MU Faculty Council wants Deaton to conduct audits for nuclear engineering programs

By Katie Yaeger
April 25, 2013 | 8:56 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The MU Faculty Council will ask Chancellor Brady Deaton to conduct an audit of the Nuclear Engineering Program and the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute, as well as restore the institute to its previous state before MU administrators decided to split it up.

The council passed the resolution Thursday by a 14-8 vote.

Faculty were concerned that the institute had not been audited, a procedural step necessary to dissolve it.

The council recommended that the institute be returned to its previous state until an audit is completed.

In January, the council asked Deaton to open admissions for and maintain the academic and research functions of the institute.

Deaton responded by saying he would reopen admissions to the nuclear engineering graduate programs and make sure the institute’s curriculum wasn’t changed in the next five years.

A second resolution to analyze the administration’s decision process after fall 2011, when institute status and grant contract conditions were changed, was tabled because it was not clear who would perform the analysis.

The council discussed a motion from Galen Suppes, professor of chemical engineering, that called for administrators to follow the Collected Rules and Regulations concerning faculty authority. Suppes believes administrators did not follow protocol when they did not involve faculty in decisions regarding the new nuclear engineering program.
For example, Suppes said, College of Engineering Dean Jim Thompson and Nuclear Engineering Program director John Gahl inappropriately hand-picked faculty for the Nuclear Engineering Program. Faculty should have selected a committee to identify qualifications for potential program faculty and another to then select final candidates and work with Deaton to appoint them, he said.

The motion also called for faculty to be appointed to programs following appropriate processes, and for the Nuclear Engineering Program to be reconstituted following those processes.

Deputy Provost Ken Dean said he did not think the Collected Rules and Regulations regarding faculty authority had been violated.

The process of creating the Nuclear Engineering Program was the same process used to create other programs that are not departmentally based, such as the neuroscience program, Dean said.

Whether the program had been approved was disputed at the meeting. Dean said he was told April 18 it had received approval from the Graduate Faculty Senate and the appropriate committees, but Suppes said that as a member of one of those committees, he knew it had not been approved.

At the meeting, the council also discussed:

- A motion to add a supplemental fee to all courses in the College of Arts and Science, which would benefit fellowship programs and other student activities. Because the college is the only one that doesn't charge supplemental course fees, if fees were charged, the least expensive college-specific fee would then be counted in MU's tuition and fees, Dean said.
- University of Missouri System health care reform with the Intercampus Faculty Council. Beginning in 2014, employees who average 30 hours a week will qualify for medical-only benefits.
Faculty Council votes to audit NSEI

The Faculty Council voted to call upon Chancellor Brady Deaton to conduct an audit of the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute on Thursday.

The motion was one of two resolutions Professor of Mathematics Stephen Montgomery-Smith introduced in response to the ongoing debate surrounding the closing of NSEI.

Administrators announced the closure in a March 15, 2012 letter. The institute was to be restructured for general improvement and economic opportunities. Staff would have to find new academic departments to join.

Faculty and students in the institute contested the action and accused administration of breaking Collected Rules and Regulations by failing to consult them on the issue.

The first resolution proposed the creation of a committee to analyze the administration of the NSEI, but there was a consensus that the resolution was too vague.

The second resolution stated the council should call upon Deaton to conduct an audit on the NSEI as well as restore the NSEI to its state prior to the closing until the audit has been completed.

The council postponed a vote on the first resolution for their next meeting, but the second resolution passed in an 18-4 vote.

Under current conditions, NSEI cannot admit any new students to the program. The only students who can participate in the program are those currently enrolled in it.

"We cannot recruit students," said Sudarshan Loyalka, professor of nuclear engineering. "We cannot advertise that they are coming to NSEI. That has been changed."

Graduate students are still interested in the program, but the current suspension has closed admissions. Loyalka said he was to send letters out telling students they were not allowed to enter the program.

"Twenty-eight students applied," he said. "They have just been sent letters that admission are suspended."

Loyalka continued to say the NSEI and its staff have asked Deaton to talk with them about the current admission problems.

"We were supposed to have more discussions this week," he said. "No discussions have happened this week."

A date to vote on the first resolution was not set.
MU faculty salaries less than average, new study finds

By Katie Yaeger
April 25, 2013 | 1:11 p.m. CDT

The AAUP annual faculty salary survey looks at the average salaries that higher education institutions paid faculty members during the 2012-13 academic year. The Missourian analyzed faculty pay for the 32 public universities that are members of the Association of American Universities. Among these universities, MU ranked No. 31 for full professors and No. 32 for associate and assistant professors. This chart compares MU with the 10 highest-paying public AAU members.

COLUMBIA -- MU Chancellor Brady Deaton has said he wants to make MU faculty salaries competitive with other public Association of American Universities members. Recent comparisons show MU's current faculty salaries are at or near the bottom of that group.
A survey conducted by the American Association of University Professors looked at how more than 1,100 higher education institutions paid full-time faculty whose main role is instruction during the 2012-13 academic year. This includes tenured, tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty.

About the survey

The survey was published in the American Association of University Professors March-April issue of Academe.

Amounts for salary averages were rounded to the nearest hundred. MU's results pertain to 1,201 faculty members. MU did not provide data for instructor salaries.

In its submission, MU excluded School of Medicine faculty, per the survey's instructions, and did include nursing, law and health professions faculty, MU Institutional Research programmer analyst Ann Patton said.

Salaries of part-time or adjunct faculty members and medical faculty were excluded from the survey's data, said Samuel Dunietz, a research associate for the American Association of University Professors.

Two public AAU members, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of Washington, did not participate in the survey and were not included in the public AAU averages.

The Missourian analyzed the results of this survey, pulled out the specific salary findings for public AAU members and compared those to reported salaries for MU faculty members.

The survey broke down salaries into four categories: full professors, associate professors, assistant professors and instructors.

In its submission of data, MU excluded School of Medicine faculty, per the survey's instructions. MU did include nursing, law and health professions faculty, MU Institutional Research programmer analyst Ann Patton said.

Compared with the other public AAU members, MU pays associate and assistant professors the least. MU is second-to-last in pay for full professors — the University of Oregon is the only surveyed public AAU member that pays these professors less.

MU's average salaries are higher than they were for the 2011-12 academic year, and with the exception of 2003, average faculty salaries at MU have increased each year since 2000, according to survey results.
During 2012-13, full professors earned an average of $3,300 more, and associate and assistant professors each earned an average of $2,100 more than they did in the 2011-12 academic year.

But MU's average salaries are still significantly short of other public AAU members' salaries. Of the 32 public AAU members that participated in the survey, the average salaries and their MU comparisons are:

- $134,800 for full professors, compared with $117,200 at MU.
- $91,300 for associate professors, compared with $78,000 at MU.
- $80,300 for assistant professors, compared with $63,800 at MU.

At an April 9 general faculty meeting, Deaton presented plans to increase faculty salaries in the next several years as part of a hiring strategy to attract and retain top faculty members.

Making salaries more competitive with other public AAU universities is a priority, he said at the meeting.

To increase the salary pool for both faculty and staff for the 2013-14 academic year, MU Budget Director Rhonda Gibler said at the April 9 meeting that she is encouraging departments to see how they can reallocate money in their budgets to put more money toward salaries and wages.

The annual faculty and staff raise process doesn't specifically address MU's long-term faculty salary goals but is crucial for MU to maintain its current position among public AAU institutions' faculty salaries, Gibler said in an email.

Increasing salaries is also a top priority for University of Missouri System employees, according to a 2010 survey.

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.
Senators give first-round OK to higher ed funding measure

Bill would create a funding formula.

By Rudi Keller

JEFFERSON CITY — Sens. Kurt Schaefer and Eric Schmitt found something they agreed on at the end of a searing exchange over the place of Truman State University in a proposed higher education funding formula — Missouri has too many colleges and universities.

"Do you think we need 13 institutions?" Schmitt, R-Glendale, asked.

"No," Schaefer, R-Columbia, replied.

"You and I both know we are never going to be able to really have that discussion on the floor," Schmitt said.

The issue before the Senate, Schaefer said, was as close as they would get to having that discussion. "Because this is such a political issue — not as political as closing schools, which we should probably be doing because simply we can't cut the pie into 13 pieces and expect there to be enough in any one piece — I think at this point."

The discussion came during debate of a bill sponsored by Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, that would create a formula for distributing state aid to colleges and universities. It would use the five states immediately above and below Missouri in economic ranking for funding comparison. The schools would be measured based on a number of factors such as the variety and number of degrees awarded and credit hours taught.

Under the bill, only 80 percent of each school's funding would be guaranteed each year. It sets aside 10 percent for performance-based funding and 10 percent for career placement incentives. A school would receive the money only if it met state goals in each area.

The model calls for spending $1.3 billion to support two- and four-year schools and Linn State Technical College. This year's appropriations total $854 million. The target for state funding for the University of Missouri would be $554.3 million, or $156.3 million more than this year's appropriation.
The Senate gave first-round approval to the bill, but its prospects are doubtful. Pearce is trying to pass it over the united opposition of the four-year schools. The Council on Public Higher Education, which represents the campus chiefs of 14 four-year campuses, opposes the bill, Executive Director Paul Wagner said.

"One of our main reasons is that the overriding incentive in this is enrolling more students," he said.

The bill rewards credit hours taught, he said. "The easiest way to increase the number of credit hours is to enroll more students."

The council laid out its objections in a nine-point letter to Pearce. He responded with a letter that challenged each point, including the complaint about enrollment.

"It incentivizes completion," Pearce wrote in a letter he distributed to the Senate along with the council's letter. "There is a fundamental difference between these two objectives. The biggest revenue driver in the model is completed credit hours."

Under a state law passed last year, appropriations are supposed to be based on a formula by fiscal 2015 rather than the current political fight every year over relatively small sums.

This year's budget is no exception to that pattern. In January, Gov. Jay Nixon proposed using performance measures to distribute $34 million in the coming year, giving the University of Missouri System $16.9 million. The House cut it to $20 million and gave each school a share based on current appropriations. That gave UM less than the same amount using performance measures.

The Senate, with Schaefer as Appropriations Committee chairman, restored Nixon's plan.

During debate, Schaefer opposed Schmitt's amendment to use a different peer group for funding comparisons for Truman State because it has a statewide liberal arts mission. Schmitt wants to compare Truman's funding to liberal arts schools in other states, using the 15 states above and below Missouri in economic rankings. The change would give Truman a bigger share of the total.

Schmitt's amendment passed on a 16-11 vote. Pearce's bill needs another round of approval before moving to the House.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Beyond Meat steps up production to offer products at Columbia grocers

MU Mention on Pg. 2

By Meghan Eldridge
April 26, 2013 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — If you cooked fajitas with it, you might not taste a difference. With 3,999 followers on Twitter and 12,032 likes on Facebook as of Thursday, the Columbia company Beyond Meat has gained attention nationally and outside the U.S. from people seeking alternatives to meat.

The company has roots in Columbia and opened its production facility here last summer, where it produces Chicken-Free Strips designed to imitate the taste and texture of real chicken. Production has increased five times since January, Bob Prusha, vice president of operations, said.

Despite the proximity of production, the chicken strips have only been available in two Columbia restaurants, Main Squeeze and Smokin’ Chick’s BBQ, and aren’t sold at any local groceries. Main Squeeze in downtown Columbia features the strips on its menu as an ingredient in many of its salads and soups.

“We really enjoy cooking with it,” Main Squeeze manager Katherine Wilcox said. “It’s a really great meat substitute to use in a lot of our specials in addition to tofu, seitan and tempeh. Everybody in Columbia is really excited about it because they know where it comes from, since it’s made locally.”

The Chicken-Free Strips are sold exclusively through select Whole Foods stores nationwide in the prepared foods section as an ingredient in products such as wraps and sandwiches. The new retail packs began to appear in the refrigerated section of some Whole Foods stores in early April.

Beyond Meat is working on expanding its retail availability to other natural product stores and has sent a letter to retailers, including Natural Grocers and Clovers Natural Market in
Columbia, to inform them about the product. The Chicken-Free Strips will become available in retail packs to Columbia grocery stores beginning July 1, Prusha said.

"With our stuff, we always look at the ingredients first," Julie Hayes, Clovers Natural Market grocery buyer, said. "When it does become available, I’ll definitely be checking it out. It would be nice to get another local nonmeat option in here."

The strips are “chicken-free” in the sense that they are made from soy and pea protein, flour and plant fibers and possess no meat. They are also gluten-free, vegan and made with nongenetically modified organisms.

Products will be available for purchase in 12-ounce packages in three varieties: lightly seasoned, grilled and southwest style for a suggested retail price of $5.29, Hilary Martin, public relations representative for Beyond Meat, said.

Company founder Ethan Brown collaborated with two MU researchers, Fu-hung Hsieh and Harold Huff, to develop the technology necessary to create the Chicken-Free Strips. Their work was licensed by the university and came with a requirement that the company make an investment in Missouri within five years of receiving the license.

That investment came in the form of a production facility that employs more than 30 people and has expanded its production so much since January that another labor shift was added in March, Prusha said.

The product utilizes Hsieh’s and Huff’s research to create a plant-based meat substitute that has similar characteristics to chicken, both in texture and taste. It is an alternative suitable for people trying to make the transition from eating meat to becoming vegan or vegetarian and those who participate in Meatless Mondays or are looking for a satisfying, healthy alternative, Prusha said.

In addition to the Chicken-Free Strips, Beyond Meat is developing and producing an alternative to beef. The alternative is being called a beef crumble product and mimics ground beef, similar to the texture one would think of in a taco, Prusha said. When the product will be made available in local grocery stores is unknown, he said.

The company is also developing a breaded version of the Chicken-Free Strips, possibly in different forms such as chicken breasts, which could potentially be used in a wider array of dishes.
“We’re trying to make a product that doesn’t feel like you’re sacrificing, that you’re actually taking a positive step forward,” Prusha said.

*Supervising editor is John Schneller.*
A central Missouri man has been convicted on federal arson charges stemming from fires on the campuses of the University of Missouri and Stephens College.

Christopher Kelley, 27, of Columbia, was found guilty of two counts of arson Wednesday, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported. He faces at least five years in prison.

Kelley was accused of setting a pair of fires in 2011 at the Audrey Webb Child Study Center at Stephens College and at Ellis Library at the University of Missouri. No injuries were reported.

Prosecutors said video surveillance showed Kelley walking through Ellis Library carrying a metal rod around the same time fire alarms sounded in the early morning hours of Sept. 10, 2011. Prosecutors also said a computer believed to be stolen during a May 18, 2011, fire at Stephens was found later in Kelley's home.

U.S. Assistant Attorney Jim Lynn accused Kelley of getting into the locked library and setting seven small fires on the first floor. Some fires were large enough to activate the sprinkler system, and damage was estimated at $1 million.

Defense attorney Troy Stabenow did not deny Kelley was in the library, but he argued that the evidence failed to show Kelley was responsible for the fires. Stabenow also said there was no evidence of soot on the shirt Kelley was wearing in Ellis.

"How is it that Chris could have set seven fires and have nothing on his clothing?" he said.
Jurors convict campus arson suspect

Video evidence was key in federal case.

By Brennan David

The possibility that Christopher Kelley might have had a lighter in his pocket when recorded on video at the scene of a fire played a role in the decision to convict him of arson, a juror said yesterday, even though no such evidence was presented in court.

Kelley yesterday was convicted in U.S. Western District Court in Jefferson City of two counts of arson for his role in 2011 fires at the University of Missouri's Ellis Library and at Stephens College that resulted in about $1 million in damage. He was taken into the custody of U.S. marshals after the verdict, with sentencing yet to be scheduled. Under federal statutes, he could face five to 40 years in federal prison without parole on each count, plus a fine of as much as $500,000.

During two hours of deliberation, the jury of eight women and four men asked to review video surveillance recordings.

The video shows Kelley walking around Ellis Library on Sept. 10, 2011, with a metal rod in his hand, but video does not show him starting the fires that occurred during the same time frame.

At no point during the three-day federal trial did Assistant U.S. Attorney Jim Lynn present evidence indicating what was used to start the fires at Ellis and at the Audrey Webb Child Study Center at Stephens, such as a pocket lighter or other source.

During their video review, however, jurors noticed an indentation in the left pocket of Kelley's shorts that they speculated was a pocket lighter, said Susie Medleck, 42, of Argyle.

She said she could not definitively say whether the item was a pocket lighter, a knife or another item, but "it was a deciding factor" in the guilty verdicts, she said.

In the video, Kelley can be seen trying to open doors to exit Ellis while keeping his left hand in his pocket, Medleck said.

The fact that Kelley did that each time he tried to exit made jurors suspicious, she said.
"No one thought he was 100 percent guilty when we started" deliberations, Medleck said, and the "one-in-a-million" chance that someone else was in the locked library at the same time as Kelley who could have started the fires weighed heavily in their consideration.

Upon reviewing the surveillance video today, defense attorney Troy Stabenow said he does not think the item in Kelley’s pocket was a lighter.

"If I hold a lighter, I hold it inside my fingers, so if my hand was inserted inside my shorts, I would expect it to be inside my hand, not observable," he said.

A lighter was found at the scene and unsuccessfully tested for fingerprints, he said, but it was never introduced during the trial.

"Obviously, the jury was paying close attention because I don't think the government or defense ever noticed it," Stabenow said of the possible pocketed item.

Jurors can derive a theory or conclusion however they see fit during deliberation as long as they do not seek information from outside sources, said Frank Bowman, a University of Missouri law professor. The video surveillance in this case was submitted as evidence.

"They come up with their conclusions with all sort of fascinating reasons," Bowman said of juries.
Federal jury convicts Mo. man of arson

22 hours ago

A central Missouri man has been convicted on federal arson charges stemming from fires on the University of Missouri campus and at Stephens College.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports (http://bit.ly/ZvI2sd) that Christopher Kelley was found guilty on two counts of arson on Wednesday after a federal jury deliberated for two hours.

Kelley was accused of setting a pair of 2011 fires at the Audrey Webb Child Study Center at Stephens College and Ellis Library on the University of Missouri campus. No injuries were reported, and damage was estimated at about $1 million.

Kelley was taken into custody of the U.S. Marshals after the verdict. Kelley faces up to 40 years in federal prison without parole on each count, plus a fine of up to $500,000.

MU vet school hosts memorial for pet owners

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Grieving pet owners can honor their deceased furry friends Saturday at an annual companion memorial sponsored by the University of Missouri's veterinary school.

The one-hour event begins at 1 p.m. at the Grand Cru restaurant, 2600 South Providence Road. The ceremony is designed as part of an expanded grief support program at the university's Veterinary Medicine Teaching Hospital.

Experts at the university's Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction say pet owners can experience intense grief not unlike what is felt when a human family member dies.
Mizzou Dance Marathon reaches out to help kids

By Karyn Spory

Mizzou Dance Marathon has been dancing for kids who can’t since 2008, and now the group is expanding beyond the dance floor.

Yesterday, Mizzou Dance Marathon, the largest student-led philanthropy group at the University of Missouri, held a bone marrow donor registration drive to help find a match for 6-year-old Rylan Newman, who was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in 2010. Nearly 300 people participated in the event at the MU Student Center.

Although Mizzou Dance Marathon is known for its namesake event — a fundraiser in which dancers stand for 13.1 hours — the group is expanding by trying to make a difference in the lives of children such as Rylan.

Mizzou Dance Marathon learned about Rylan's situation through MU Children's Hospital.

Sharon Newman, Rylan's mom, said after 29 months of chemotherapy treatment, Rylan was just five months away from finishing treatment and one week away from his sixth birthday when he relapsed in March.

Newman was introduced to members of Mizzou Dance Marathon through the hospital, and she invited some of them to Rylan's birthday party. She said they wanted to help, and together they decided on hosting a bone marrow registration event through the National Marrow Donation Program's Be the Match registry program.

"All of us wanted to get tested to see if we were possibly a match, so we decided the best way to do that was through a drive and open it to the rest of Columbia, as well," said Jessica Pulmart, who is Mizzou Dance Marathon's chairwoman of Children's Hospital relations.

Rylan is one of 17 Children's Miracle Network kids Mizzou Dance Marathon helps. Pulmart said the group recruits families mainly through word-of-mouth. "It's really just families recruiting other families," she said.
When it was formed in 2008, Mizzou Dance Marathon pledged to give Children's Hospital $100,000 over a five-year span. The group completed its goal two years early, and last summer it signed a new five-year pledge of $375,000.

"With Children's Miracle Network, we are actually supposed to grow by 20 percent every year," said Kailyn Castro, Mizzou Dance Marathon director of development.

However, it's not only the pledge amounts that keep growing. The group's number of participants has been increasing as much as donations. The group started with nearly 300 participants, and that number has tripled over the years, according to the group's website.

"What is really great about Dance Marathon is the people who become involved become a family, not just the students involved but the families as well," Castro said.
Office for Financial Success program aids students leaving with debt

Graduating students can now look to MU officials for help managing financial debt.

The Office for Financial Success launched a new counseling program to help students with debt management. The program gives students a chance to sit one-on-one with a student financial counselor to go through the necessary forms for student loans.

Students can also learn about different repayment plans, deferment and forbearance options, loan forgiveness and cancellation provisions, loan consolidation and other debt management topics.

The median student borrowing for MU is 30 percent lower than the national average. The average MU student loan borrower will pay nearly $222 per month after graduation, according to an MU news release. Normally, students complete loan forms online in a process that can be confusing and complicated, said senior Michael Blumreich, who serves as a counselor at the office.

"Originally it was a 100 percent online process, and it was a little bit of a pain," Blumreich said. "Online, it takes anywhere from 35 minutes to an hour to answer a lot of questions and go through a basic review of a lot of your rights and responsibilities and some general information about student loans."

Completing the process with an exit counselor shortens the process and makes the experience easier for students, Blumreich said.

"Our standard appointment takes anywhere between 10 to 20 minutes," he said. "20 minutes being on the long end of it because what we do is very, very straightforward."

The 19 exit counselors at the office are undergraduate students studying personal financial planning or personal finance management services, Office for Financial Success Director Ryan Law said.

"They're working with somebody who is trained and understands the process," Law said. "It's another student, so it's somebody who has gone through some of the same issues. All the counselors are undergraduate students so they really do understand what's going on, they know the situation. They've been through it recently."

By serving as counselors, students gain experience in financial planning and a beneficial addition to their résumés, Counselor Mike Assing said.

"Almost everybody in our major is trying to become a financial counselor or planner in the future, so it's nice to get hands on experience," he said.

The Student Financial Aid Office offered counseling last semester. However, the office handles many issues for incoming freshmen and didn't have the time or resources to continue the program this semester.
"I talked to our vice president of continuing education and said, 'Hey, graduation is coming up, so a lot of students are going to want to know more information in regard to the repayment of loans they've taken out,'" Blumreich said. "We talked to people at the Financial Aid Office, and they said they didn't have time for it. So they were going to drop it and go back to doing it all online. So I said that we (at the Office for Financial Success) are perfectly equipped to do this."

The Student Financial Aid Office is involved in the new program, training students at the Office for Financial Success, documenting which students took advantage of counseling, and tracking the student loan default rate, Director of Financial Aid Nicholas Prewett said.

"By providing some counseling to students, we hope to reduce the loan default rate and provide students with the tools for financial success in the future," Prewett said.

About 500 students scheduled appointments within the first two weeks of the program's operation.

"I feel it's a better process because it's a lot more streamlined," Blumreich said. "It's a lot faster, and there's a human element. If you have a specific question and you do it online, you may or may not be able to get an answer. With us, we can just answer it for you."

The office only offered exit counseling to undergraduates this semester but plans to extend their service to graduate students in the fall, Blumreich said.

"We didn't even touch the graduate student body this semester just because we were thrown into it so quickly," Blumreich said.

Exit counseling services are offered from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday in the OFS or by appointment.
Four student organizations were honored for their contributions to campus at the 2013 Chancellor's Excellence Awards, which recognizes exemplary students, faculty and student groups on campus.

Dance Marathon won the Most Improved Organization award. The annual event increased its participation from last year by more than 350 dancers. Additionally, Dance Marathon raised nearly three times as much — $152,402 in all — than its 2012 showing.

Annie Bastida, outgoing Dance Marathon executive director, said she was happy with the award and is looking forward to seeing what next year's Dance Marathon can accomplish.

"To me, this award symbolizes the turning point for Dance Marathon as an organization that can be sustainable and continue to grow on our campus," Bastida said in an email. "I can't wait to see what next year's group accomplishes, and I'm positive it will be nothing short of miraculous."

The group attributes the growth to its members' greater accountability and the close-knit "DMamily."

Dance Marathon Director of Public Relations Victoria Mechler said the organization is looking for even more improvement next year.

"After the 2013 Main Event, the entire steering committee met and discussed the successes of the year and how Mizzou Dance Marathon can further improve," Mechler said in an email. "For 2014, we are planning to improve our family-dance interaction. If this year is an indication, there's no reason to believe this organization will continue its growth and improvement into 2014."

Tigers Against Partisan Politics, a political education organization without party affiliation, took home the award for Best New Organization.

TAPP President Camille Hosman said TAPP provided a lot of opportunities, events and resources for students in its first year of existence. She said she likes what the group has done so far and said politics are very important all the time, not just during election season. She also hopes more students will get involved next year.

Mizzou Unity Coalition, a 3-year-old organization, received the Best Small Organization award.

What started out two years ago as an Alternative Spring Break group that traveled to Charleston, S.C., the Mizzou Unity Coalition strived to bring something to Columbia the group felt was missing: a relationship with those who have disabilities.

President Alyssa Shaw said the group is hoping to expand next year.
“We love talking to FIGs, classes, and we’re even trying to get our foot in the door to start talking with other organizations on campus,” Shaw said.

Shaw said she believes that what the group has accomplished in so little time led them to receive the award, which she hopes can in turn get their name and purpose out to the MU community.

The group has implemented a program called Tiger Buddies, where they pair a MU student with an individual in the Columbia community that has a disability once a week, in addition to hosting walks and working with the adaptive garden on campus.

Made possible solely through private donations, Camp Kesem was the winner of the Best Large Organization category. Then-senior Adam Ryan started an MU chapter last year after his mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. The camp provides activities for those children whose parents have been diagnosed with cancer.

Co-chair Jaclyn Dipasquale said she is proud of how far the group has come since it began last year, noting that the number of campers has risen from 30 last year to 53 and counting for this summer’s program.

She attributes the victory to how passionate everyone involved is and finds it especially amazing that a group of full-time students are able to do such noble work.

"It's amazing how a passionate group of full-time students are able to pull this off, seeing as how it could also be a full-time job," Dipasquale said.
WASHINGTON • U.S. students are falling behind their international rivals. Young people are not adept at new technology. America's economy will suffer if schools don't step up their game.

"A Nation at Risk," the report issued 30 years ago this week by then-President Ronald Reagan's Education Department, was meant as a wake-up call. It spelled out where the United States was coming up short in education and what steps could be taken to avert a crisis.

But its warnings still reverberate today, with 1 in 4 Americans failing to earn a high school diploma on time and the U.S. lagging other countries in the percentage of young people who complete college.

"A Nation at Risk" spooked the public, urged an overhaul of how and what children are taught and sparked a school reform movement in the country.

"We opened the genie from the bottle and said, 'You aren't doing so well,'" said Xavier University of Louisiana President Norman Francis, a member of the commission that produced the warning. "For us, we felt good about the fact that we wrote something that needed to be said. We had the research. And we hoped we would have a greater measure of return."

At times, President Barack Obama has seemed to take his cues from the report.

"What is at stake is nothing less than the American dream," he said in 2009, calling for education overhaul to keep pace with other counties.

"Despite resources that are unmatched anywhere in the world, we have let our grades slip, our schools crumble, our teacher quality fall short and other nations outpace us," he said.

Russ Whitehurst, director of the Brown Center on Education Policy at the liberal-leaning Brookings Institution, calls the report prescient. "The themes that it stressed — the increasing role of technology, globalization — is now the everyday stuff of education. But it wasn't at the time. I can't think of anything that painted with quite as broad a stroke as 'A Nation at Risk.'"

Its impact, however, was not as broad.
The commissioners urged extending the school year to up to 220 days from 180 days. The report also suggested an 11-month contract for teachers so they could spend their summers preparing for the next year. Neither recommendation has been put into widespread use.

The commissioners also said teacher salaries should be increased to be "professionally competitive." Again, there hasn’t been near the movement commissioners sought. In today’s dollars, the average teacher earned $46,700 in 1983 and $54,900 in 2010, according to the Education Department.

‘RESULTS ARE MIXED’

But some other recommendations were put into practice, including a more rigorous curriculum. Students graduating in 1982 had an average of 2.2 science credits on their transcripts. In 2009, that average number rose to 3.5 credits.

And the class of 1982 left high school with 2.6 math credits, compared with the 2009 graduates’ 3.9 credits, according to Education Department data.

“The results are mixed,” said William Bennett, who served as Reagan’s second-term education secretary. “We have progress being paid to the right things: content, accountability. ... It was right about how we needed to beef up courses and how we needed to be stronger.”

But when Bennett compares U.S. results with those of other nations, there’s no reason to celebrate.

“If you look at those numbers, you get the story for 30 years,” he said. “If there’s a bottom line, it’s that we’re spending twice as much money on education as we did in ’83 and the results haven’t changed all that much.”

American fourth-graders are 11th in the world in math in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, the measure of nations against each other. U.S. eighth-graders ranked ninth in math, according to those 2011 results.

The Program for International Student Assessment measurement found the United States ranked 31st in math literacy among 15-year-old students and below the international average. The same 2009 tests found the United States ranked 23rd in science among the same students, but posting an average score.

It is impossible to compare the rankings before 1995, when these international math and science tests were first given. The first international math literacy and science tests were given in 2001.

Yet domestic tests show there have not been major changes in students’ scores.

Between 1980 and 2008, 13-year-old students posted only a 2-point gain in reading scores, and 17-year-old students saw just a 1-point gain during that time. The tests were scored on a scale of 0 to 500, meaning the changes were statistically insignificant.

MODEST GAINS

"We haven’t yet gotten near the payoff that we want and need in terms of achievement in 30 years," said Chester Finn, a former Education Department official who now heads the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, a conservative think tank.

"The fact that 30 years later, despite all of the reforming, the gains are so modest, they ought to serve to energize and even panic today’s policymakers," he said.
Of course, stagnant scores don’t automatically mean stagnant learning; higher standards could yield lower scores.

Domestic measurements comparing U.S. students to one another are relatively new, and tests aren’t given every year. Also, tracing changes isn’t as simple as looking at the United States’ standing compared with other countries today.

What is clear is that “A Nation at Risk” cast the United States as on the precipice of collapse, not unlike the warnings that followed the Soviet Union’s 1957 launch of the Sputnik satellite, which caught Americans by surprise.

While other education studies urged action, none was as intentionally alarming as this one.

In a brisk 36 pages, the authors warned that schools were not preparing students for their future and cautioned that the country would suffer. In some ways, the same warnings have appeared in most reports on education in the last decades.
International Slow Art Day encourages museum visitors to slow down

By Lauren Hill
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COLUMBIA — Scores of art pieces are now accessible online. Nonprofit websites such as ARTstor, or even a simple Google Image search, show high-quality images of works from Neolithic caves to works by 20th-century masters such as Picasso.

Add in the distraction of mobile devices while at a museum, and the traditional museum experience has changed for many.

On Saturday, museum visitors will be encouraged to slow down and absorb the art around them at the third annual Slow Art Day at the Museum of Art and Archeology, 1 Pickard Hall. The event is from noon to 2 p.m., and entrance is free.

Slow Art Day is a global event that was founded in 2008 by Phil Terry.

"Instead of breezing past hundreds of art works in the standard 8 seconds, (Terry) wondered what would happen if people looked slowly at just a few," a page on the Slow Art website states.

Participants look at five works of art for 10 minutes each, and then discuss their experience over lunch. Five people participated in Terry's first art experiment, held in 2009 in New York, according to the event's website.

More than 252 venues will participate this year, the website said.

At Pickard Hall on the MU campus, an 1861 oil painting depicting a lake — or portal to the underworld, a Keith Crown watercolor painting, a contemporary piece called "Mardi Gras Scene," which uses dry pigments mixed into wax, and a Greek carving from 630 B.C. will be displayed.

"It's a nice sampling of the museum," Nancy Gerardi, a museum board member, said.
The pieces were chosen by a Museum Associates committee, which is composed of museum board members.

Gerardi hopes the event will help people realize that they do, in fact, have time to go to a museum because they don’t have to see everything. Once they accept this premise, "you are not beating yourself up because you didn’t do everything," she said.

Staff will be available to answer participants’ questions about the art, but Gerardi said they are encouraged to make their own deductions.

“We want to let them know that what they think is important,” she said. “They can have their own opinions.”

After viewing the art, participants are encouraged to continue the discussion over refreshments or lunch. Participants who bring their flyer to the Heidelberg can receive a free soda or coffee.

Free parking is available at the Hitt Street garage.
Obama tries his hand at comedy

President has a one-night shot at getting some laughs at the correspondents' dinner.

Did you hear the one about the president and the correspondents' dinner?

A year ago, President Obama tells a ballroom full of journalists, politicians and celebrities that "the White House Correspondents' Dinner is known as the prom of Washington, D.C. -- a term coined by political reporters who clearly never had the chance to go to an actual prom."

Ba-da-boom!

Presidents have many duties -- commander in chief, party leader, chief executive -- but this weekend Obama plays a unique role generated by the media age: political comedian.

Like his predecessors, Obama will headline the annual White House correspondents dinner, seeking laughs and trying to walk a fine line between being funny and being mean.

"It just needs to be good-natured," said Landon Parvin, who wrote dinner jokes for presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush. "You don't want to grind any axes."

There are three basic rules of thumb for presidents-turned-temporary comedians: Make fun of yourself, don't go overboard in mocking your opponents, and wrap up with a tribute to the free press (or, if you're angry with the press, freedom and democracy).

This year, Obama faces an extra challenge, a dinner shadowed in part by tragedy. He performs just 12 days after the Boston Marathon bombing that killed three people and injured more than 260. Expect the president to pay tribute to the victims and first responders near the end of his remarks on Saturday.

Of all the rules for presidential jokes, self-deprecation is probably the most important.

"People really seem to appreciate it when presidents tell jokes on themselves," said William Horner, a political science professor at the University of Missouri who specializes in political humor.

In 2010, President Obama opened his monologue by saying, "It's been quite a year since I've spoken here last; lots of ups, lots of downs -- except for my approval ratings, which have just gone down." At his first dinner, in 2009, he paused before speaking to allow Teleprompters to rise from the floor.
Presidents can – and do – make fun of their critics, in both Congress and the press, and Obama seems especially enthusiastic about this rule. Said Horner: "It seems like President Obama has really gone after people who are his political opponents."

His most famous attack came in 2011, against Donald Trump.

President Obama is shifting from commander to comic for his appearance before the White House Correspondents Dinner in Washington, D.C. in 2011.

Obama, who had released his Hawaii birth certificate just three days before the dinner, said: "No one is prouder to put this birth certificate matter to rest than the Donald -- and that's because he can finally get back to focusing on the issues that matter. Like, did we fake the moon landing? What really happened in Roswell? And where are Biggie and Tupac?"

The president -- who that night also joked that he was releasing an "official birth video" -- then mocked Trump's decision-making skills on Celebrity Apprentice.

Parvin, for one, thinks Obama may have gone a little overboard on Trump, saying: "He's the president of the United States. He didn't have to go after the individual just sitting there."

Of course, Obama fans and Trump critics loved it.

As with any speech, a lot of planning goes into presidential comedy routines.

Current and past aides said White House speechwriters gather a long list of potential jokes. That process includes outreach to professional funny people, such as former Obama speechwriter Jon Lovett, who went on to be co-creator of the presidential situation comedy 1600 Penn.

Obama's staff whittles down the list to the funniest -- and most usable -- jokes for presidential review. Obama edits his favorites, sometimes adding one-liners and asking for more jokes on specific topics. The speech-writing team then generates a new draft.

The president and his staff will try to work in one or two practice runs before the big show.

"He always kept us laughing when I worked for him," former Obama speechwriter Jon Favreau said. "So he usually wants to make sure that great sense of humor is reflected in these speeches."

This year, expect jokes on congressional Republicans and sequester. (If you want to figure out the president's favorite jokes: They're the ones he himself laughs at while delivering them.)

As with most White House correspondents' dinners, Saturday's affair will feature a true professional comedian, late-night talk show host Conan O'Brien.

But presidents moonlighting as comedians have found a way to deal with the competition: Most insist on going on first. Some past comedians have noted that it's tough duty following the president of the United States.
The sitting president almost always speaks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner, which is the largest press gathering of the year and is televised. President Reagan didn't make it in 1981, but he had a good excuse: He'd been shot less than a month before.

Still, Reagan did phone in some comments to that dinner. And, yes, he did joke about the assassination attempt, telling the crowd: "If I could give you just one little bit of advice, when somebody tells you to get in a car quick -- do it."

In some years, presidents have struck comedy gold with props.

In 2000, President Clinton produced a short "mockumentary" about his final year in office. Called "The Final Days," the video showed a bored Clinton washing the presidential limo and making lunch for wife Hillary, then a Senate candidate in New York.

In 2006, President George W. Bush stood side-by-side by a dead-on impersonator, who gave voice to what Bush was "really" thinking.

After Bush made a friendly overture to the assembled reporters, his doppelganger intoned: "The media really ticks me off - the way they try to embarrass me by not editing what I say ... Well, let's get things going, or I'll never get to bed."

In some ways, it's an easy gig. Presidential comedians have a low bar. Many people in the crowd want them to succeed, and party colleagues will laugh at even bad jokes.

But presidents aren't comedians, they only play them on TV. Professionals also get to hone their acts at comedy clubs and other events; presidents generally get one shot at their comedy routines.

"They open and close the same night," Parvin said.