Professors, Columbia parents want MU museums to return after renovations

Wednesday, July 17, 2013 | 8:37 p.m. CDT

BY Claire Boston

COLUMBIA — About 50 professors, museum docents and other stakeholders convened Wednesday evening in Jesse Wrench Auditorium to discuss their concerns about renovations that will close Jesse, Swallow and Pickard halls in the fall.

To accommodate the $22.85 million Renew Mizzou project, MU's Museum of Anthropology and Museum of Art and Archaeology will move two miles north to the former Ellis Fischel Cancer Center on Business Loop 70 West. The center's space is now known as Mizzou North.

The Museum of Art and Archaeology will begin to move its collection in October, and the Museum of Anthropology will move in May 2014.

Alex Barker, director of the Museum of Art and Archaeology, said the move was an imperfect but necessary solution.

"When I balance those two things — my concern for the staff and making sure the Pickard Hall issues with radiation are fully documented, understood and addressed, versus moving away for campus for a time — it's a pretty easy choice for me," Barker said.

Radiation from experiments MU professors conducted in the early 20th century lingers in the walls and floors of Pickard. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will work with MU to conduct more tests in hopes of taking the building off a radiation watch list. As the commission tests Pickard, Swallow Hall will be renovated to create more classroom and multipurpose space.

Forum attendees said they were concerned about vague details surrounding Pickard's future. Because it is unknown how long radiation testing will take, there is no set timeline for the Museum of Art and Archaeology's return, said Jackie Jones, vice chancellor of administrative services.

Art history professor Keith Eggener said he feared the museums' collections could "succumb to some sort of institutional inertia and just stay there."

Columbia community members shared his concerns.

Peter Stepleman, an assistant superintendent at Columbia Public Schools, said Lee Elementary takes frequent walking field trips to the museums. Many Lee parents have contacted the school system wondering when the museums will return to campus.
"It would be helpful to understand — for our families — how long this is going to be for them," Stiepleman said.

Several parents of Lee students spoke at the meeting to praise the field trips and question if they will be able to continue when the museums move.

Professors from multiple departments also said they will lose valuable teaching tools when the museums move. History professor Lois Huneycutt said she uses museum collections extensively in two of her undergraduate classes and will have to redesign her curriculum to accommodate the loss.

"I can't walk students over and teach courses in the museums if the museums aren't on campus or downtown," Huneycutt said. "We've lost it for undergraduate teaching."

Michael O'Brien, dean of the College of Arts and Science and director of the Museum of Anthropology, said the college is exploring the possibility of leasing space downtown to set up a small-scale museum. After its renovation, Swallow Hall will also have space to host some of the museum's art exhibits on a rotating basis.

"There is going to be a ton of space in Swallow — nooks, niches, walls, whatever you want to call them," O'Brien said. "I think it's going to be great."

Astronomy professor Angela Speck said MU should commit to returning the museums to campus because the museums help bring together professors and the greater Columbia community.

"Here's one of those places where we have really good interaction, and we don't want to lose that," Speck said. "If we lose that, we'll lose something that makes us really special."
On July 1st I went on an adventure. Well, I actually went to freshman orientation at the University of Missouri. I had no idea what to expect. In the back of my mind, I was still in the high school mentality.

I stayed in the dorms overnight—that was an experience in itself. I was lucky enough to have my own dorm room because the person I was partnered with never showed. Still, I didn’t have a built-in orientation buddy like everyone else seemed to have.

At the end of the day, I returned to an empty room. I wanted to talk to someone about the silly fears and worries that had popped up throughout the day.

More than that, I needed someone to drag along to the pizza parties that Mizzou hosted each night. I didn’t want to look like a loner standing alone in the corner.

Other than the MIA roomie, my first impression of college was that community living (especially dorm bathrooms) would definitely take some getting used to.

Don’t get me wrong, the bathrooms were very clean, but I realized that I need to take full advantage of my own room and bathroom before I have to share with everyone else on my hall floor.

I also experienced culture shock outside of the dorms. You know how at most high schools there’s a handful of really peppy kids who carry the school’s spirit? Well, it’s not the same in college.

At Mizzou, it seemed like everyone carried that spirit and pride for their school. As far as I could tell, every student knew Mizzou’s fight song and the Alma Mater. They weren’t afraid to act silly and support their fellow Tigers.

I still don’t know the fight song, but I’m sure I’ll have it memorized after the first few football games.

I also found out a lot about myself while I was at orientation. I have this oppressed sense of wanderlust. I want to see different places, meet new people and experience a little adventure. When I was choosing my college, I decided to go somewhere that I wouldn’t know anyone. That way, I knew I’d experience something new.
There’s just one problem with that: I always forget how shy I am.

In high school, everyone knows everyone, so it’s easy to talk to people. Now I’m going to a college where the freshman class is bigger than the population of my hometown.

I was overwhelmed with all the new faces I saw at orientation. Everyone was very friendly—typical Midwest charm—but I regret not talking to more people and not attending to those Mizzou pizza parties.

From now on, I am making it a goal to be more outgoing while I’m away.

I think it really hit me when I finally received my school ID card: I’m going to college next year. I won’t see the friends I’ve seen every day for the last 12 years. This is a brand new book with tons of blank pages.

By the end of orientation, I was ready to go home. That worried me a little bit, but I was exhausted. Orientation at Mizzou was more like a crash course introduction to college life.

Still, the two days I spent in Columbia, Missouri, made me excited about my future. I’m going to have to put myself out there next year. Joining clubs, forming strong relationships with my professors and creating bonds with new friends—those are all things that will help me get ahead in the “real world,” for which college, as they say, is a stepping stone.
WASHINGTON — Heading off a costly increase for returning college students, a bipartisan group of senators reached a deal Wednesday that would offer students better rates on their loans this fall but perhaps assign higher rates in coming years.

The deal would offer students lower interest rates through the 2015 academic year, but then rates are expected to climb above where they were when students left campus this spring. The interest rates would be linked to the financial markets, but Democrats won a protection for students that rates would never climb higher than 8.25 percent for undergraduate students. Graduate students would not pay rates higher than 9.5 percent and parents' rates would top out at 10.5 percent.

Under the deal, all undergraduates this fall would borrow at 3.85 percent interest rates. Graduate students would have access to loans at 5.4 percent and parents would be able to borrow at 6.4 percent. Those rates would climb as the economy improves and it becomes more expensive for the government to borrow money.

The deal was described by Republican and Democratic aides who insisted on anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the ongoing negotiations.

Undergraduates last year borrowed at 3.4 percent or 6.8 percent, depending on their financial need. Graduate students had access to federal loans at 6.8 percent and parents borrowed at 7.9 percent.

A vote on the agreement could come as early as Thursday, although it could be pushed back to the middle of next week depending on the Senate calendar.
The bipartisan agreement is expected to be the final in a string of efforts that have emerged from near constant work to undo a rate hike that took hold for subsidized Stafford loans on July 1. Rates for new subsidized Stafford loans doubled from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent, adding roughly $2,600 to students' education costs.

Lawmakers from both parties called the hike senseless but differed on how to restore the lower rates. Republicans have pushed for a link between interest rates and the financial markets. President Barack Obama included that link in his budget proposal, as did House Republicans. Democrats balked, saying it could produce government profits on the backs of borrowers if rates continued to climb.

Leaders from both parties, however, recognized the potential to be blamed for the added costs in the 2014 elections if nothing were done.

The House has already passed student loan legislation that also links interest rates to the 10-year Treasury note. The differences between the Senate and House versions are expected to be resolved before students return to campus this fall, and Obama is expected to sign the bill.

Few students had borrowed for fall classes. Students typically do not take out loans until just before they return to campus, and Congress had until they left for the August recess to restore the lower rates. The students who had borrowed for summer programs since July 1 would have their rates retroactively reduced.

Lawmakers and their top aides have been tinkering with various proposals — nudging here, trimming there — trying to find a deal that avoids added red ink for students and the government alike.

The deal was estimated to reduce the deficit by $715 million over the next decade.

But if the economy improves as congressional economists predict, rates would climb in coming years. The compromise reached Wednesday evening would limit how high those rates could go, although all were higher than the current fixed levels.

Lawmakers from both parties met with Obama and Vice President Joe Biden on Tuesday at the White House. An outline of an agreement seemed to be taking shape Tuesday, with follow-up meetings Wednesday in Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin's office yielding a final agreement.

Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Republican Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina were the main negotiators, with Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Durbin filling the role of mediators.
United States Senate members voted down the Keep Student Loans Affordable Act of 2013 at last Wednesday's vote, the final count being 49-51.

Instead, federally subsidized student loan interest rates will now be doubled from 3.4 percent to 6.8 percent for students this fall.

The Keep Student Loans Affordable Act of 2013 was the first attempt to combat this increase. It was created in an effort to keep current student loan interest rates in place for the next year, giving the Senate enough time to find a better solution. In order to have gone to a final vote, the bill needed 9 more votes.

Among the 51 yeas was Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo.

"I relied on student loans and understand the life-changing opportunities they provide to millions of American students," McCaskill said in a news release. "Keeping rates low and affordable is more important than ever — particularly during a time of economic recovery. I think we're moving closer to a bipartisan solution that will accomplish that goal, and I'll continue to focus on student loans until we get this resolved."

Earlier this year, McCaskill visited University of Missouri's campus and spoke to various students, including many from the Missouri Students Association and Graduate Professional Council.

"It was a great honor for all of the student leaders that spoke with Senator McCaskill earlier this summer to spend time talking to her about an issue that is really important to us and the students that we represent," MSA Legislative Advocacy Officer Camille Hosman said. "We are hoping that a deal gets made concerning student loans that is in the best interest of students. There is no concrete expectation of which student loan bills will succeed, but we hope a deal is made."

Included in this discussion with McCaskill was MSA's Director of Student Communications, Jimmy Hibsch.

"It's definitely saddening to hear that a solution couldn't be reached when so many students struggle to afford college as is," Hibsch said. "I would hope that we'd eventually see a compromise reached that won't put politics into students' wallets."

Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., was on the opposite side of the vote; he believes there is a better way to adjust interest rates, according to a news release.
“Millions of American students are borrowing between now and the fall, and they’re trying to
decide whether or not they can afford to go to school,” Blunt said in his press release on July 1.
“Now is the time for Congress to pass a bipartisan, common-sense solution that will give
students more long-term certainty and access to lower rates. The House passed a bill, and the
Senate has a bipartisan plan that is very close to the president’s proposal. I hope Majority Leader
Harry Reid will allow a vote on this common-sense solution immediately when the Senate is
back in session.”

Roughly 7 million college students will be affected by this decision and each one of them will be
paying about $1,000 more in interest rates per year. This includes MU students who have taken
out federally subsidized Stafford loans.

Without further action from the Senate, interest rates will stay doubled at 6.8 percent.
Duo robbed by man at MU's South Farms, police report

Wednesday, July 17, 2013 | 5:32 p.m. CDT
BY Danielle Renton, Lakshna Mehta

COLUMBIA — Two people were robbed by a man early Wednesday at South Farms, 3600 New Haven Road, according to a MU Police Department news release.

The robber approached the male and female victims, who were in a parked vehicle at the scene at about 4 a.m. He had a handgun and demanded money, the release said.

The robber left the scene in a large white vehicle with a black luggage rack on top, after taking property and money. According to the news release, the vehicle could be a Cadillac Escalade.

He was described as a mid-30s black male, approximately 6 feet tall with very short hair. He was wearing a black T-shirt.

Anyone with information is asked to call Detective Joe Kingsbury at 884-2605. Anyone who wishes to remain anonymous may call Crime Stoppers at 875-8477. Online tips may be submitted at 875tips.com.

If the information leads to an arrest, the tipper could be eligible for a $1,500 reward.
Fatal fungus showing up in Midwestern pastures

15 hours ago • By Georgina Gustin ggustin@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8195

A fungus that can kill horses and cattle is rampant in Missouri’s pastureland this summer — and has already felled at least four animals.

The fungus, called ergot, appears in grains and grasses when weather conditions are favorable, as they have been this year. The fungus is so widespread that state authorities are warning animal owners to be especially vigilant and to move animals to non-infected fields.

"It’s very severe this year, and I want producers to be on the lookout for it," said Craig Roberts, a professor of plant science with the University of Missouri Extension and the state’s forage specialist. "I’ve seen it in every field and in every grass species."

Ergot thrives when springs are cool and summers are hot, as has been the case this year. It typically infects grains, including wheat, oats and barley, but can affect grasses and pastureland, including hay fields.

"It can be fatal," said Tim Evans, a veterinary toxicologist with the University of Missouri's College of Veterinary Medicine. "I expect this year, we're going to see problems."

Evans said he was called to a farm in northeastern Missouri last week to help a local veterinarian identify what killed four cows in a 20-cow herd, which had been grazing on a pasture of fescue.

"I could see as I was driving onto the premises that the fescue was ergotized," he said. "Since then I’ve seen quite a number of fields with ergot in it. I’ve talked to my colleagues in Iowa, and they’re seeing the same thing up there."

The fungus is not only potentially fatal but can cause fertility problems and decreased appetite — a problem for the state’s cattle breeding industry, the third largest in the country. The cattle operations here feed young cattle up to a certain weight before shipping them to feedlots for finishing.

Dairy cows also can suffer from loss of production, and horses and llamas also are susceptible.

Ergot compounds cause arteries to constrict, causing labored breathing, raising body temperatures and restricting blood supplies to extremities.

Ergot looks like small rodent droppings in the seed heads of plants, and it can be easily seen in cereal grains and common grasses, including fescue.
Early mowing of pastureland usually limits the growth of ergot, but this year, because of the wet weather, producers weren't able to mow and bale their fields, allowing the fungus to settle into seed heads.

The toxins in ergot are chemically related to LSD and have been linked to deadly epidemics in the Middle Ages, when it was known as St. Anthony's Fire. Some historians believe that the symptoms of ergotism in people — scratching, convulsions and hallucinations — were behind the "bewitchment" that triggered the Salem Witch Trials. The poisoning in humans is usually linked to infected rye, which was grown in abundance in that region.

It commonly is seen in wheat, but the U.S. Department of Agriculture requires inspections and testing that limit its presence.
In years past, Brian Moody's efforts to bring economic development to his small Illinois town focused on modest projects: merging an old hardware store whose owner was retiring with another shop to preserve 30 jobs or pointing artists to a vacant downtown building.

Now he has a bigger prospect. Cronus Chemicals wants to build a $1.2 billion plant on a nearby cornfield that would manufacture nitrogen-based fertilizer, a staple of the corn and soybean farms that fill the landscape around Tuscola, a community of 4,500 people about 160 miles south of Chicago.

Similar projects are being proposed across the nation, driven by booming demand for corn and newly abundant supplies of natural gas, a major component in fertilizer production. The plants promise thousands of jobs during construction and hundreds of full-time spots once they're up and running. And most of them would go in small, rural towns where economic development isn't easy.

"It's equally time-consuming and frustrating," Moody said, explaining that such promising job-creating opportunities are rare.

The wave of potential expansion comes with concerns. An explosion at a Texas fertilizer plant in April killed 15 people in the community of West, highlighting the dangers of such facilities and how loosely they're regulated.

But in communities like Tuscola, local officials say they're prepared to handle those risks. A large chemical plant already stands near the proposed fertilizer site.

"The fact is that whether these plants are going to be here or not, we have three major railroads that go right through the middle of this community," said Steve Ettinger, chief of the Tuscola Fire Department. "Those railroads on a daily basis move all kinds of threats."

Experts say conditions are ripe to bring fertilizer production back to the United States after an exodus to the Caribbean and elsewhere a decade or more ago, when high domestic natural gas prices drove many manufactures away.
Since then, new methods of finding natural gas — hydraulic fracturing, which uses high-pressure water and chemicals to break dense layers of rock, and horizontal drilling — have set off energy booms in parts of Pennsylvania, Texas and other states.

"It shouldn't be a surprise that there are a lot of people investing in the fertilizer business right now," said Pat Westhoff, an agricultural economist at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Like Tuscola, most of the sites being considered are already home to other chemical facilities, which were drawn by the same rail lines and other industrial infrastructure that are attractive to the fertilizer industry.

Over the past two years, the trade publication Argus FMB North American Fertilizer has tracked about 20 proposed fertilizer projects in the United States and Canada, said Lauren Williamson, an Argus editor. Potential new plant locations include Indiana, Iowa, Illinois and North Dakota. Existing factories in Iowa, Louisiana and Oklahoma could be expanded.

Fertilizer is big business, especially in agricultural regions where farmers rely on nitrogen-based products. Profits for publicly traded fertilizer producers have averaged 20 percent or more over the last decade, according to Gary Schnitkey, an agricultural economist at the University of Illinois, about 25 miles north of Tuscola.

The plant proposed by Cronus Chemical promises about 2,000 short-term construction jobs and 150 permanent positions. That would make it the second- or third-largest local employer.

Agriculture is Tuscola’s No. 1 industry, and the high profits of the past few years for corn and soybean farming have helped keep unemployment relatively low — just above 6 percent, well below the statewide rate that exceeds 9 percent.

Behind agriculture, tourism is a steady No. 2 industry. The town is built on the edge of Illinois’ Amish country, drawing day-tripping tourists who flock to a homemade candy store and soda fountain.

But growth, as Moody said, doesn’t come easily to small towns. So they compete.

Cronus has also found a site in Mitchell County, Iowa, and is seeking incentives from each state as it weighs options. In Illinois, lawmakers passed legislation that includes tax breaks for the newly formed company.

Since the Texas explosion, questions about the kinds of fertilizer the new plants would make and the chemicals that are used have become more important.

The volatile chemical ammonium nitrate fueled the disaster in Texas, and few of the new plants would use it. But many, including the Cronus plant, would use other potentially dangerous chemicals, like anhydrous ammonia, which can be used as a fertilizer on its own or serve as a component in other forms of fertilizer, like urea.
"People should learn from the incident at West," said Daniel Horowitz, managing director of the Chemical Safety Board, a federal agency investigating the Texas explosion. He believes rules need to be reviewed to prevent accidents.

Anhydrous ammonia is ubiquitous in farm country. It is flammable or explosive only in extreme circumstances, but an accidental leak could release a toxic chemical cloud that can drift for miles.

"You don't want to breathe it. It'll burn your lungs," Hettinger said.

Government oversight of such chemicals varies greatly from state to state.

In Illinois, the roughly 800 anhydrous storage sites are inspected annually. The six largest have few, if any, problems, said Jerry Kirbach of the state Agriculture Department's Bureau of Agricultural Products Inspection.

California requires plants be inspected once every three years.

However, in many states, including Texas, fertilizer plants are considered small polluters, and cash-strapped state environmental agencies conduct inspections only when a complaint is lodged.

Larry Robb is the emergency manager in Posey County in southern Indiana, where a firm owned in part by large Pakistani company, the Fatima Group, has proposed a $1.3 billion plant that's run into hurdles.

The state put an offer of incentives on hold over concerns that Fatima's overseas products wind up in explosives in Afghanistan. Since then, local officials have stepped in to help with financing.

Much like officials in Tuscola, Robb said he already deals with other local plants. They regularly report inventories of dangerous chemicals, but he acknowledges he's taking them at their word.

"Could they do something without reporting it? Of course," he said. "Is it likely to be caught? That's a good question."

Still, he and other local officials hope the plant gets off the ground.

"We're optimistic that it will be built," Robb said. "We're looking at growth in our county."
ASK A SCIENTIST "How are invertebrates classified?"

By JENNIFER HENDERSON and DEANNA LANKFORD of MU’s Office of Science Outreach

Wednesday, July 17, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Question submitted by Ragan Webb's fourth-grade class at Fairview Elementary

Gerald Summers, a biology professor at the University of Missouri, explains that invertebrates are animals without a backbone. Even though invertebrates lack a backbone, they can have a type of skeleton. Insects and spiders, invertebrates we see every day, have skeletons on the outside of their bodies. Examples of invertebrates include organisms such as insects, spiders, earthworms, jellyfish, octopus, lobster, shrimp and coral, just to name a few.

Summers notes that there are more than 1.5 million types of invertebrates on Earth; the vast majority of animals are classified as invertebrates. Insects, one of the largest of the invertebrate groups, share several characteristics including jointed legs, an exoskeleton and a segmented body — head, thorax and abdomen. Snails and clams are also classified as invertebrates but belong to a different group because they produce a protective shell and do not have jointed legs.

Summers explains that even though when most people think of animals, they think of vertebrates, the majority of animals living on Earth are actually invertebrates. Furthermore, new types of invertebrates are discovered every year; scientists estimate the number of invertebrate species might be as many as 30 million. Because they are so common on Earth, invertebrates are part of many food webs providing a food source for all other animals.

Invertebrates can also provide many important benefits for humans. For example, many medications are derived from invertebrates. Summers says that preserving types of invertebrates is very important because so many types are disappearing. Summers warns, "Do not step on the insects; just shoo them away!"

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Posted in Editorial Archive on Wednesday, July 17, 2013 2:00 pm.
House committee to meet on campus

Wednesday, July 17, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A legislative committee looking for ways to make state government smaller will hold a hearing at 2 p.m. Thursday in the Reynolds Alumni Center on the University of Missouri campus.

The House Downsizing State Government Committee will take testimony as part of its inquiry into the proper role, responsibilities and organization of state government, Rep. Paul Curtman, R-Eureka, said in a news release.

After the hearing in Columbia, the committee will meet at 4 p.m. in the Capitol Building in Jefferson City for additional testimony.

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Posted in Politics on Wednesday, July 17, 2013 2:00 pm.
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

St. Louis Public Radio-Beacon merger moving ahead

MU MENTION P. 3

ST. LOUIS • They're next-door neighbors in Grand Center. But they want to be closer.

One neighbor is 41 years old: St. Louis Public Radio, better known as KWMU (90.7 FM). Once a classical-music station, it now is best known as an affiliate of National Public Radio, with NPR's news magazine shows composing the bulk of its programming.

The station, owned by the University of Missouri-St. Louis, has about 40 employees, with about one-third involved in the news operation. Its revenue comes from both listener contributions and taxpayers.

The other neighbor just turned five: The St. Louis Beacon, a nonprofit online news site.

It was started in 2008 by former Post-Dispatch editors and reporters, and focuses on political and arts coverage, emphasizing analytical pieces and avoiding detailed coverage of sports and crime. It has 18 employees and gets its money from private contributions.

For the last nine months, KWMU and the Beacon have been talking about merging their two houses, which they say will create a unique, and better, way to deliver news to the region.

The two sides have worked together before. Last year, they joined KETC (Channel 9) to create a political news website called "Beyond November." Funding for that project ended in January.

MONEY ISSUES SURFACE

While the original goal of tying the knot by July 1 has come and gone — with top university officials saying a pact is at least six weeks away — some issues involved in the merger are emerging.

Issues such as money.

Projections show joining operations would produce a $3 million funding gap over five years, though the two sides give different reasons for that gap.

Beacon editor Margaret Wolf Freivogel said the gap didn't come from KWMU's taking over the Beacon's news operation, but instead it would stem from "new kinds of activities" the combined venture would pursue.

Freivogel declined to discuss those activities or other financial issues and referred questions to Tim Eby, KWMU's general manager.
Eby said the gap would be caused by KWMU’s merging with the Beacon, specifically because of the way the Beacon raises money. The Beacon tends to have years of major fundraising, followed by years with fewer contributions.

Eby said about $2.5 million already had been pledged by both KWMU and Beacon donors to cover the projected $3 million gap.

UMSL Chancellor Tom George said the donor situation at the two organizations was “quite different.”

“The Beacon has fewer donors but with bigger gift amounts,” George said. “We have tons of donors, but the average gift is not near as great.”

George’s assessment coincides with a conclusion reached in a 2011 study from the Knight Foundation. The study’s examination of the Beacon noted that “94 percent of its 2010 donation revenue came from seven individuals who contributed an average of $173,823 for a total of more than $1.2 million.”

The Beacon is not required to list specific donor amounts on its filings with the Internal Revenue Service, and Beacon officials have declined to voluntarily release the information.

The Post-Dispatch filed a request under the Missouri Sunshine Law asking the university to turn over the information. The university denied the request, saying it didn’t have to release the information because negotiations are still under way.

On its website, the Beacon lists donors who gave $10,000 or more. Along with various foundations, the list includes: William Danforth; Kenneth S. and Nancy Kranzberg; Roy R. Pfautch; Michael and Noemi Neidorff; Emily Rauh Pulitzer; Rex A. and Jeanne C. Sinquefield; Jack C. Taylor; Richard K. and Josephine Weil; and Virginia V. Weldon. Freivogel and her husband, William H. Freivogel also are on the list.

According to information from the Beacon’s IRS filings, which cover 2008 through 2011, the Beacon spent more money than it raised in two of those four years. It made up for that shortfall in 2010, its strongest financial year, when it conducted a capital campaign and raised more than $4.4 million.

The Beacon now has about $2.5 million in net assets.

Eby said a positive note in a recently completed consultants’ report was the finding that there is little overlap in the two organizations’ donor lists. “There is low risk that a combined organization would cannibalize existing revenue to either side,” the report states.

The Florida-based Coats2Coats consulting group is being paid about $52,000 to help guide the merger. The Knight Foundation provided $40,000 of that amount.

Another issue is the merger’s educational component. University officials want the agreement to include academic benefits for UMSL students — something not mentioned specifically in the consultants’ plan.
George said he wants significantly more internships and training opportunities for students at both the radio station and online news service. And he wants the merger talks and the academic aspect to be addressed at the same time.

“We'd like to see it all move forward together,” George said.

Eby said the university was looking at offering courses in new methods of communications, called “emerging media. It’s very much a work in progress,” he said.

George said the academic aspect was crucial. He noted that KWMU’s move to Grand Center in 2012 was approved by the faculty senate only after fine arts and communications classes were instituted at the site.

George said meetings had been scheduled between now and the end of August between the university and both donors and academic administrators, including members of the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

The consultants’ report also clarifies organizational rules: All workers in the new entity will be university employees; they will work under a unified brand; and its leadership team will answer to university officials.

Because Beacon workers would become state employees, they would be part of the university’s retirement system, Eby said. The university said KWMU had not yet computed any information about the additional cost to the university retirement system from taking on the Beacon employees.

Also, the consultants’ report outlines a table of organization for integrating the two operations.

It states the merged entity will be managed by a “general manager,” who will oversee seven departments: development; business development; campaign director; administration; radio; digital; and news. The news department would be managed by an “editor.”

Eby would not say whether specific people had been assigned to those positions.

It’s still unclear whether the two neighbors will move in together. The Beacon shares space with Channel 9 at Grand Center. Eby said that the matter was under discussion, but that no concrete plans had been developed.