costs about $300,000, he said.

“There are services people want, and people expect us to be there, and we try to stay as long as we can,” Matthes said.

The traffic situation exacerbated by simultaneous releases of public and private employers might provide lessons for dealing with the next big winter storm, Atwill said.

“I think we will sit down and assess this whole event,” he said. “I don’t think anyone foresaw the road problems of letting people go at the same time.”

Although the Columbia post office didn’t close yesterday, snow did impede carriers. Postmaster Pamela Davis said about 10 postal trucks got stuck, and there were delays.
“We were out running all day trying to get carriers back. We even had one carrier volunteer to use his big truck to pull the carriers to safety,” Davis said.

Only about half of deliveries were made yesterday, she said. “We made whatever deliveries we could safely and where we could move around the gridlock.”

This article was published in the Friday, February 22, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "City, county, campuses opt to close early: MU shutdown continues today."

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Posted in Local on Friday, February 22, 2013 2:00 pm.
MU community combines effort to counter snowstorm

By Cassa Niedringhaus, Jill Deutsch and Nassim Benchaabane

Published as a part of Maneater v. 79, Issue 38

Throughout campus and Columbia, students could be seen lending a helping hand

As the snowstorm set in, students and staff banded together to combat the adverse effects of the weather.

The MU Student Center remained open for 24 hours along with the Women’s Center and the Multicultural Center for any students stranded by the weather that were unable to make it home.

“The Women’s Center is open 24/7 during finals, so we know that we can trust our students to hang out here and relax and everything will be okay,” Women’s Center Coordinator Suzy Day said. “I had a lot of interested student staff that wanted to stay and hang out. I’m trusting them to watch over the space.”

Senior Alison Schwartz said she was glad the Women’s Center provided a place for her to stay and wait out the storm before walking home.

“I regularly come to the Women’s Center,” Schwartz said. “Being stuck on campus, I was really relieved to find out I was still welcomed here despite other places being closed. It’s a really welcoming place all the time and especially during emergency situations like this one.”

Multicultural Center Director Pablo Bueno Mendoza said he too was happy to provide a safe place for students to stay. He said the school’s response to the storm was good in that everyone was looking out for the safety of students.

“I think that most universities are much more forward-thinking about weather response than they were 20 years ago when I started my career in student affairs,” Mendoza said. “My whole experience at the University of Missouri since I came here in ’98 has been that we really are trying to be proactive in our response. We look at all the different logistics and try to do things for the safety of our students, staff and faculty.”
As the Student Center was offering its space for students, Residential Life Director Frankie Minor said ResLife was offering its open spaces to campus employees that needed a place to stay.

“We have offered up some of the few empty spaces that we’ve got for other campus employees that have been working, including landscape services employees, campus facilities employees and police officers,” Minor said. “We know we’re going to be housing at least six of the Campus Dining Services employees so students can have sufficient food.”

While some employees are defined as essential employees that must stay to keep the campus running, Minor said other employees volunteered to stay on campus to help out.

“Most of the ones here are volunteers,” he said. “We have some staff who are extremely dedicated to the students. They take their jobs very seriously. They have tremendous dedication to our students.”

Student staff members were also among the people helping to fight the weather. They shoveled entrances, exterior stairways and paths to help students move around campus easier.

“We tend to hire students who really care about their jobs,” Minor said. “They care about making their community a better place. Sometimes, it means pitching in and shoveling snow.”

Mobility was a concern for students on campus, and Minor said the focus of ResLife was on the safety and security of the students.

“I got a call from the Director of Disability Services earlier today,” Minor said. “They had a student who was bound in a scooter and was there taking a test and couldn’t get back because he lives off-campus. We were prepared to put him up, but she and her husband actually took him home.”

Minor said the school did the best it could to handle the snowstorm. He said the decision to cancel classes is a very complex decision, and he trusted that the senior administrators had weighed all the information and made the best decision they could. He said, just as it had in past snowstorms, the school would analyze the situation after it passed to better prepare for the future.

“We are an institution of higher education,” Minor said. “We’re all about learning. Any opportunity we have to learn from our past experiences and apply that to future situations, we do that. We did that after Snowpocalypse. I have every confidence that we will do that after this situation is over.”

Thunder Snow Rescue

A group of students were gathered in the LGBTQ Resource Center for a student leadership event that was cancelled due to the snow.
The student leaders sat in the center talking about how students were stranded around campus when they decided to do something.

“We couldn’t hold an event but we could help each other,” LGBTQ Resource Center Coordinate Struby Struble said.

The leaders took to Twitter, creating the Twitter hashtag #ThunderSnowRescue.

Although they could not drive students or help students stuck off-campus, they were able to leave the MU Student Center and help students, Missouri Students Association President Nick Droege said.

Kat Seal, Sustain Mizzou President and a Tiger Pantry coordinator, said the efforts were just random acts of kindness.

Droege said he hoped the hashtag allowed other people to help out as well.

“The hashtag can be applied not just to us but to anyone who reads it,” he said. “As long as the hashtag runs, anyone has that option to look into it.”

At various locations throughout campus and Columbia, students could be seen out and about helping anyone who needed it.

Sophomore Sam Vickery was walking home from the Student Center when, at the intersection of Stadium Boulevard and Highway 63, he notice two or three groups of about five students each helping stuck cars get out of the snow.

“The whole stretch of the road was full of stopped-up cars,” he said.

Vickery joined the effort as students pushed cars up the hill to get them out of the mess.

“People like to help others who are in a hard time,” Vickery said. “It just sucks because obviously no one was prepared enough to deal with the quantity of snow we got in just one day.”

On Providence Road, sophomore Brea Love and four friends had stepped out of the car they’d been stuck in for more than two hours to help push other vehicles.

The group had driven from College Avenue through campus to Providence after deciding not to take the winding, snow-covered Rock Quarry Road home.

They noticed members of MU fraternities sitting outside their houses in Greektown and helping cars that got stuck nearby, Love said.

“It’s nice,” she said. “It’s nice to see people coming together to do something to help, you don’t see that all the time.”
This was the side of the story people weren’t seeing, law-student Larry Lambert said.

At the intersection of Providence and McDeaver roads, Lambert saw groups of four-to-five students directing traffic and pushing out cars stuck in the snow.

“I wondered where the cops were that should’ve been doing that but was glad they (the students) were doing it themselves,” Lambert said. “I thought it was really admirable that they were taking it upon themselves to help other people.”
MU Police Department released an alert Thursday at 1:15 p.m. announcing the closure of the university due to severe weather. All classes, exams and events were cancelled.

Critical personnel will still be operating what MUPD called continuous operations throughout the day. The university’s hospitals, clinics and emergency rooms are also remaining open.

"Despite the slippery streets, there have not been any reported accidents since midnight on Thursday," Brian Weimer, MUPD spokesman, said around 3 p.m. Thursday.

Road surfaces have dropped below freezing temperatures and are being treated with a chemical to melt the snow as it falls. The effort is being monitored by the Columbia Public Works crews.

"The university police patrol cars have not been affected by the snowstorm," Weimer said. "(The patrol cars) have all wheel drive."

The Columbia Police Department also works a little differently during severe weather.

"We change things up a bit," CPD spokesman Joe Bernhard said.

CPD officers often ride two to a car in extreme weather situations.

"Since it is difficult to get around quickly in a police car, the two man cars ensure the officers have back-up when they need it," Bernhard said. "We use our regular police vehicles but put chains on the tires to help with traction."

CPD also has a few four-wheel drive vehicles that are used for other police functions, such as the mounted team and building maintenance. A local dealership agreed to lend CPD a few extra four-wheel drive vehicles, Bernhard said. Vehicles with four wheel drive allow officers to reach calls for service in residential neighborhoods and on side streets.

"We ask our officers from other divisions within the department to be available to be reassigned if necessary to patrol," Bernhard said. "We will respond to all calls for service, although we do
prioritize them and it does take us longer to respond to some calls. We do ask for citizens to use online reporting for reporting crimes not in progress."

Michelle Baumstark, a Columbia Public Schools spokeswoman, said the schools would wait until Thursday morning to make a decision to cancel school as a precautionary measure. MU also waited to determine whether the predictions would be accurate before calling off the school day.

In addition to MUPD’s MU Alerts, Residence Hall Coordinators have also notified students of the changing weather status through email. Residential Life and the MU facilities staff worked to keep the sidewalks and entrances clear of snow.

The snow was expected to reach up to 6 inches, but, according to the NOAA National Weather Service, the exact accumulation will depend on the storm’s path.
After retirement, pensions provide consistent income to aging individuals and can represent a new life stage for individuals. A University of Missouri researcher has studied how older men and women view their health before and after receiving fixed incomes. South African men and women in the study viewed their health more positively when they began receiving their pensions, but the heightened sense of well-being faded over time.

"We looked at individuals' perceptions of their own health. Did they worry less? Were they less sad and more satisfied with life now that they were receiving pensions?" said Enid Schatz, associate professor of health science in the School of Health Professions. "People perceive their lives and well-being as better after they start receiving their pensions because they're getting money that they didn't use to get, so they're able to do more for others and more for themselves. When they are first able to do that, it feels good. Ten years later, their feelings of progress are not as great."

Schatz, who also teaches women's and gender studies in the MU College of Arts and Science, analyzed data previously collected as part of the WHO-INDEPTH Study of Global Ageing (sic) and Adult Health Survey of men and women in rural South Africa. Women reported poorer well-being than men, although women reported feeling less worried and more satisfied after they started receiving their pensions.

Conversely, men reported lower well-being in the years leading up to receiving their pensions and, after receiving the pensions, men's well-being improved for five years and then declined.

Social Science & Medicine published the article, "The impact of pensions on health and wellbeing in rural South Africa: Does gender matter?" Schatz's co-authors included Margaret Ralston, a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology in the MU College of Arts and Science, and researchers from the University of Colorado and the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Posted in Saturday Business, Wire on Saturday, February 23, 2013 2:00 am.
National Academy of Sciences member William Brock hired at MU

By Andrew Beasley

Published as a part of Maneater v. 79, Issue 38

William Brock, a Guggenheim Fellow, will develop tools for mathematical research.

The department of economics will add William Brock, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, to its staff later this spring.

Brock, who currently teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, will teach a month-long technical mathematics module at MU for both graduate students and professionals in fields like computational biology.

The opportunity to teach this class is just one of the reasons he looks forward to coming here, Brock said. He has family in nearby towns like Mexico, Mo., and Brock’s daughter is an assistant teaching professor in the MU division of applied social sciences. Brock also graduated from MU in 1965.

“I was actually there when the old Shack existed,” said Brock. “It was a much smaller campus back then.”

Last year, Brock was invited to MU to speak about early warning signals of ecosystems on the brink of collapse.

“They invited me to be a Chancellor’s Distinguished Visitor and give a lecture so that’s probably what got (the hiring process) started, I suppose,” Brock said. “I guess someone must have liked it.”

Brock is one of three distinguished faculty members to be hired by the university. Napoleon Chagnon and Martin Daly were both hired by the department of anthropology and brought many honors with them. Brock said he has quite a bit of respect for the two, especially for Chagnon’s accomplishments.

“This guy is a real living Indiana Jones,” he said.
After graduating from MU, Brock went on to earn a doctorate from the University of California – Berkeley in 1969, according to a MU News Bureau release. He was named a Guggenheim Fellow in 1987 and in 1998 became a member of the National Academy of Sciences.

Brock works primarily in economics and mathematics, designing applicable models to aid those fields.

"I am a toolmaker for other researchers," Brock said in the release. "My mathematical models and statistical analysis are, hopefully, already helping other MU researchers to use the data they collect on such diverse topics as salamander ecology, the business cycle and linguistic anthropology."

Brock said some of his favorite places to think are coffee shops like Lakota Coffee Co. in downtown Columbia.

"A couple of cappuccinos and it’s amazing what the brain will do," Brock said. "When my wife and I drive across the country we have a map in front of us and college towns are like our oases."

Brock said he and his wife are looking forward to spending some time in Columbia.

"When we’re down there we get our accents back," he said.
Local agencies would suffer from automatic spending cuts

Education, housing would be affected.

By Jacob Barker

Sunday, February 24, 2013 at 2:00 am

Friday will be day one of the so-called sequester, when automatic spending cuts of $85.4 billion are set to take a bite out of federal funding from programs ranging from research and education to defense and public housing.

Unless Congress reaches a compromise before then, the cuts will trickle down to the local level where administrators will have to figure out how to deal with the swift and indiscriminate reduction in funding.

Democrats and President Barack Obama have pushed an alternative composed of half spending cuts and half tax increases. Republicans have signaled a willingness to push cuts over a longer time period and spread out the cuts over some programs now exempt, but they are firmly against any more tax increases. The two parties have not been negotiating much, and that makes it appear likely that the first round of cuts, which Congress and the president put in place to force a compromise, will occur.

Sequestration mandates $1.2 trillion in cuts over 10 years. When savings on debt service is factored, that equates to cuts of more than $100 billion after this year, with indiscriminate cuts of 8.2 percent to most programs. The first year is $85 billion because of the fiscal cliff deal reached last month.

The pain here won't be as great as in places such as St. Louis, where Boeing's defense division is based. Because the sequester cuts are divided evenly between defense and other discretionary spending, communities with companies reliant on defense contracts stand to take a bigger hit.

The long-term unemployed, those who have used up the six months of state benefits and qualify for the federal program, would see a 9.4 percent cut in their benefit checks. In Missouri, 29,532
people were receiving federal benefits in January, according to the state's Department of Labor. With an average weekly benefit of $237, sequestration would mean $22 less per week. Columbia, with a jobless rate of about 4 percent, is in much better shape than most places.

That's not to say Mid-Missouri won't feel its own pain. The University of Missouri estimates its research funds could be lowered by more than $16 million per year, MU spokesman Christian Basi said. Low-income housing assistance would take a hit, and the Columbia Housing Authority would feel some of the pain. Community Development Block Grants the city uses for fixing infrastructure and other services would be reduced. And grants for public safety, research and not-for-profits would be affected.

Columbia also is home to many of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's state offices, and they employ about 250 people locally, according to Regional Economic Development Inc. An Office of Management and Budget report estimates those departments would see $1.1 billion in cuts this year, and some of that pain will trickle to the local offices, either through program cuts or employee furloughs. Those estimates are somewhat high, though, because the fiscal cliff deal reduced this year's cuts.

Columbia Public Schools would take a hit, too. Federal funds support areas such as special education, and federal money goes toward schools that have a high number of their students living in poverty. Chief Financial Officer Linda Quinley estimated the district would lose $285,804 of its $3.48 million budget for Title I, with many of the cuts affecting reading and math programs. About 8 percent of the district's nearly $3.38 million budget for special education could be cut.

School lunches would be affected as well — federal funds support the free and reduced-lunch program and a program that promotes healthier eating. Quinley estimated $322,000 could be cut from various student meal programs.

Sequestration also would put some school construction bonds at risk, Quinley said. The bonds were issued with an interest subsidy under the stimulus, and the school district could be on the hook for an extra $400,000 per year.

Tribune Reporter Catherine Martin contributed to this story.

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Posted in Local on Sunday, February 24, 2013 2:00 am.
Columbia native hired to lead the Missouri Symphony Society
Missouri Symphony Society hires new executive director

Saturday, February 23, 2013 at 12:00 am

A Columbia native with extensive experience in the entertainment industry has returned to town as the new executive director of the Missouri Symphony Society.

Chris Campbell started work this week, Lili Vianello, president of the Missouri Symphony Society board of directors, said in a news release.

Campbell is a 1980 graduate of Rock Bridge High School and most recently worked as an events producer and arts consultant in Lexington. He previously was an executive at Paramount Pictures and has produced various entertainment events and worked with the music education group The Young Americans. He is married to Lafayette County Prosecuting Attorney Kellie Wingate Campbell.

Vianello said the symphony society's board conducted a nationwide search for a director, and Campbell ultimately won its unanimous approval. She said Campbell's duties will include expanding the symphony's appeal to a younger audience.

The symphony society's events include the annual six-week Hot Summer Nights concert festival featuring its Missouri Symphony Orchestra.

The symphony society entered a deal in 2011 that allowed the University of Missouri to take over operations of the Missouri Theatre downtown. The theater, which the symphony society owns, had temporarily closed because of the financial burden from a recent renovation, but the deal with MU has allowed it to resume hosting regular events.

"I'm excited about coming back to my hometown to work with a Columbia arts institution," Campbell said in the news release.

— By the Tribune's staff

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Nixon makes case for expanding Medicaid

Expanding Medicaid coverage in Missouri is the “smart thing to do and the right thing to do,” Gov. Jay Nixon told an audience in St. Charles County last week.

Nixon made his remarks during a Feb. 20 visit to the Economic Development Center of St. Charles County, one of several stops the governor was making in the state to promote bringing Medicaid dollars back to Missouri. About 75 people attended, including local educators, business people, health care providers and some mayors.

He joins governors in other states, including Ohio and Michigan, who have elected to participate in Medicaid expansion to provide health coverage to those who lack health insurance. The expansion is called for in the federal Affordable Care Act pushed by President Barack Obama.

Nixon said expanding Medicaid would have major economic benefits for the states. The governor’s proposal would bring $5.7 billion to Missouri during the first three years of the program, providing health coverage to 300,000 Missourians at no cost to the state. Federal funding would cover 100 percent of the costs in 2014 through 2016.

“Bringing billions of our current tax dollars back to Missouri to strengthen Medicaid will have a profound and positive impact not only on our health but also the local economy here in St. Charles County and in communities in every corner of the Show-Me State,” Nixon said.

Under the proposed expansion, low-income Missourians who can’t afford health insurance and earn less than 138 percent of the federal poverty level would be eligible for coverage, according to a news release from the governor’s office. A family of four living at 138 percent of the federal poverty level in 2013 makes $32,500 a year.

Nixon said business organizations such as the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and others throughout the state have endorsed the plan.

The federal dollars that would be brought back to the state came from the pockets of local taxpayers, he said.
“Will we bring the tax dollars sent to Washington back home to strengthen our Medicaid system here in Missouri, or will we let those tax dollars that Missourians send to Washington be spent in other states?” he said. “Other states get the benefits, we get the bills.”

Republican state legislators have been less than enthusiastic about expanding Medicaid, wanting less government involvement in entitlement programs. Hospitals have been supportive because they have picked up uncovered medical costs.

*Nixon said a study by the University of Missouri found that bringing these dollars back to the state would create 24,000 new jobs and help hospitals that already are required by law to treat people who have no health insurance.*

The cost of caring for the uninsured is passed on to employers and individuals who must pay higher premiums for their health insurance. According to the university study, the average family of four in Missouri pays $434 more in insurance premiums due to the cost of the uninsured. Under the proposed Medicaid expansion, this cost shift would be reduced, saving each family an estimated $200 in lower premium costs each year, according to the governor’s office.

The cost share the state would start to pick up after three years would be phased in at 5 percent in 2017 and not more than 10 percent by 2020.

Other states such as Ohio, Michigan, Arizona and North Dakota are moving in this same direction, he said. “They are doing this not because it’s the easy thing for them to do politically but because it’s the smart thing to do economically,” he said.

Whether Republican legislators will go along with this idea remains unclear. Republicans have a majority in the state House and Senate.

“It’s clear to me we’re making progress, first of all,” said Nixon, a Democrat. He said progress will be seen in the House when the Republican majority introduces a measure to move forward with this proposal. He said he hopes lawmakers can move beyond the rhetoric from the November presidential election.

“I believe elected representatives reflect their communities and they don’t diverge from them,” he said.
Oscar Pistorius: Will he be granted bail?

Kelly Whiteside, USA TODAY Sports
4:59 a.m. EST February 22, 2013

Story Highlights

- Pistorius' bail hearing continues Friday in Pretoria
- Judge could take away athlete's passport, restrict him to his home
- Suspects awaiting trial are held in prisons in South Africa


But the Oscar Pistorius case, and the legal system under which it will be adjudicated, differs significantly from that other headline-grabbing murder trial, held in the mid-1990s.

In South Africa, Pistorius will not be tried by a jury as O.J. Simpson was in Los Angeles. Jury trials were abolished during the apartheid era in South Africa.

Pistorius is expected to be granted bail after final arguments are made Friday, several experts in South African law told USA TODAY Sports. The Olympic and Paralympic track star was charged with premeditated murder in the shooting death of his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, on Valentine's Day.

**SHAPIRO: Simpson lawyer says cases very different**

"In my view, he has established that he should be released," said Cape Town attorney William Booth, the chairman of the Criminal Law Committee of the Law Society of South Africa. To be granted bail, Pistorius' lawyers must prove that an "exceptional circumstance" exists and that Pistorius is not a flight risk.

Booth said he doesn't believe Pistorius would be considered a flight risk and also cited concerns with the strength of the prosecution's case. "They could set bail at a very high amount under very strict conditions," he said.
Rodney Uphoff, professor of law at the University of Missouri who runs the school's study abroad program in Cape Town, also expects Pistorius to be granted bail. The judge could take away Pistorius' passport and restrict him to living at home, Uphoff said.

"That would probably be a more appropriate resolution to the bail issue rather than sending him to prison," Uphoff said, adding that in the U.S. suspects are often held in county jails but in South Africa they are taken to prison while awaiting trial. "(Prison) would create some security issues because South African prisons are not the safest places to be. For a high profile defendant like him, I'd think there would be a serious risk of potential harm for him. I think it would be a security nightmare for the prison authorities."

At the London Olympics last summer, Pistorius' worldwide fame skyrocketed; the first double amputee sprinter to compete in the Olympics became an inspiration to millions.

If bail is denied, Pistorius can immediately appeal to a higher court. If freed on bail, the trial wouldn't likely take place for months, at the least, legal experts said.

"In South Africa there are many criminal cases pending," Booth said. "People have been in custody for years on murder, robbery and rape and there is such a high incidence of those cases in South Africa. It could take a couple of months, maybe up to a year. Maybe even longer than that."

The high court in South Africa won't have to worry about the challenge high-profile U.S. cases face: seating an impartial jury in media-saturated environment. Instead, a single judge will hear the entire case and then rule on Pistorius' guilt or innocence.

The judge can be assisted by two advisers — highly trained lawyers — during the trial. Those advisors can outvote the judge, said Richard Goldstone, a judge for 23 years who served on South Africa's highest court. Goldstone now teaches at the University of Virginia School of Law.

If found guilty, Pistorius can appeal the ruling or sentence. Premeditated murder can carry a sentence of life in prison. There is no death penalty in South Africa. A lesser murder charge carries a sentence of 15 years to life. Pistorius maintains he accidentally killed Steenkamp.

Plea bargaining is rare in South Africa, but used a bit more in high-profile cases, Uphoff said.

Robert Shapiro, who represented Simpson in that notorious trial, told MSNBC the Pistorius case is very different except both "have superstar athletes that are accused of killing beautiful significant others."

Simpson never testified in his trial. Pistorius has already stated his case in an affidavit during the bail hearing, which was a mini-trial in itself.

"Most defense lawyers, at least in the States, wouldn't have their clients making any statements at all at this point until the defense has a better idea of what was going on," Uphoff said. "Under (the U.S. legal system's) standard, the defendant has no obligation to speak."
The Pistorius case has something else in common with Simpson's: the questioning of an investigator's integrity. Wednesday, the chief investigator in the Pistorius case, Hilton Botha, provided testimony damaging to the prosecution because of several missteps. A day later he was removed from the investigation after this bombshell: Botha is facing attempted murder charges stemming from a 2011 incident.

"It throws a bit of a question mark on his credibility," Booth said. "But more than that, it places the whole investigation in rather a bad light. You can't come to court and oppose bail for somebody when you yourself are also facing serious charges."