Program gives hope to students who had counted college out

By Erika Tallan, Reporter -

KANSAS CITY, MO (KCTV) - For many students, a higher education seems out of reach for financial reasons, but a program spawned from the University of Missouri is showing students that they can get there with a little encouragement.

Zakiyyah Lester had no intention of ever walking the halls at the University of Missouri Kansas City or any college campus.

"I was just always my parents would be happy if I just graduated high school, found a good job and I'm done," Lester said.

That changed last year.

Lester was a senior at Central Academy in the Kansas City Public School District. The school has seen its share of socioeconomic challenges and crime.

Gerald McLemore, a college advisor, told Lester and her class how they could take control of their lives.

"I always tell my students, 'you want to make money, what do you think it takes to get there,'" McLemore said.

McLemore is one of many college advisors with Missouri College Advising Corps, a program designed to help students find a means to a higher education.
The program been around for five years. Since then, the number of high school students who go on to college, state wide, has increased by .3 percent.

The schools that have the program saw a more than 10 percent spike in college bound students.

"Definitely building relationships with these students is working and giving them an avenue where they feel like they have a goal to reach like college and this program gets them there," McLemore said.

College advisors work through financial aid forms, college and scholarship applications and ACT preparations.

The program has had great success at Central Academy. The certificates line their walls, showing students who've received college acceptance letters and scholarships.

Lester feels the program has changed her life.

"It really opened the doors for me for a lot of new things," Lester said.

The directors with the program from across the country are meeting Thursday to discuss the success, as well as how to expand the program to more schools.

Missouri advisors will interact this year with more than 25,000 students in 25 high schools in the metro, St. Louis and rural and south-central Missouri.

Several partners are investing in the program, but it needs additional funding since it costs the program $46,000 each year to put an advisor in a school.
MU Life Sciences Week gives scientists chance to share research

By Karyn Spory

A record number of students and scientists turned out this week for the 29th annual Life Sciences Week at the University of Missouri.

Ginny Booker, manager of marketing and communication at MU's Bond Life Sciences Center, said the purpose of the weeklong event is to bring scientists and their ideas together. Booker said this is achieved with the poster session, which allows students and faculty to present their research in an accessible poster format.

Booker said Life Sciences Week always has had more than 200 research posters being presented, but she had hoped to increase that to 300 this year. "Instead, we ended up with almost 340, which is huge," she said.

Booker said she doesn't believe there's one specific reason the poster submissions grew so substantially, but she did personally reach out to departments to encourage students to submit their projects.

The posters were submissions from MU undergraduates, graduates, post-doctoral students, lab staff and faculty across disciplines and were presented over two days.

Life Sciences Week originated in 1985 as Molecular Biology Week and grew from there. Booker said the purpose of the week, whether molecular biology or life science, is to bring scientists together. "It's a celebration of a lot of different scientific disciplines, and it's a celebration of collaboration," she said.

Although the poster sessions are about presenting research, Booker said it also is important for these "future scientists" to tell the average person about their project.

Doctoral student Danny Stark presented his research, which looks at adult stem cells that are responsible for muscle regeneration.
"It's nice to relay the information to other scientists, but also it forces me to organize my thoughts and explain" his project "in context that everyone can understand," he said.

Duane Keisler, professor of animal sciences and a poster judge, said the poster session is critical for students because it teaches them to trim down three years of research into a 15-minute presentation.

The annual celebration also went from one keynote speaker to four. Speakers included: David Hillis, University of Texas-Austin; Devin Sinclair, University of Nottingham; Denise Dearing, University of Utah; and Mark Hay, Georgia Tech.

Life Sciences Week also features a vendor show on the first floor of the Bond Life Sciences Center.
Mizzou summit explores creativity and new media

COLUMBIA, MO (AP) - Some University of Missouri researchers are exploring the link between new media and creativity with an assist from the Hallmark greeting card company.

The Mizzou International Symposium on Creativity and New Media features a Friday afternoon keynote speech by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (sih-kh-sehnt-muh-HAH'-lee), a Claremont College psychology professor who studies the creative process.

Speakers at the 2-day event also hail from Israel, the United Kingdom, Stanford University and other campuses.

MU students helped design online greeting cards for Kansas City-based Hallmark Inc. Their work was monitored and recorded by researchers hoping for further insights into the links between creativity and new media.

The keynote speech begins at 4:30 p.m. and is free and open to the public.
Students see brighter future at MU Employer Summit

Summit offers career advice.

By Karyn Spory

For University of Missouri graduates, the job market is looking a lot sunnier after Wednesday's Employer Summit.

The summit, sponsored by the MU Career Center, was held at Memorial Union and offered workshops for students and MU employees.

Amanda Nell, senior coordinator for MU student services, said the national employment outlook is more positive than in recent years.

Nell cited a report from the National Association of Colleges and Employers that says employers who responded to a survey reported they "plan to hire 13 percent more new college graduates in 2012-13 than they did in 2011-12."

"If you just look at the activity on our campus, the number of employers who RSVP to this event is up significantly," Nell said.

She estimated 80 employers came to the 2011 summit. That's compared with the 125 employers that attended the event yesterday.

Nell added that the number of students attending campus career fairs also is up.

"A couple of years ago we were in a deep freeze," she said. "It's fair to say the market has thawed and the market is looking" sunnier.

The summit is held to benefit students and employers.

"For the employer audience, we're doing everything to promote our student talent," Nell said.
Nell said the MU Career Center also has tried to allow for direct connection between students and employers during a networking luncheon. During the luncheon, students could apply to various companies, as well as receive advice from prospective employers.

Rod Whitney, a talent acquisition specialist for Monsanto, said this was the third employer summit he has attended at MU. As for the industry, Whitney said "agriculture is on fire."

"A young man or woman who would like to commit their careers to feeding a hungry planet is going to find tremendous opportunities over the next 20 years," he said.

Whitney said he was looking for people with a good attitude, strong work ethic, good communication skills and honesty.

Although many of the workshops helped students prepare for interviews, several were aimed at employers and how to help them attract the best candidates.

Amanda Neff, a junior agriculture major, said the summit had been a great opportunity to interview with multiple employers.

Neff was also pulling double duty, as she was sitting on a panel to tell recruiters what students are looking for when accepting one job offer over another.

Neff, who has had her fair share of interview experience, said she's looking for enthusiastic recruiters who are interested in what interviewees are saying "and won't just stick to a script."
Online registration saves time at college fairs

The information form -- that staple of college fairs all across the country -- is about to go digital in the St. Louis area.

Instead of students filling out a card for every college representative they talk to, students can go online at CollegeFa.irs.com days or even weeks before the college fair and fill out an online form.

The form is a virtual mirror of the cards found at college fairs. Students can fill out the forms at home, answering questions about what size college they are interested in, the distance from their homes, the major they are interested in pursuing, their ACT score, even their interest in participating in intramural sports.

Students can then print out a bar code or download the information to a smart phone. Once at the fair, college representatives run the bar codes through scanners. Within five to seven days, the college reps receive an email with an Excel spreadsheet with all of the captured data.

"It's beneficial to kids because they have to fill out all those interest cards, and after about 10 cards, they've about had it," said Joan Lodes, a college counselor at Marquette High School.

Instead, the student can spend more time talking to college representatives, said Mark Clynes, assistant director of admission at McKendree University in Lebanon, Ill.

On the college's side, admission reps get clean data, Clynes said. In the rush to see as many college representatives as possible, cards are often turned in with only partial information and the scribbled answers are indecipherable.

Not only does the program eliminate errors and missing information, students have an opportunity to list any special accomplishments or extracurricular activities they might not jot down on a card at a college fair.

The program allows high school counselors to keep track of which students have registered, so the students can be reminded, if needed.

The online program is free for the student and the school district. The colleges pay a fee for the scanners.

Online registration has been moving across the country for the past four to five years. So far, online registration has been used at the national fairs, such as the fair coming up April 28 at Maryville University.
"The goal is to get as many students registered for fall," Clynes said.

Next fall is the opening of college fair season. Individual school districts will hold fairs on campus in cooperation with the Missouri Association of College Admission Counseling, a non-profit organization of admissions professionals, high school counselors and educational institutions.

Online registration will be required. In the meantime, high school counselors are busy getting students signed up and parents notified. Rockwood is sending out newsletters to notify parents and students of the college fair it will hold Sept. 16 at Marquette High School.

"Our goal is to have the students signed up in advance," Lodes said. "I think it really benefits the students. I think it benefits everyone all around."
MU Tap Day ceremony moved indoors due to rain

By Elle Hoffman
April 18, 2013 | 3:26 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Frequent rain over the past week has led MU to move its Tap Day ceremony indoors for the second year in a row.

The ceremony will be at 2 p.m. Friday in Jesse Auditorium. Like many student traditions, the event is usually held on Francis Quadrangle.

Stormy weather and muddy ground are the causes for the move, according to a news release from Nick Evans, a coordinator of student organizations at MU.

On Tap Day, an 86-year-old tradition, MU’s six secret honor societies reveal their new members to the public. The selected students are "tapped," or chosen, during the week preceding the ceremony.

The secret societies are QEBH, Mystical Seven, LSV, Mortar Board, Omicron Delta Kappa and the Rollins Society.

The societies usually induct juniors who will spend their senior year involved with the group. Sometimes, involvement in Tap Day is just a formal recognition of students who have been involved throughout their junior years.

There will be free parking in the Conley and Turner garages on Friday afternoon for those attending the ceremony.

Supervising editor is Richard Webner.
Letter to the editor: Problems with recruiting teachers cannot be linked to pension plans

Regarding "Charters want pension flexibility" (April 14):

The Public School Retirement System of the City of St. Louis has done very well for our active and retired members, both from charter schools and traditional public schools. The retirement system regularly ranks among the best-performing pension funds in its universe of similar funds. Especially during the recent economic downturn, defined benefit funds routinely outperformed 401(k) accounts, which switch risk to the individual. Pension fund members can have confidence in the viability of the fund now and into the future. The nationwide problem of recruiting and retaining qualified, certified teachers and support employees cannot logically be linked to participation in a fiscally sound, high-performing defined benefit pension plan.

The study cited in the article failed to identify wealthy, conservative activist Rex Sinquefield's funding links to Professor Mike Podgursky (both at the University of Missouri economics department and the Show-Me Institute). Readers, especially educators, and taxpayers deserve to know that the pension fund is healthy and that Professor Mike Podgursky is linked to Mr. Sinquefield.

Byron Clemens • St. Louis
University of Missouri senior Xavier Billingsley has been awarded a Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship after a highly competitive nationwide contest. The Rangel Fellowship will provide Billingsley with approximately $90,000 in benefits over a two-year period to pursue a master's degree in international affairs. Billingsley served as president of the Missouri Student Association (MSA) in 2012. He also directed an Alternative Spring Break trip, served as a Summer Welcome leader and was the 2012 Homecoming King. He has participated in a diplomacy trip to Russia and a mission trip to Jamaica and is now serving as an intern in the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica. As part of the Rangel program, he will work for a member of Congress this summer on issues regarding foreign affairs and then attend the Cornell University Institute of Public Affairs starting in the fall. In the summer of 2014, the U.S. Department of State will send him overseas to work in a U.S. Embassy to get hands-on experience with U.S. foreign policy and the work of the Foreign Service. Upon graduation, he will become a U.S. diplomat.
Slow down, students; Missouri measure lets campus cops write speeding tickets

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. • Campus police at Missouri’s public colleges could gain state authority to write speeding tickets.

A bill passed Thursday by the Missouri Senate would allow the governing board of any public college or university to impose traffic regulations on roads owned or maintained by the institution. The schools could put up official traffic control signals and campus police could write tickets, including for speeding.

Campus traffic tickets would be treated the same as those issued by cities, with fines ranging from $5 to $500 and the potential for up to a year in jail.

The Senate legislation now goes to the House, which passed a similar bill last month.