LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Immigration bill is right step for international students

Friday, June 21, 2013 | 6:00 a.m. CDT
BY Brady Deaton

As chancellor of MU, I’ve seen first-hand how immigrants enrich our nation, beginning with all four of my wife Anne’s grandparents, who were poor but hardworking immigrants from Italy. In my academic career, I have come to deeply admire the many ways in which our campus community is enriched by immigrant students, faculty and staff who work hard, shine in the classroom, and do groundbreaking research that benefits us all.

MU takes pride in the diversity of immigrant students and faculty as we help train the world’s top minds in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and in the creative and performing arts. But because of our country’s antiquated immigration system, and after we have invested resources in these individuals, many are sent abroad to compete against us.

The United States needs an immigration policy that will help ensure our international graduates have a clear path to a green card so they can stay and create new American jobs. The comprehensive immigration reform bill (S. 744) represents a unique opportunity to accomplish this. I hope fellow citizens will join me in urging Missouri Sens. Roy Blunt and Claire McCaskill to support it.

Brady Deaton is chancellor at MU.
MU’s Alden named president of AD association

Thursday, June 20, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden has been selected as the 2013-14 president of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics, the university announced Thursday morning.

The announcement comes a year after Alden helped lead Missouri into the Southeastern Conference and follows a series of athletic-related renovation plans at MU.

“We look forward to having Mike Alden serve as our president in 2013-14 and anticipate his leadership in enhancing NACDA’s ever-expanding role in intercollegiate athletics,” NACDA Executive Director Bob Vecchione said in a statement.

The NACDA is the professional and educational association for more than 6,500 college athletic administrators at more than 1,600 institutions throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico.

In addition to Alden, executive committee members for 2013-14 include athletic directors Greg Byrne (Arizona), Brenda Hampton (Iowa Western Community College), Marcus Manning (Maryville), Lee Reed (Georgetown) and Jack Sullivan (County College of Morris).

“I’ve known Mike for a very long time and have enjoyed watching his career and all he has accomplished,” SEC Commissioner Mike Slive added. “In his role as president of NACDA, he will bring energy, passion and commitment to the membership, and the organization will certainly benefit.”

Alden begins his 16th season at MU this upcoming academic year.

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Missouri's Mike Alden named president of Athletic Directors Association

Thursday, June 20, 2013 | 4:11 p.m. CDT; updated 7:27 p.m. CDT, Thursday, June 20, 2013
BY Missourian staff

COLUMBIA – MU Director of Athletics Mike Alden has been selected as the 2013-14 President of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics.

The announcement comes one year after Alden and campus administration led the university into the Southeastern Conference and follows unprecedented and aggressive renovation plans throughout the Sports Park at Missouri.

In addition to Alden, executive committee members for 2013-14 include athletics directors Greg Byrne, University of Arizona; Brenda Hampton, Iowa Western Community College; Marcus Manning, Maryville University; Lee Reed, Georgetown University; and Jack Sullivan, County College of Morris.

“I’ve known Mike for a very long time and have enjoyed watching his career and all he has accomplished,” Southeastern Conference Commissioner Mike Slive said. “In his role as President of NACDA, he will bring energy, passion and commitment to the membership, and the organization will certainly benefit.”

Alden begins his 16th season at the helm of Missouri athletics and contributions to athletics has grown under his watch. In the classroom Missouri ranked among Southeastern Conference leaders in both graduation success rates and academic progress rates and on-field performances remained strong with 14-of-20 programs reaching postseason play.

“Mike has been an outstanding leader for Mizzou’s athletic program for many years, and we are very proud to see him contribute his exceptional skills at the national level,” MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said of Alden’s appointment.
COLUMBIA — Pablo Mendoza, MU's Multicultural Center director, has accepted a new job as assistant to the president for social equity at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

According to Indiana University of Pennsylvania's website, his tenure will begin Aug. 1.

A 13-member search committee comprised of professors and other university faculty members selected Mendoza from more than 60 applicants.

In Mendoza's new role, he will help to enhance diversity by creating policies and services to bring equity and inclusiveness to Indiana University of Pennsylvania's campus, according to the university's website.

As director of the Multicultural Center at MU, Mendoza advised multicultural and LGBT student groups and provided diversity training to interested student groups.

According to his LinkedIn account, Mendoza previously served as coordinator of student activities at the University of California-San Diego and as community development coordinator in the residential life office at the University of California-Davis, where he guided student programming in residential communities.

Mendoza received his doctorate in higher education policy at MU.

The Multicultural Center is located downstairs in the MU Student Center. The center aims to provide support to underrepresented populations on campus, according to its website.

Supervising editor is Hannah Wiese.
Soil erosion is on the rise, scientists say

By Georgina Gustin ggustin@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8195

When a raindrop hits the soil, it acts as kind of a miniature bomb, displacing earth in tiny but collectively significant ways. So with all the heavy rain of recent weeks and the countless miniature bomb strikes, the state’s cropland is showing serious signs of stress. Soil scientists say they’re seeing more erosion on farmland than they have in years. That could mean trouble for crops, particularly corn this season — and it could have long-term consequences for the state’s farmland. After last year’s historic drought, snow and rain in recent months have increased moisture content, but now things are shifting toward the other extreme.

“We had snow storms, we had rains, and these were significant in replenishing water,” explained Newell Kitchen, a professor of soil science at the University of Missouri’s College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. “But unfortunately it’s come too fast, and when it rains an inch in an hour, it’s too intense, and it takes the soil with it.”

The erosion, soil scientists say, could begin to reverse decades of progress. About 30 years ago, Missouri had among the worst soil erosion rates in the country. But, like farmers everywhere, more farmers here switched to “no-till” methods, meaning they no longer turned over the soil before planting — a long-held technique, but one that soil scientists determined was wrecking soil structure. With the no-till approach, farmers leave crop residue in the field after harvest, which act as a buffer against rain, further protecting the soil.

Also, in the mid-1980s, lawmakers and the public were convinced that erosion had become a major problem and got behind programs to address it. The 1985 farm bill required farmers to adopt soil conservation plans to receive federal benefits, while at the state level Missourians passed a sales tax, sending funds to soil conservation measures.

In 1982, Missouri’s erosion rate was 10.9 tons per acre, the second-highest in the country. By 2007, the rate was cut by more than half, to 5.3 tons.

“Missouri had more funding available,” said Charlie Rahm, a public affairs officer for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, based in Columbia. “Our erosion rate has dropped more than any state in the country.”

But now it appears to be going up again.

Newell said the university’s test plots have shown higher rates of erosion, and farmers are reporting sediment-covered crops and washed-out fields. While most of the state’s grain crops are planted now — 90 percent of the state’s corn and 70 percent of the state’s soybeans as of last week — farmers were
delayed by weeks, leading to more erosion, Kitchen believes, because plants' root systems weren't in place to hold the soil together.

"A lot of fields got planted late. The preparation of the field was done late," he said. "Then the rains came, and now it seems erosion is more widespread. There are plenty of fields as you drive along I-70 — you can see that erosion is wreaking havoc."

While USDA recently projected record yields of corn and soybeans this year, many analysts think that the predictions are unlikely because of delayed plantings. Erosion could further darken the picture because soil loss leads to weaker stands and, ultimately, lower yields.

The department's latest figures on erosion, documenting the stretch from 2007 to 2010, won't be released until later this year. But experts believe it will show that erosion rates started climbing with the recent agricultural boom.

"We're expecting it will show an increase in our erosion rates, and we're basing that on the fact that more highly erodible land is back in production," Rahm said. "If you have high grain prices, and (farmers) see a chance to put more acres into grain, then they're going to put them into production."

Indeed, as grain prices have soared, more farmers have taken their marginal cropland out of the Conservation Reserve Program, a federal program in which farmers voluntarily agree to not farm certain land in exchange for a government payment.

In the past five years, nearly 10 million acres have been dropped from the program, representing a 26 percent drop, including about 500,000 acres in Missouri. (From 2005 through 2012, the state's farmers have received about $1.9 billion, ranking sixth among recipient states. Illinois farmers received about $1.8 billion, ranking the state eighth.)

"I don't have research to back this up," Rahm said. "But it would make sense that if you take those highly erodible acres and put them back into crops — logic would tell you there's a link."

The Senate recently passed a five-year farm bill, the sweeping legislation that guides farm policy and spending. On Thursday, the House rejected its version of the bill, which called for cuts in the food stamp program. Both versions call for a reauthorization of the conservation program but reduce the enrollment caps by between 7 million and 8 million acres, from the current 32 million.

The good news, soil scientists say, is that more farmers are growing nitrogen-fixing crops, known as cover crops, that help rebuild the soil. Rahm's unit, for example, has held dozens of "soil health" seminars around the state, drawing hundreds of farmers.

"These cover crops put down very deep roots, and they create openings in the soil — passageways for the water to infiltrate," Rahm explained. "Then micro-organisms in the soil, they eat the roots."

That means healthier, more crumbly soil, that absorbs water and holds together better.
"When you combine no-till with cover crops, you can really improve the health of the soil," Rahm said. "Farmers are really getting interested in this, and the reason is because farmers are saying this is working, and farmers listen to farmers. ... I think it's one of the most exciting things happening in agriculture."
What’s so great about Brad Pitt? Plenty

For years, the first rule of the Brad Pitt Fan Club was that you didn’t talk about the Brad Pitt Fan Club.

Serious film aficionados couldn’t possibly endorse an actor who was so buff, so seemingly happy, so painfully attractive to our loved ones. But there’s no use denying it: Pitt is not only an iconic star, he’s a talented actor and even a conscientious role model.

This week he adds high-rolling businessman to his résumé, as his new horror thriller “World War Z” represents his biggest gamble as a producer.

Pitt may seem to be living a charmed life, but as yours truly learned from mutual friends while researching the book “Hollywood Myths,” the actor has good work habits to match his good genes and good luck.

Pitt was born in Shawnee, Okla., in 1963 and grew up in Springfield, Mo., where he was a choirboy and a popular athlete at Kickapoo High School. At the University of Missouri-Columbia, the photogenic fraternity member was not only featured on a “Men of Mizzou” calendar; he produced it as his final project for an advertising class.

In 1986, two credits short of a journalism degree, Pitt took his life savings of $325, loaded his belongings into an old Datsun he called Runaround Sue and headed west on Route 66. Although he fibbed to his parents that he would be finishing college at an art school, his secret hope was to parlay his looks into an acting career.

Several Mizzou classmates had already preceded Pitt to Los Angeles, including an aspiring singer named Sheryl Crow (of Kennett, Mo.).

Pitt lived in a small apartment in North Hollywood with five friends from college. While Pitt took drama classes, got his teeth capped and exercised fanatically, his roommates figured acting was just another one of his whims, like studying architecture or starting a band.

One of Pitt’s first jobs in Los Angeles was to wear a chicken suit outside an El Pollo Loco restaurant on Sunset Boulevard. That job, which he shared with one of his roommates, lasted one day. So did his gig as the limo driver for a strip-o-gram service.

Pitt earned $38 as an extra in the movie “Less Than Zero” then landed recurring roles in the TV series “Dallas” and “Glory Days” before his breakthrough as the larcenous hitchhiker in “Thelma and Louise.” Buoyed by the attention, he starred in the low-budget cult film “Johnny Suede” and the partly animated
"Cool World." When Robert Redford cast the easy-going young actor in "A River Runs Through It," he was anointing Pitt as a possible successor to his own legacy.

Pitt stole "Interview With the Vampire" from star Tom Cruise, scored an international hit with the thriller "Se7en" and earned an Oscar nomination as best supporting actor for the time-travel fantasy "12 Monkeys."

For a while he escorted his Missouri friends to parties where the swimming pools were stocked with starlets. But soon he disappeared behind the velvet rope, where his country-boy charm and retro-'70s fashion sense proved irresistible to the press, the public and his co-stars.

He dated actress Juliette Lewis and was engaged to "Se7en" co-star Gwyneth Paltrow before he met sitcom star Jennifer Aniston while she was walking her dog outside the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills.

Pitt and Aniston married in 2000 in a million-dollar ceremony for which all the hired help had to sign nondisclosure agreements.

During the five-year marriage, he broke the bank with the first of the "Ocean's" movies, was named People magazine's Sexiest Man Alive for a second time — and was cast in the spy spoof "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" with his female equivalent, Angelina Jolie.

Today Brad and Angelina are arguably the most famous couple in the world, with an international portfolio of children and homes.

Yet the couple, who do not employ a publicist, use their celebrity to advance humanitarian causes. When Jolie gave birth to twins Knox and Vivienne in 2008, the money for the worldwide photo rights went to the proud parents' charitable foundation, which has contributed to tornado relief in Joplin, Mo., a children's museum in Springfield and Pitt-designed housing in flood-ravaged New Orleans.

As the couple have built a family, Pitt (on the cusp of age 50) has built a reputation as a serious actor, with Oscar-nominated performances in "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" and "Moneyball" and admiring reviews for his roles in "The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford" and "The Tree of Life."

In the latter film he was the bullying patriarch of a 1950s family; in the zombie-theme "World War Z," he plays something closer to what he is in real life: a globe-trotting father in a modern family that is beset by the threat of the rabid masses.

Through two decades of unimaginable scrutiny, Pitt has kept a smile on his face and a high percentage of smart choices on his movie scorecard. If there's a guidebook for handling fame so well, it must come with instructions that say burn after reading.