University of Missouri plans $23M hall upgrades

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri is considering a proposal to renovate its main administration building and two other halls that now house museums.

The university announced the $23 million plan to renovate Pickard, Swallow and Jesse halls in a news release Thursday, although it still must be approved by the Board of Curators.

Jesse Hall is the administration building, Pickard houses the Museum of Art and Archaeology, and Swallow holds the Museum of Anthropology.

If approved, the proposal would require administrators, faculty and staff to move to new offices for at least a year, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported.

When the work is done, the Museum of Anthropology and the Museum of Art and Archaeology would be relocated to the former Ellis Fischel Cancer Center “for the foreseeable future,” the release said. The cancer center will be renamed Mizzou North.

Faculty and staff would move out of Swallow Hall next May, and construction would last into the summer of 2015, the news release said. The $11.5 million in renovations would include expanding available space for classrooms, offices and labs.

The proposed $9.5 million renovation at Jesse Hall would include a new sprinkler system, fire alarm system and second elevator and upgrades to the heating and cooling systems. Employees would move between March and June 2014, with construction lasting until April 2015.

Work is continuing to decommission Pickard Hall because it contains radiation from experiments conducted decades ago. The building will be cleared, with employees moving out at the end of this year. Further testing is planned next year.

The cost of the move is estimated at $1.5 million, but testing costs are not yet known, the news release said.
University spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said the project would be funded by three sources: $8.6 million from savings resulting from refinancing current debt, $8.85 million from Campus Facilities’ deferred maintenance budget and $5.4 million from one-time savings the campus has accumulated.
Three historic MU halls to close for renovation
Jesse Hall offices will be relocated.

By KARYN SPORY
Three historic MU halls to close for renovation
Friday, May 24, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Three historic buildings around Francis Quadrangle on the University of Missouri campus are slated to close for renovations in 2014, displacing faculty and staff members working in those buildings for close to a year.

The nearly $23 million project, pending approval from the UM Board of Curators, will include work at Pickard, Swallow and Jesse halls. Jesse Hall is the university’s main administration building, while Pickard houses the Museum of Art and Archaeology and Swallow is home to the Museum of Anthropology.

"Each building is unique because each project is different," MU spokesman Christian Basi said.

The renovation effort is called "Renew Mizzou" and aims to cut MU’s deferred maintenance costs.

Basi said faculty and staff will move out of Swallow Hall, on the east side of the Quad, in May 2014, and construction will last from June of that year into the following summer. Work is estimated to total $11.5 million, which will include renovations to expand available classroom, office and lab space.

"We will be upgrading the facilities ... so that our students will have the tools and be able to engage in the latest technologies for their classes held in that building," Basi said.

Pickard Hall, just north of Swallow, will see a continuation of the decommissioning that has been going on for several years, Basi said. The building was found to have radiation from experiments conducted decades ago. The entire building will be cleared, with employees moving out at the end of 2013, and further testing conducted next year. The cost of the move is estimated at $1.5 million, but testing costs are not yet known.

"This was an opportunity to get inside of the building, in a very thorough manner, and do the testing that is needed so we can determine how best to move forward," Basi said.
The south side of the Quad features the iconic Jesse Hall, which will receive new sprinkler and fire alarm systems and a second elevator, plus heating and cooling system upgrades. Around 600 full-time and part-time staff will be displaced from Jesse beginning in March. MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said care was taken to ensure offices that deal directly with students, as well as main administration, remained on the central campus. Construction will begin in July 2014 and last until the next April. Work at Jesse is estimated at $9.85 million.

Banken said funding will come from three sources: $8.6 million from savings resulting from refinancing current debt, $8.85 million from Campus Facilities' deferred maintenance budget and $5.4 million from one-time savings the campus has accumulated.

All staff from Swallow and Pickard halls, including the museums, will move to the former Ellis Fischel building. The office moves from Jesse Hall will include, in part:

- The chancellor, deputy chancellor, provost, deputy provost, university affairs and visitor relations offices will move to Reynolds Alumni Center.
- Admissions, student financial aid and cashier's offices, as well as some functions of the registrar and accounting offices, will move to the west reading rooms of Ellis Library.
- The Graduate School and International Programs will move to McReynolds Hall.
- The offices of the vice provost for enrollment management, student information systems and vice provost for undergraduate studies, as well as some functions of the registrar's office, will move to the Heinkel Building.
- The research, sponsored programs administration, budget, vice chancellor of administrative services, business services and accounting services offices, as well as some staff from the cashiers, admissions and student financial aid offices, will move off the main campus to the former Ellis Fischel building on the Business Loop, now called Mizzou North.

This article was published in the Friday, May 24, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Work to close MU buildings: Jesse Hall offices will be relocated."
Renovations mean two museums must move

By KARYN SPORY

Renovations mean two museums must move

Karyn Spory

Friday, May 24, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A Lee Elementary School art teacher says although she will continue field trips to the University of Missouri's museums next year when they move off campus for building renovations, she hopes MU will plan to bring the museums back — a sentiment others on campus share.

The Museums of Art and Archaeology in Pickard Hall and the Museum of Anthropology in Swallow Hall will be relocated to the former Ellis Fischel Cancer Center building on Business Loop 70 West next year while their current homes are renovated. The museums are being moved as part of a nearly $23 million project to improve historic buildings around Francis Quadrangle, including Jesse Hall.

The former Ellis Fischel building is being renamed Mizzou North. MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said the facility was chosen for the museums because of its open space.

She said although Swallow Hall will reopen by fall 2015, the museums will remain at Mizzou North for the "foreseeable future." A timeline for the reopening of Pickard, which is known to contain radiation, will not be known until further testing can be done.

"I was shocked to find out the museums are not in the capital campaign with a plan to move it back to campus," Lee teacher Ann Mehr said. She takes her students to the museums twice a year and said the proximity of the museums to Lee — located just north of campus on Locust Street — is vital for "academic and artistic interaction."

Mehr said she and her students will find their way to Mizzou North during the renovation, but she hopes the university understands the importance of returning the museums to the main campus.

"We need to let the university know that it's not a long-term solution," she said.

Mehr also shared a letter Lee fifth-grader Elsa Dickerson wrote to MU Chancellor Brady Deaton: "Having my younger siblings not experience the MU Museum of Art and Archeology as many times
as I have, which has been like a million times, breaks my heart. Please think about the contents of this letter and think of the future Lee artists."

Alex Barker, director of the Museum of Art and Archaeology, said there are concerns with the move off campus. As part of operating an academic museum, he said, he and his staff members have worked hard to be more integrated into the academic life of campus.

Angela Speck, director of astronomy at MU, said she has attended many campus events at the Museum of Art and Archaeology and thinks it is a "wonderful backdrop for impressing visiting dignitaries."

"All in all, I feel that losing the Museum of Art and Archaeology, in particular, will be a huge loss to many aspects of campus life, and I hope that we can convince the powers that be to bring it back to its former, central location after the refurbishments are complete," Speck said in an email.

Banken said officials have tried to find the best solutions possible.

"We've given everyone a year's notice in order that we may solicit any questions or deal with any issues that arise in the next year before we actually start making the move," she said.

*This article was published in the Friday, May 24, 2013 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "MU will relocate galleries: Two museums to move off campus."*
Is college still worth what it costs?

William J. Bennett and David Wilezol, for CNBC11:03 a.m. EDT May 26, 2013

Many students are tempted to believe that college is no longer a value proposition for them. After all, costs have risen over 1,100% since 1978, far outpacing inflation.

Fifty percent of the class of 2011 was unemployed or dramatically underemployed. In another survey, only 16% of employers reported that new hires from four-year colleges were "very qualified" for the workforce. Academically, one study showed that only 45% of students showed any meaningful cognitive gains after three semesters. Regardless of what one considers the purpose of college to be, it is clear that costly dysfunction is plaguing the system.

With such dismal outcomes across the board, is college still worth it?
For students, a college education can still be the right decision, provided they make informed decisions about their educational path. Attending a well-regarded state school on a scholarship and studying a STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) discipline will, on average, produce a better return on investment than taking out a pile of student loans to study sociology at an average, or below average private university. And the student must ultimately graduate for it be worth it: nearly 50% of students who enroll in four-year colleges never finish.

But massive inefficiencies in the system jeopardize the value of higher ed for all students.

**First, colleges need to stop the "academic arms race."** Institutions of higher education are businesses: They compete with one another for customers. In the world of higher ed, students who can pay the full price tag are the preferred clients. To attract these types of students, colleges raise their prices to levels that most people cannot afford. Yet because our consumer society usually sees price as synonymous with quality (an untrue maxim in higher ed), applications often increase when schools raise prices.

As a result of increased revenue campuses often are furnished with extravagant amenities like rock-climbing walls, hot tubs and apartment-style dorms. Boston University even has a "lazy river" inner-tube ride for students. These are nice creature comforts, but ones that are ultimately unessential to the mission of educating students. These, too, are designed to attract the wealthiest students.

**Second, the massive amounts of federal student lending must be tightened.** About $110 billion in federal student loans were distributed in 2011. Most colleges see the federal lending system as a money spigot which has rarely been tightened. By banking on the ever increasing number of federal dollars flowing into their coffers, they continually raise prices, knowing that Congress has historically done little to curb the money flow.

**Third, many colleges employ a superabundance of personnel who manage campus life and ideology but contribute little to student learning.** Tiny Williams College, for instance, employs 71 people on its fundraising staff full time. The University of California system has found money to keep dozens of expensive vice chancellors for diversity programs, while cutting the number of enrollment spots at many institutions amid a recession. Higher ed also has many research professors who never teach: Only 20% of the faculty at UT-Austin teaches 57% of the courses. These research professors often exist merely to bring in more dollars in research grants, thus raising the university's "profile."

Colleges and universities ignore such unproductivity their peril. As the president of Stanford has said, a "tsunami" is coming in the form of online education. Innovations such as MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) can deliver course content to more students at fractional costs. This will challenge every aspect of the higher-education business. As certificates of completion from MOOCs and other online resources gain more acceptance among employers desperate for skilled workers, there is a good chance that students could flee from the sclerotic, expensive model that has defined higher ed for decades.
In the meantime, college can still be worth it for many students, provided that they have an appetite for academic rigor and an understanding of which schools and majors provide a good return on investment.

—William J. Bennett is co-author of "Is College Worth It?" Bennett was Secretary of Education from 1985 to 1988 and director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under President George H.W. Bush.

—David Wilezol is co-author of "Is College Worth It?" and associate producer for Bill Bennett's "Morning in America." He is also a 2012 Publius Fellow of the Claremont Institute and currently a graduate student in Greek and Latin at Catholic University in Washington, D.C.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU police arrest man who kicked University Hospital employee

By Missourian Staff
May 24, 2013 | 9:16 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — MU police arrested Dominque Powell, 22, at 10:28 a.m. Friday on charges of second-degree robbery, harassment to frighten or disturb another person and aggravated stalking.

The charges are in connection to an incident at the University Hospital when a man demanded money and kicked an employee in her shin Thursday, according to an update from the department.

In the release, MU police wished to thank the community for its assistance in locating Powell.
MU hospital assault suspect is arrested

Friday, May 24, 2013 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri police Friday morning said a man suspected to have assaulted and demanded money from a University Hospital custodian on Thursday has been arrested.

According to an MU Police Department news release, around 11:38 a.m. yesterday, Dominque Powell, 22, allegedly entered the hospital and asked that a female employee be paged, Capt. Brian Weimer said. Powell claimed to be the employee's brother, which was untrue, Weimer said.

He then allegedly approached a custodian and demanded money, the victim told police. She ignored the demand and continued her work.

Powell continued to follow the custodian, again demanding money and kicking her in the shin, Weimer said. The employee called hospital security, but the attacker left in a vehicle driven by another person.

The custodian told police she had been robbed last year and ignored Powell's demands because "she wasn't going to have any of it." The female employee who had been paged identified Powell to police and said Powell had been harassing her by phone.

Powell was found and arrested in Centralia, police said this morning.

A warrant request earlier had been submitted to prosecutors on suspicion of attempted second-degree robbery, third-degree assault and harassment.
Design chosen for MU post-WWI memorial

By Katie Yaeger
May 26, 2013 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

Designer Karen Johnson was impressed by the U.S. military's "missing man formation," an aerial salute to fallen pilots and used that design, as well as the MU Columns, for inspiration on her memorial design, which will be installed at Memorial Union, North Tower. | Courtesy of Marty Walker

COLUMBIA — One day, looking at the MU Columns on the Francis Quadrangle, Karen Johnson wondered what would happen if a column were missing.

The community reaction would be huge, she thought. Everyone would know. They would feel the void.

She wanted to symbolize that feeling in a war memorial she was designing to honor post-World War I veterans who were enrolled or worked at MU.

She had also been impressed by the U.S. military's "missing man formation," an aerial salute to fallen pilots. Her father, a Navy pilot, took her to air shows when she was small to see the flyover.

Johnson created her design as part of an architectural studies class at MU. From among 14 submitted by students in the class, hers was selected to be installed near the information desk in Memorial Union, North Tower.
The memorial will be dedicated in November during the annual wreath-laying ceremony on Veterans Day. Right now, construction on the memorial is in preliminary stages, said Tracy Schultz, assistant director of the Missouri Student Unions.

**Elements of the design**

In Johnson's design, the columns represent MU students, faculty and staff. A light beam shines where one column is missing to remember those who are no longer living.

It is a twist on the missing man formation, in which aircraft fly in a complete "V" until one plane leaves an empty space.

"In a crazy way, it's design-oriented," Johnson said. "We like things to be symmetrical, but it's asymmetrical, so it catches the eye."

Incorporating the columns also makes the memorial timeless, she said.

"The beam of light could symbolize any one of (the veterans) for any era, or age, or war, or conflict," she said. "I hope that veterans feel that they're a part of it."

To the left of the columns, the names of veterans will be placed on glass in a simulated etching so names can continue to be added.

"In a transparent manner, she overlaid campus symbolism with military symbolism," said Marty Walker, a retired Marine and member of the Chancellor's Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs.

The memorial will be accompanied by a portable electronic kiosk allowing visitors to access information about the veterans. The display could include voice recordings from veterans who participated in an oral history program through the Library of Congress or the state of Missouri.

It was important for the design to have both a physical monument and an electronic kiosk, said Craig Roberts, chairman of the MU Faculty Council Student Affairs Committee.

"People on active duty wanted something physical — as one man said, something he could run his fingers across," Roberts said.

Additional locations on campus for kiosks are being considered, Walker said.
History of the effort

Faculty Council's committee has been working with the chancellor's committee for about 18 months on a memorial to honor MU students, faculty and staff veterans who have served in World War II and later wars.

"We want to represent the veterans in a tasteful, honorable way, which I think they deserve," Walker said.

The Memorial Union tower is a monument to those who died serving in World War I, a plaque in Memorial Union North commemorates MU students who died in World War II, and another plaque recognizes contributions MU veterans have made, Walker said.

Roberts said he thinks it's significant that the idea for the memorial in Faculty Council came from nonveterans.

"It shows that faculty, by and large, appreciate the freedom of education and speech, but that it comes at a cost," he said.

The student affairs committee let the chancellor's committee take the lead because that committee consists of veterans, Roberts said.

The chancellor's committee brought the idea to architectural studies Assistant Professor Newton D'Souza, who turned it into a competitive class project to create a student-centered design for a memorial.

Johnson and 13 others from the class presented their designs to members of the chancellor's committee. The entire committee and Roberts then made its selection from three finalists.

Under the leadership of MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, MU has become known as a military-friendly campus, Walker said. During Deaton's time as chancellor, the MU Veterans Center was created and a veterans' barbecue, the first held on the Francis Quadrangle, was started.

"(The status) ensures we have veterans coming home to this campus," Walker said.

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.
Study: Longhorn ancestry spans globe, centuries

By MICHAEL GRACZYK

Associated Press

PONTOTOC, Texas — A first-of-its-kind genetic analysis of Texas Longhorns shows the cattle breed - as much a state symbol as the Alamo and cowboys - shares a diverse ancestry that spans the globe and mirrors the spirit and self-sufficiency of the quintessential Texan.

The Longhorn's roots are traced back thousands of years to far-off places such as the Middle East and Asia, with the animal's direct descendants crossing the Atlantic with Christopher Columbus. They grew longer horns to protect against their New World predators and even rebounded from a post-Civil War beef demand that decimated herds.

The study's authors say the genetic influences helped create a hardy breed of cattle that is independent and well adapted to the land.

"I think Texans admire a lot of the characteristics they see in Texas Longhorns because it's some of the same characteristics humans had to have to thrive in Texas," says David Hillis, a University of Texas biologist and geneticist involved in the yearslong study of the Longhorn genome. Hillis and one of his doctoral students, Emily Jane McTavish, joined researchers from the University of Missouri-Columbia for the study, which was published earlier this year in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

They examined some 48,000 genetic markers on DNA from 58 cattle breeds, confirming the Longhorns of today are direct descendants of Spanish cattle brought by Columbus to Hispaniola on his second voyage to the New World in 1493. Other Spanish colonists brought the descendants of those cattle to Mexico in 1521, where the animals flourished. Some became wild and migrated over the next centuries to present-day Texas.
In the Lone Star State, they became targets of the big cattle drives of the late 1800s - memorialized in countless Hollywood westerns - in which they were rounded up to feed a growing demand in the eastern U.S. for beef and tallow, an essential ingredient in candles.

Today, the cattle are carefully managed by ranchers like Hillis, who has about 50 at his Texas Hill Country ranch. Longhorns, some weighing as much as a ton, graze on whatever the rocky ground and minimal rain allow to grow.

On the range, the Longhorns are surprisingly adept at maneuvering among trees and branches.

"Longhorns are very alert, very intelligent," Hillis said. "They're very good at watching what's going on around them."

DNA evidence reviewed in the study traces Longhorns back thousands of years to cattle in the Middle East, India and Pakistan. The Middle Eastern animals were brought to Europe while the India-Pakistan cattle spread through Asia. Both wound up in Africa, which became a "kind of mixing ground" where they adapted to a hot, dry climate and built up resistance to disease, Hillis said.

"Longhorns are unusual in being an ancient breed," he said. "There's not many of those left in the world."

The new research shows 15 percent of the genetic makeup of Longhorns reflects the India-Africa influence. It's possible Moors brought African cattle with them during their invasion of Spain from the eighth to the 13th centuries, or that cattle were directly imported from Africa to the nearby Canary Islands, where Columbus likely put them aboard his ships.

"We're still actually trying to track that down," Hillis said. "That's probably the most interesting ... and that they don't seem to have influences from other recent European breeds."

McTavish became involved after starting salamander-focused graduate work at the University of Texas. Her Longhorn project - "a lot more interesting than salamanders," she laughs - began in 2009.

"One of the neat things to me is that we know cattle strongly are selected by breeders for traits," she said. "And despite the impact of all that selection, Longhorns still have a very strong signal of geography."

The distinctive long horns are a relatively recent evolutionary development, due to natural selection and a need to survive in the rugged Southwest where coyotes, wolves and mountain lions were predators.

"The ones that had the long horns were better able to defend their calves and were able to survive the best," Hillis said.
Horns now typically can be 70 inches long from tip to tip, nearly a couple feet longer than horns on cattle mere decades ago. That's the result of ranchers selectively breeding cattle with the best physical characteristics.

Historically, management of the Longhorn in Texas wasn't always a consideration. The cattle drives depleted herds by the turn of the 20th century. In 1927, the federal government - later joined by Texas - began working to preserve Longhorns. By the 1960s, when the Texas Longhorn Breeders Association of America was founded and the breed became registered, only about 1,500 head of genuine Longhorns existed.

Today, the Fort Worth-based association estimates there are several hundred thousand Longhorns, and the breed has become a favorite for consumers willing to pay a premium for low-fat beef from grass-fed animals.

"The animals are very lean by nature of their evolution," says Debbie Davis, whose family raises Longhorns in Bandera County about 75 miles northwest of San Antonio and belongs to the Cattlemen's Texas Longhorn Conservancy, which contributed to the study. "It's a healthier product and people on a high-protein, low-starch diet seek out this beef."

University of Texas mascot Bevo - arguably the most famous and visible Longhorn in the state - belongs to John T. and Betty Baker, who have a ranch northwest of Austin and have travelled to Spain to see cattle there that resemble their animals but have shorter horns.

"They're tough, they're brave, they're self-sufficient," she said of Longhorns. "All those things you like in an animal. You don't have to worry about them all the time. You don't have to baby them. I'd say the boldness, the bravery of the Longhorn, is symbolic of Texas."
Missouri lawmakers rolled back some of their own power this year, even after railing against Gov. Jay Nixon's administration for purchasing an airplane and changing the way people get their drivers' licenses without consulting them first.

The Republican-led Legislature asserted legislative prerogative this year in condemning the Democratic governor's administration for requiring driving applicants' documents, such as birth certificates and concealed gun permits, to be scanned into a state computer system without notice or input from lawmakers. Republicans also cried foul when the Highway Patrol purchased a $5.6 million airplane without seeking explicit approval from budget-writers.

In response, lawmakers used their authority to check the administration this year, including budget cuts to the agency responsible for licensing and passing a bill that would require the Highway Patrol to seek approval for vehicle purchases more than $100,000.

But they didn't seem to mind ceding some of their authority on potentially politically thorny issues despite the calls for increased involvement in other policy areas.

One measure awaiting Nixon's signature would allow a board whose members are appointed by the governor with Senate approval to change the fee structure on permits for businesses to discharge wastewater into the state's rivers and streams. Another would let Missouri judges draw new boundaries for the state's trial court districts.

"I think giving greater flexibility shouldn't be a problem, and if there is a problem, we can always come back and address it," said Senate President Pro Tem Tom Dempsey, R-St. Charles.

The court bill would give judges the ability to draw new boundaries every 20 years as long as they don't add to or remove any of the current 45 districts. Coming up with a water permit fee structure would be left to the Clean Water Commission; those fees fund the Department of Natural Resources' water
enforcement program. To change the fee structure, five members of the seven-person commission would need to approve it and the fees could not be more than $5,000. The measure would also extend the department’s ability to collect the fees to September 2018, because they are set to expire this September.

Lawmakers would not be totally removed from the fee or boundary change process. If they aren’t happy with the judges’ map, they can pass their own as long as it also gets the governor’s approval. They also could veto the Clean Water Commission’s fee structure by adopting a resolution. And they could pass new laws changing these proposals altogether.

But deferring the responsibility of setting fees to a state agency may not have happened when lawmakers had more than 16 years to serve in the Legislature.

"That would never have occurred under a pre-term limited General Assembly. Legislators wanted to control how much fees were," said David Valentine, a professor at the Institute of Public Policy at the University of Missouri-Columbia, about the water permits.

The same is true for the courts. Lawmakers wanted control over the size and number of judges in circuits because the judgeships were linked to their districts and it was a way to assert authority, Valentine said.

Republican leaders argue that judges are in a better position to draw their boundaries because they can evaluate factors, such as caseload, that are important for a boundary change. House Speaker Tim Jones, R-Eureka, said judges are the experts in determining the districts where they work just as lawmakers are the experts regarding their legislative districts.

The state’s judges haven’t had the best track record when it comes to drawing districts for lawmakers. There was turmoil when a special panel of appellate judges handled the task of drawing new House and Senate districts after the 2010 census. The Missouri Supreme Court rejected the panel’s Senate map as unconstitutional, which caused the process to restart from scratch _ throwing lawmakers who were trying to file for the 2012 election into a state of flux.

Senators responded by pushing for a constitutional amendment that would have required the special panel to hold their meetings in public after many of judge’s deliberations drawing the maps occurred in secret.

Although lawmakers chose to spread the power to set permit fees and draw judicial boundaries, there also can be a tendency for state agencies to claim additional authority.

"I think there is less confidence on the part of public officials that the General Assembly will recognize what can be done and what should be done," Valentine said. "If they can do something themselves they do so."
College students share confessions online, anonymously

May 26, 2013 12:05 am • By Tim Barker tbarker@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8350

There was a time when college students used bathroom walls or personal ads in campus newspapers to express their love or disdain for others.

But why do that, when you can put the same stuff on Facebook for the world to see? Particularly on sites designed for just this sort of thing.

Pick any college in the area, and you are likely to find at least one of these so-called confessions or secret admirer pages dedicated to its students, who are promised anonymity.

You’ll find students expressing lust or loathing for classmates. You’ll read complaints and compliments about instructors and roommates, confessions of cheating and a lot of playful banter.

It’s what used to show up (and probably still does) scribbled out as graffiti, said Steve Jones, a communication professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

"It had a certain confessional quality," Jones said. "Some of the intent is pretty much the same."

To some, the sites do offer the potential for cyberbullying and general harassment. And like anything else on the Internet, there’s always the danger of discussions veering into controversial waters.

Still, most agree these sites serve as an outlet, offering students a forum to let others know what they’re thinking. And they provide a quick and easy way for students to learn they’ve caught someone’s eye.

Take, for example, a post that popped up a couple weeks ago on the Wash U Admirers page: “Julian Clarke is bangin in those red pants today. yum.”

Clarke, a freshman from Westport, Conn., laughs about the posting, while admitting to some conflicted emotions.

“As much as I was flattered by it, it was a little creepy,” Clarke said.

Creepy or not, it’s one of the prices we pay for living in such a well-connected society, said Greg Lastowka, a law professor at Rutgers, who specializes in technology issues.

People have always talked about each other. Now it’s just easier to become aware that you are the subject of someone else’s interest. But that, by itself, does not constitute harassment.
“Some people don’t want attention and don’t want people talking about them. They might find that uncomfortable,” Lastowka said. “But we have a First Amendment tradition in this country.”

Aside from ego boosts and entertainment value, the anonymous posts – and the reactions they draw – also offer insight for those who read the pages, said Kristen Faddis, a junior from St. Louis at Washington University.

“It's interesting to see how people think on campus,” Faddis said. “It's my community.”

And while some worry that the anonymity of these confession sites could lead to malicious postings, Faddis and other users say the conversations are, largely, humorous and light-hearted.

“If you’ve seen a lot of the comments, we’re pretty tame,” Faddis said.

Yet that’s not always the case.

The Wash U confessions page is actually in its second life after an earlier version was shut down after someone posted a racial slur. It’s the sort of thing that’s tough to stop, because the moderators only control the initial anonymous posts. After that, users are pretty much free to post whatever they want in response to the confessions.

And some posts are decidedly dark. On the Wash U confessions page, for example, one user talks about fears of disappointing his/her family and about having a drug problem. “I consider suicide every day. I know what method I want to use. I know when and where I want to do it.”

The comment is followed by several students offering advice and a sympathetic ear.

Such cries for help are likely to be frustrating both for the users and for school administrators who learn about them.

“Some will be phony. Some will be incredibly sincere,” said Jones of the University of Chicago. “But there’s not much you can do about it, unless they identify themselves.”

That’s because identifying the posters isn’t easy. In fact, there’s no guarantee the posters are even students. At the heart of these confessions sites is an online submission form that shields the poster’s identity, even from the site moderator.

It’s unlikely such a shield would thwart a law enforcement investigation. But universities would likely run into extensive roadblocks if they tried to police these sites, suggested Lastowka from Rutgers.

That’s not to say, however, that schools couldn’t keep an eye out for breaches of student conduct codes by the non-anonymous users. The question is whether they would even make the effort.

“I suppose it depends on the culture of the college, to some degree,” he said.

A sampling of area schools finds a mix of approaches:
At the University of Missouri-Columbia, a spokesman said the school is aware of such trend pages, “but we do not actively monitor them. If we get a specific complaint or report, we do follow up immediately.”

Washington University, in a statement, said it does not monitor the confessions site. The school said sites like these involve two key values: the right of free expression and the need to create a welcoming environment.

“It is particularly difficult when those values come in conflict with one another, and the university is currently in the process of discussing how it can better educate its students about responsible and respectful use of social media,” the school said.

A spokesman for Lindenwood University said the school is aware of the LU Confessions page and that it is reviewed on a regular basis. The school has had no complaints about the page.

That’s likely due, at least in part, to the job done by moderators to keep the more objectionable material from ever showing up in the first place, said Heather Collins, a recent criminal justice and psychology graduate of Lindenwood University.

“There would be a lot of crazy things on there if they didn’t do that,” Collins said.
Wet spring can put plants at risk if hot, dry weather arrives

By DEBBIE JOHNSON University of Missouri Cooperative Media Group

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The excessive spring rains could put plants at risk when Missouri weather turns dry and hot.

"The big problem that plants have right now is there is no reason for them to send down a deep root system since all they need in life is near the soil surface," said David Trinklein, horticulture specialist for University of Missouri Extension. "When warm temperatures and dry conditions arrive, these plants will be in trouble."

This means you will need to be ready to mulch these plants.

"Don’t mulch when it’s raining so much, but have mulch on hand and ready when the rain stops," Trinklein said. "The mulch will help conserve water and control weeds, which are real robbers of water from our garden plants."

The best way to prepare for dry conditions is to choose the right plants. Missouri’s fickle weather can jump from cold to hot or wet to dry in the blink of an eye.

"We really need to select species that can withstand drought," Trinklein said. "If you choose to grow food crops or ornamentals that can’t tolerate hot summers without water, then you either need to be ready to do supplemental irrigation or don’t grow those species."

Irrigation costs time and effort, as well as money. Trinklein said you need to ask yourself how much you are going to be able to water.

Tomatoes are a good example. "Growing tomatoes without the ability to water is really a waste of time in Missouri," Trinklein said. "If we have a summer with lots of rain, you’ll likely lose tomatoes if you don’t spray for foliar diseases. If we have a summer with little or no rain, you’ll likely lose tomatoes to blossom end rot."

If watering is a problem, Trinklein said, it’s best to choose drought-tolerant vegetables such as green beans and sweet corn.

"When all is said and done, gardeners are at the mercy of nature," he said.
Sheriff's pot arrests draw ire of liberties group
Enforcement does not stick to city law.

By BRENNAN DAVID
Friday, May 24, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A statewide civil liberties group is asking the Boone County Sheriff's Department to enforce Columbia's city ordinance concerning marijuana possession, something Sheriff Dwayne Carey says the department is not authorized to do.

The sheriff's department in January instructed members of its proactive unit to perform more search warrants and traffic stops inside the city limits to deter crime that was spilling into the county. At the time, Carey said the move was a result of the Columbia Police Department being unable to control the problem.

With deputies patrolling more within the city, Columbia attorney Dan Viets, who is general counsel for the not-for-profit Missouri Civil Liberties Association, claimed that the additional patrols have resulted in more misdemeanor marijuana and paraphernalia possession charges.

Carey said deputies have made more than 100 arrests in the city involving a multitude of charges since the start of the special enforcement, but he did not have a specific number regarding how many involved marijuana charges.

Columbia voters passed an ordinance in 2004 saying people found in possession of fewer than 35 grams of marijuana should be penalized with a violation in city court rather than being arrested and charged with a violation of state law. The city ordinance also provides provisions for violations to be filed in state court.

Carey said his deputies only enforce state law.

"It is ironic that we have to make a special effort to ask the Boone County sheriff and his deputies to follow the law," Viets said in a news release announcing the not-for-profit association's request. "We are hopeful that the sheriff will agree to comply with what is clearly the preference of the majority of his constituents, the voters of the city of Columbia."
Viets accused deputies of violating the city ordinance by referring the cases to Boone County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Knight. Carey said his deputies are not authorized to refer any case to municipal court because deputies are not commissioned officers of the city of Columbia. They are instead commissioned to enforce state law, as is the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

"That's the first I have ever heard of that," said Viets, who added that the sheriff's department should take the steps are necessary to be commissioned by the city.

Carey said one problem with requiring deputies to enforce municipal ordinances is the number of municipalities within the county. Deputies would be responsible for enforcing each municipal code in those jurisdictions, and highway patrol deputies would be responsible for enforcing each municipal code throughout the state.

"It's not a case of being hard-headed," Carey said. "We do that everywhere within Boone County."

The county prosecutor could refer county marijuana arrests to municipal court. However, Carey and the highway patrol have requested their cases not be referred to municipal court because they do not want their officers to testify in cases involving ordinances they don't have the authority to enforce, Prosecuting Attorney Dan Knight said.

**Columbia and University of Missouri police are commissioned to enforce both city and state law.**