UM Press announces three finalists for director position

Editor-in-chief makes the cut.

By Karyn Spory

Tuesday, August 13, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A familiar name is among the finalists for the position of director of the University of Missouri Press.

Clair Willcox, associate director and editor-in-chief of UM Press, is one of three finalists. Jim Cogswell, co-chairman of the search committee, said the panel received about two dozen applications.

The finalists are Willcox; Leila Salisbury, director of the University Press of Mississippi; and David Rosenbaum, director of product development and project management for the American Heart Association.

Cogswell said each finalist has a variety of skill sets that are attractive to the committee. Cogswell said besides experience, the finalists' credentials included fiscal affairs, promotions and organizational management.

"Each of them have differing credentials, and much of that will be vetted when we have them here as personal candidates," Cogswell said.

Cogswell said Willcox did not receive any special treatment or consideration because he currently holds a position at the UM Press. "It was an open search in every sense, and if Clair had not brought with him the required skill sets that we, the search committee, felt were needed, then he would not have been a candidate," Cogswell said.
Willcox said the other candidates are highly qualified. He said he didn't think anyone could predict what university presses will become in the future, but they will change, and the director of the UM Press will have to adapt to the changing market for scholarly publication and needs of the academic world.

Salisbury said it was the opportunity to participate in the reinvigoration of the UM Press that made her want to apply for the job. "I think the whole conversation about scholarly publishing has referenced Missouri in so many ways over the past few years, and I think this position is a chance to show the scholarly community you can run a small to mid-size scholarly publisher in a way that allows it to thrive," she said.

Rosenbaum could not be reached for comment this morning.

Beginning next week, candidates will be on campus for formal interviews with constituents of the press, as well as to deliver presentations during an open forum, which will conclude with a question-and-answer session.

MU Provost Brian Foster said after the campus interviews, he and the search committee will have a "very detailed" conversation about the candidates and the input given by the constituents. Foster will make the final decision. He said there is no hard date for a decision.

Salisbury will have a campus interview Aug. 20-22. Wilcox will follow Aug. 25-27. Rosenbaum will be at MU from Sept. 3-6.

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Posted in Education on Tuesday, August 13, 2013 2:00 pm.
IBM and Universities Team Up to Close a 'Big Data' Skills Gap

By Lee Gardner

IBM is expanding its push to encourage the study of "big data" through a brace of new partnerships with prominent universities and a new round of grants to support data-analytics pursuits in academe, the company announced on Wednesday.

Georgetown University, George Washington University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and Northwestern University are among the nine institutions and higher-education agencies worldwide that will introduce new curricula developed in partnership with the computer company.

George Washington, Rensselaer, Ireland's Dublin City University, and the National University of Singapore are each introducing new master's degrees with a big-data emphasis. The other participating institutions—the University of Missouri, India's Mother Teresa Women's University, and universities overseen by the Philippines Commission on Higher Education—are introducing graduate and undergraduate courses.

The terms of the partnerships vary, but IBM typically offers some combination of technology, expertise, and financial support.

The universities join more than 1,000 other institutions with which IBM has created partnerships in order to boost the number of students able to grapple with the floods of data currently redefining how things are done in business, science, and other fields.

"People really aren't prepared for the exponential volume of this data," said James C. Spohrer, director of global university programs for IBM. The company's partnerships with universities are designed to narrow "the tremendous skills gap for people to learn the tools and processes" for crunching big data in the near future, he said.

In addition to the new partnerships, IBM also announced a new set of winners of its periodic Big Data and Analytics Faculty Awards. Fourteen professors are to be awarded grants of $10,000 each for their work in big-data instruction or research.
Student loan rate fix crucial

America's future deserves chance for prosperity.

By ROY BLUNT

Tuesday, August 13, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Because of a recent stalemate on student loans in Washington, D.C., University of Missouri sophomore Erica Eagleburger was forced to think twice about going to physical therapy school after she graduates, fearing it will take her longer to pay off her student loans.

Lindsey Kolb, a student at Missouri State University, had to take out a $6,500 loan to pay for college. While she plans on paying every penny back, she said the government isn't exactly making that easy for her. "You work so hard to do well to get through college, then you get out on your own, finally get a decent-mediocre job with the degree that cost you thousands of dollars and are still living paycheck to paycheck because you are still paying back loans," said Lindsey, who works three jobs and an internship in addition to school. "You do all that work to have a job just to be in debt once you graduate."

Andrea Schreiner, an occupational therapy student at Rockhurst University, said her decision to go to graduate school took careful consideration, knowing she would be adding even more to her debt from undergraduate school. "I was hoping I would have a better chance at a higher-paying job that would allow me to overcome the debt," she said. "But with increasing loan rates, the idea of paying off my debt seems to be getting further away."

And Danielle Pederson, a December 2012 MU graduate, said she has had to ask herself whether the return on her educational investment will be worth it — especially if she forgoes two working years to complete her degree. "I think in the long run, getting my master's is a good idea. However, I'm not sure I am ready to financially sacrifice in the shorter term of things," Danielle worried.

As a former teacher and university president, I understand the importance of a quality education for every student. I also know how hard it is to make these financial decisions. Unfortunately, these and other students in Missouri and nationwide have been forced to wonder whether they
can attend school or afford their loans thanks to Washington's unnecessary standoff surrounding a long-term student loan solution.

The first plan only addressed part of the student loan issue — and only for a set amount of time. It's time to stop kicking the can down the road on this and so many other problems. I was proud to co-sponsor a bipartisan solution that recently overwhelmingly passed the Senate to lower and fix interest rates for 100 percent of newly issued student loans. This compromise, which was led by U.S. Sens. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., and Richard Burr, R-N.C., is a solution for everyone that ties student loan rates to the government's borrowing costs.

Under this plan, rates are pegged to the 10-year Treasury note yield, plus 2.05 percentage points for undergraduate students, 3.6 percentage points for graduate students and 4.6 percentage points for parent loans. Undergraduate loan rates will not rise above 8.25 percent; graduate loans, 9.5 percent; and PLUS loans, 10.5 percent. Instead of another temporary way out, this bill will provide a permanent fix to this problem moving forward and guarantee that everyone who gets a student loan will benefit from these changes.

"Student loans are terrifying," said Amy Lutz, a student at Saint Louis University. "However, I don't regret taking out loans in exchange for a great education. I'm pleased that the Senate Democrats have finally decided to support a bill, which will lower the rates."

Mizzou student Devin Kelsey said a rate increase has given him concerns about taking out student loans in the future, but he supports this bipartisan solution. And John Kerr, who has two semesters left at Ozark Technical College in Springfield, said, "This" agreement "is good news for me. Even if it's only for two semesters, it locks in a good rate."

I'm glad members on both sides of the aisle were able to work together to reach this bipartisan agreement and finally give students more long-term certainty and access to lower rates. We must encourage common-sense policies that create opportunities for our students to prosper, not limit them. These young people are the future of America, and they deserve the chance to succeed without partisan gridlock in Washington getting in the way.

Roy Blunt, a Republican, is a U.S. senator from Missouri.

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School transfer law makes funding inequities even worse

12 hours ago  •  Brad Desnoyer

Brad Desnoyer is a law professor at the University of Missouri at Columbia, a former attorney for the Missouri Supreme Court, and a graduate of the Francis Howell district in St. Louis.

NO MU MENTION

Our state constitution declares that Missouri’s children have the right to a free public education. The famous case of Brown vs. Board of Education stated that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” But even with this legal background, too many of Missouri’s students attend failing public schools, and a disproportionate percentage of these students are black. Nearly 60 years after Brown, the current school transfer-crisis in the St. Louis region reveals that separate and unequal is alive and well in Missouri.

At the root of this problem are the vast inequities of school funding in Missouri. A 2012 study analyzed states in which higher-poverty districts receive significantly less funding than lower-poverty districts. Near the top of the list of states with the largest spending disparities per child: Missouri.

It is no revelation that school funding directly correlates to the adequacy of a child’s education. And if Missouri wishes to compete nationally and globally, all of our children need adequate educational funding. Yet our system continues to rely too heavily on local property taxes, which guarantees that schools in poor neighborhoods will always be underfunded. The state legislature must create a funding mechanism that guarantees a minimum amount of funding for each district to stay accredited, and that allocates monies to districts based on student-need, so that every child receives equal education dollars.

As Brown stated, public education is “a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.” Yet our nation continues to spend $334 more per white student every year than per non-white student. Even more staggering, schools that enroll 90 percent or higher of non-white students spend $733 less per student than schools enrolling 90 percent or higher of white students. These “racially isolated” schools account for one-third of our nation’s schools. In the St. Louis area, more than half of the public school districts are at least 75 percent black or 75 percent white. It should come as no surprise that the poorly-funded majority black schools perform significantly worse than the better-funded majority white schools.

By inequitably funding our schools we have socially engineered our own problem. Only now that suburban schools are affected have we discovered that apathy and isolation will not benefit Missouri’s children.
Unfortunately, the current school transfer law will only increase this inequity. While there has been much talk about the fears of parents in the “receiving” districts – overcrowding, poor test scores, violent crime – there has been very little discussion of how the transfer law will hurt the current and future students of the unaccredited districts.

According to the law, an unaccredited district must pay tuition for students transferring to an accredited school district. Under this scheme, the unaccredited school districts will lose necessary funds. Additionally, it is very likely that many of the children transferring to accredited districts are some of the failing schools’ best-performing students, leaving the lowest-performers behind.

The problem thus presents itself: A district unaccredited due to poor funding and poor performance will have less funding and worsening performance. And with every passing year, more students will transfer out of the ever-failing district. The snowball grows: fewer students, less money, the same infrastructure.

Rather than addressing the problem of failing districts, our confusing and shortsighted law intensifies the dilemma. We have done more than give up on the unaccredited districts; we have ensured that they will not regain accreditation absent state intervention.

And who will pay for the students to transfer when the unaccredited districts inevitably go bankrupt? If the legislature does not act quickly, our state will have doomed not just failing districts but the families who live within them.

As the current transfer-crisis illustrates, the problem of failing schools cannot be solved by closing up the castle gates. One way or another, it affects us all. We need to focus on fixing – and funding – districts like Normandy and Riverview Gardens, not abandoning them.