Operation STEVE helps veterans young and old connect

Program in first year at MU.

By Ashley Jost

Monday, November 11, 2013 at 2:00 pm

A new volunteer-based program through the University of Missouri called Operation STEVE helps connect student veterans with elderly veterans who attend an area adult care center, among other service projects.

The Serving Through Exceptional Values and Engagement program, or Operation STEVE, is a partnership between the MU School of Health Professions and the Mizzou Student Veterans Association.

In its first year, Operation STEVE is part of a pilot program with the university.

Based on reactions by volunteer student veterans and their retired counterparts, the program appears to be off to a successful start.

Melissa Everitt, manager for alumni and constituent relations with the School of Health Professions, said the goal is to help student veterans shift the focus of their college experience from being consumed by grades, which she said can be overwhelming, to working on service-based activities in conjunction with academics.

"These guys almost died for their country," Everitt said. "Let's put things in perspective and widen our scope. Our goal for these students is to allow them to have some leadership opportunities."

Three student veterans were chosen to be part of the pilot program, with hopes that they can help build Operation STEVE activities and events that can continue.

Service projects developed for their first year included working with the elderly and disabled veterans at Adult Day Connection, an operation through the School of Health Professions that lets caregivers drop off their loved ones and take some rare personal time.
The ADC veterans have monthly coffee meetings with the STEVE volunteers, and organizers said those sessions have gone well.

Glen Richardson, 83, served as a radio operator during the Korean War and is an ADC participant. Learning about the impact the military had on the younger veterans' lives is something Richardson said he was particularly interested in.

"There's not much advice I can give them," he said. "There's too much time apart. But it's more about visiting — that's the main thing."

Jeff Mosley, a student volunteer who served in the Marine Corps between 2001 and 2005, said he has enjoyed talking with the ADC veterans in part because of the shared experiences and values.

"I'm sure we've all watched documentaries on the History Channel about the Korean War, World War II and the Vietnam War, but actually meeting those guys face to face and realizing they've been through a lot tougher situations — it's inspiring to know those guys are out there. It kind of leaves you in awe — not just of them, but of their generation."

Mosley said he thinks the ADC veterans enjoy the time as much as the students because "they see good guys who have the same values that they had when they were younger, and they can relate to the same experiences that we've gone through."

Jerry Kiesling, ADC director, said he hopes the coffee meetings can become a more frequent event based on how well they have gone.

"The veterans have mentioned how it's been good to talk to other people about things that are difficult for others to understand," Kiesling said. "They have that common experience though they're about two or three generations apart."
Vigil, parade honor veterans' service

Ceremony caps 24-hour event.

By Ashley Jost

Monday, November 11, 2013 at 2:00 pm

Col. Bill Boston was presented with his first prisoner of war/missing in action flag Sunday in a ceremony that honored veterans of the past, present and future.

University of Missouri ROTC students from the Air Force, Army and Navy were hosts for the ceremony, as they have been for nearly three decades. The courthouse assembly capped a 24-hour event honoring veterans. This year, Boston was the guest speaker for the gathering at the outdoor amphitheater next to the Boone County Courthouse.

Boston served as a fighter pilot during a 28-year career with the Air Force before he came to Columbia to command the MU Air Force ROTC unit. He later managed the Columbia Regional Airport.

Hundreds, among them many ROTC cadets, listened as Boston told the history of Veterans Day, thanked those who are serving or have served and reiterated President John F. Kennedy idea that a nation’s character is demonstrated by the way it treats its veterans.

"So what is the character of our nation then?" he asked. "Well, my wife and I came here to Columbia 25 years ago with the sense that we were returning to the moral heartland of America … that the culture of the Midwest reflected best the values of our Founding Fathers that we loosely call patriotism today."

After the speech, ROTC cadets fired a three-shot volley, signaling the end of the 24-hour Veterans Day vigil.

Patrick Stark, a senior Air Force cadet, organized the vigil and ceremony to honor fallen soldiers. Two cadets stood guard near the war memorials outside the Boone County Courthouse starting at 2:15 p.m. Saturday.

"To me, it represents why cadets were signed up in the first place," Stark said. "The whole point is that it is 24 hours of complete, nonstop guard, and that represents what the military is meant for. It doesn't matter if it's Christmas, New Year's, 3 a.m. — if something happens, they go."
The vigil and ceremony framed the annual ROTC-organized parade yesterday morning down Eighth Street from the MU campus to the courthouse. The parade included the Boone County Fire Protection District pipe and drum band, the Missouri Military Academy marching band, the Columbia College drum line, the Railsplitters World War II re-enactors, the local VFW and American Legion and the newly created Mizzou Military Veterans Alumni Association.

Sgt. Maj. Richard Grant, a 1969 MU graduate who was drafted in 1970 and served stateside with the Army during the Vietnam War, became a career soldier. Until the official election process occurs, Grant will serve as the board president for the Veterans Alumni Association, which had its bylaws approved in April.

"They're Mizzou's largest fraternity, all of the men and women who served in the armed forces," he joked. The group has about 72 members. "What we would like to do is build a nationwide network that not only supports Mizzou as part of the Alumni Association but supports veterans who graduated and need a network to plug into nationwide."

Grant said about 720 alumni have identified as veterans, and the organization plans to reach out to all of those people.

Onlookers lined parts of Eighth Street during the parade, including Maj. Bruce Schlager, who has been with the Air Force as a flight nurse for 32 years. Schlager came to support his daughter, Jessica, who is a senior Air Force ROTC cadet.

"I'm trying to help guide her along," he said. "She graduates in May, and I'm actually going to retire in May. So what I'm going to do is, when she graduates, I'm going to commission her, and then I'll retire."

Schlager served three tours overseas — in Operation Desert Storm, Iraq and Afghanistan. He said he could not think of a better way to end his time in service than by "passing the reins" to Jessica before he retires.
If Carol Fleisher had to guess how many times she has moved in her lifetime, the number would be upward of 40.

“I can pack a brown box faster than you can believe,” said Veterans Center director Carol Fleisher said.

Growing up, Fleisher’s father’s service in the Air Force was a major part of her life. His occupation required the family to move frequently.

Fleisher said Rome, N.Y., was her favorite place to live because of the snow and winter activities, such as ice skating. She said it was fun moving every two to three years.

“I enjoyed it — there were always new faces and new people,” Fleisher said. “But you have to understand that in the Air Force, often every time you move you see someone you know.”

Fleisher didn’t finish out a full year of school in the same location until her sophomore year of high school.

But the moves didn’t stop there.

After graduating college, Fleisher married into a different military branch: the Navy. In the first 26 years of marriage, Fleisher, her husband and two sons moved 28 times. And she only counts the big, cross-country moves.

“When you move and get to the new place, you know that you’re there temporarily,” Fleisher said. “You still want to make it a home, so you put up the pictures and move the furniture around.”

Though frequent relocations were challenging, the times her husband was away weren’t any easier.

“It’s pretty bad because in the navy, they’re gone a lot,” Fleisher said. “I was relatively lucky in that my husband was gone for shorter periods of time, unlike the army. He was a pilot so he would be away from eight weeks to three months at a time.”
The community on base was always supportive, she said, and all of her friends were in the same boat — literally.

“The car would quit, the plumbing would back up — things like that would always happen as soon as they walked out the door,” Fleisher said. “It was always sort of challenging.”

Fleisher said the worst part was getting sick and not being able to care for her kids, but another family on base would always step up and help.

“You build a lot of close relationships. You depend on each other,” Fleisher said. “It’s not bad, it’s just a different way of life.”

But Fleisher’s work with those in the military didn’t stop at home.

As director of the Veterans Center, Fleisher works daily with students that have served our country.

“My favorite part is being able to accomplish something,” Fleisher said. “The feedback is fantastic from the veterans. They’re very appreciative and that’s always a nice thing.”

Fleisher said student veterans do very well academically and tend to be very focused. They have their goals and priorities put together. The Veterans Center helps student veterans achieve these goals by providing the resources, support and friendships necessary for success.

“I hear a lot from the veterans that they’re in a hurry to graduate,” Fleisher said. “The reason is they’re already older and think they’re behind. When they accomplish that and graduate and move on with their life, it’s exciting to see that come true for them.”

But Fleisher’s hard work hasn’t gone unnoticed.

“As we started having more veterans coming back, she started taking care of them,” said Barbara Schneider, a friend of Fleisher’s and business school director of admissions and recruitment. “She has created such a strong, supportive environment here at MU for our veterans.”

Ann Korschgen, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, said in an email that Fleisher is the best advocate for veterans that she has even known. Korschgen said she recognized this a long time ago when she witnessed Fleisher help students establish the Mizzou Student Veterans Association.

“Carol is a great combination of passion and expertise — which is a perfect mix for someone serving our veterans,” Korschgen said in an email. “For example, her expertise has helped MU navigate all the changes in the recent years in the VA benefits for student veterans and her passion has helped make our Veterans Center one of best, if not the best, in the country.”
Schneider said she thinks Fleisher is the central person that made the Veterans Center happen. There have been others that have participated, but she’s really the core of it, Schneider said. She said Fleisher’s got their best interest at heart.

“She’s been an inspiration because she’s doing something really important,” Schneider said. “She cares so much about those veterans. She understands them. She advocates for them, and that’s a great way to be a staff member and contribute to the university.”

Fleisher said it is gratifying to be at a university that does wonderful things like working to make campus more veteran friendly and veteran comfortable.

“It’s a good thing to do for the right reason for the right people,” Fleisher said.
The University of Missouri plans to buy into an observatory in Arizona, with a goal of doing research it currently can’t perform, university officials said.

The university will buy into the WIYN Observatory, which includes a 3.5-meter telescope atop Kitt Peak National Observatory. The area of the mirror in the Arizona telescope is 75 times larger than the area in a telescope on the MU campus in Columbia, said Eric Hooper, an astronomy professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who is the interim director of the WIYN Observatory.

MU’s telescope is used mostly for outreach and public education.

Angela Speck, a professor in MU’s physics and astronomy department, called the Arizona telescope a “really good research-class telescope. “It means we can go and do things that otherwise we might not get time to do,” Speck said.

MU will buy into the observatory at a 5 percent level, meaning it will have 15 dedicated nights of research on the Arizona telescope, Speck said. The annual payment will be $130,000, with $50,000 from the physics and astronomy department and $80,000 from the provost’s office.

MU officials have set a goal of improving the school’s ranking in the American Association of Universities from 32nd out of 34 public institutions, its current ranking, to No. 28 by 2018. The ranking is based on federal research funding, National Academy of Science members, faculty awards for quality work and faculty citations in high-impact journals.

Speck said the observatory deal could improve the university’s ranking. Plus, not having institutional access to a research telescope has made it more difficult to recruit faculty and researchers to Columbia, she said.

“Now we have something that makes it a little bit easier to get people,” she said.

Woman sexually assaulted Friday morning near MU

Monday, November 11, 2013 | 5:06 p.m. CST

BY Brian Hayes

COLUMBIA — Columbia police are investigating a reported sexual misconduct incident that occurred early Friday morning.

A woman was walking in the 1400 block of Bouchelle Avenue near MU's Sanborn Field around 2 a.m. Friday when a man grabbed her breast and fled when she resisted, according to a Clery release from the MU Police Department.

The victim described the culprit to the Columbia Police Department as a slender man about 5 feet 6 inches tall with short brown hair and medium skin tone.
College billboards lure captive highway viewers

Schools blanket main interstates.

Monday, November 11, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (2)

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Interstate travelers in search of food, fun or gas routinely turn to highway billboards to determine their next rest stop.

In Missouri, a bevy of institutions of higher learning hope those highway ramblers also pay attention to their oversize suggestions on where to send the kids to college.

Schools from the massive University of Missouri to highly selective Westminster College to trade schools galore are blanketing Missouri interstates with billboard ads. In Central Missouri near Kingdom City, a lone billboard touting Webster University's national championship chess team is a strategic bid to capture some of the buzz the state's flagship university enjoys with an eastbound Interstate 70 display of six black-and-gold billboards spaced slightly apart to spell "M-I-Z-Z-O-U," with one billboard per letter. Westbound drivers on I-70 — including those traveling from St. Louis to Columbia — see a similar message, albeit with just two billboards: "MIZ" and "ZOU."

"People see those great Mizzou billboards, and now all of the sudden, they see our chess team," said John Costello, creative services director at the Webster Groves private school. "Hopefully, they remember Webster."

College marketers and billboard owners call the old-school advertising efforts vital as institutions in Missouri and across the country face increased enrollment pressures amid a drop in the college-age population.

Vince Miller, senior vice president and general manager at DDI Media, said his company provides billboard space to no fewer than 24 colleges and universities in Missouri and Illinois, including Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla; Fontbonne and Lindenwood in the St. Louis region; Ranken Technical College, Vatterott and Kaplan University, which are for-profit schools; and Southern Illinois University's campuses in Carbondale and Edwardsville.

Miller said the higher education sector ranks among the company's Top 20 clients, with a noticeable surge of interest in recent years.
"They are fighting for a shrinking pool of prospects," he said. "They're very cognizant that their target audience is going to shrink in the next few years."

At Missouri, the athletic department's billboard-driven foray into Florida, Georgia and other once-unfamiliar territory to announce its 2012 entry into the Southeastern Athletic Conference remains the envy of other schools' marketing shops, said Andrew Grinch, associate athletic director for external operations and content.

The six-figure campaign included $61,000 for highway signs in Atlanta; Dallas; Jacksonville and Tampa, Fla.; Memphis, Tenn.; Birmingham, Ala., and Valdosta, Ga.

"It's kind of an antiquated way of advertising, with everything digital," acknowledged Grinch, who helped create Missouri's digital TV channel. "But they're still a viable way to get people talking."

More important, highway drivers and passengers have little choice — short of turning their heads or closing their eyes — but to look at the oversize ads.

"People can't help but see them," Grinch said. "You can't change the channel if you're driving."
MU study finds abuse knowledge gap among surgeons

COLUMBIA, Mo. — A University of Missouri researcher says orthopedic surgeons are not often identifying domestic violence as a possible cause of the injuries they treat.

Dr. Gregory Della Rocca teaches orthopedic surgery at the MU School of Medicine and oversees orthopedic trauma services at the Columbia health care system. He surveyed more than 150 U.S. orthopedic surgeons and found that fewer than one in four had received domestic violence training.

Nearly three-fourths of the surgeons surveyed estimated that their patients suffered domestic violence in fewer than 5 percent of the cases. An international study of domestic violence among orthopedic trauma clinic patients estimated the actual rate at 40 percent.

Della Rocca says the Missouri health system's orthopedic trauma unit now screens all patients, male or female, for abuse signs.
Camp helps kids cope with cancer

Students work to bring 'magic.'

By Ashley Jost

Monday, November 11, 2013 at 2:00 pm

For one week at the beginning of August, the University of Missouri's Camp Kesem coordinators try to help children be children. The young participants especially need the support because at home, a parent has either had cancer or died from the disease.

The concept is to provide a camp for children and adolescents ages 6 to 16 so they can connect with others who face similar struggles in an environment that fosters fun, said MU senior Courtney Fischer, the group's outreach coordinator.

One of Camp Kesem Mizzou's two biannual reunions took place yesterday. More than 50 camp counselors, campers and parents met for a few hours to visit and play in the Mark Twain room of MU's Memorial Union. The next reunion will be held in February.

The week-long camp is free for those who attend, Fischer said. The goal for the student organizers is to raise the money necessary throughout the academic year to make that happen.

Camp Kesem originated in 2001 with a group of students at Stanford University in California. "Kesem" is Hebrew for magic, according to the national organization's website, and its goal is to bring magic to families coping with cancer.

Jeff Brand, an MU graduate student and Camp Kesem co-director, said the cost for each camper is about $500, as well as $500 per counselor. The national organization requires a three-to-one ratio of campers to counselors, but the MU chapter aims for two-to-one, to provide campers with direct support if they need it.

MU's Camp Kesem started in 2011 with a $10,000 grant from the Livestrong Foundation. The group hosted its first camp during the summer of 2012 at a site in Bourbon. About 30 campers participated. Last year, 63 attended the camp. Next year, the goal is 80. But Fischer said that doesn't mean the line is drawn at 80.

"We're going to keep raising as much money as we can, and if we have enough to send more than 80 campers, then we want to send more than 80 campers," she said.
Former campers are welcome and get priority access to the application.

Rashaun Dennis, 15, has one more year left at camp before he reaches the age limit, he said after competing in yesterday's pumpkin pie eating contest. But the MU program is working to create a junior counselor position so Dennis can continue to be involved and help the younger campers — something he said the camp encourages the teenage campers to do already.

"It's easier and better to communicate with people who have the same situation because they kind of understand what you're going through and can make you feel better," Dennis said. "It's been a pretty awesome time."

Dennis is the oldest of Ranell Hester's four children. All of them have attended Camp Kesem the past two years. Her other children are 14, 9 and 7.

Hester's husband was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer, in 2011. He and his family continue to cope with the effects of the disease.

"It was a surprise to be diagnosed at 40 years old with terminal cancer," she said of her husband. Hester heard about the camp in an advertisement at her home in Wentzville and immediately wanted to get her children involved, she said.

"A lot of children are afraid to talk to their friends at school, and also us as parents, so it gives them an out so they can open up to their counselors the way they can't with us," Hester said. "It's been a blessing since they started."

Applications for new campers will be available during January on the MU Camp Kesem website at http://campkesem.org/missouri.
Cash-Strapped NIH May Ask Universities to Limit Grant Applications

By Paul Basken

At a time of dwindling federal budgets, the National Institutes of Health is considering one sure-fire way to raise record-low grant-approval rates: Have researchers apply for fewer grants.

The NIH, the nation's largest provider of basic research money to universities, has seen its budget cut so much over the last decade that scientists now have only about a 15-percent chance of a successful grant application.

In response to such budget-related stresses, NIH officials are mulling their options. Certainly the agency has been pressing Congress to provide more money. But it is also evaluating ways of being more efficient with the money it has, and that includes changing its own celebrated peer-review system for awarding grants.

One idea getting some internal study, said Sally J. Rockey, the NIH's deputy director for extramural research, is to press universities—or perhaps even force them—to simply submit fewer grant applications.

"We have to think about it as a community, how we control demand," Ms. Rockey told attendees at a conference held here by the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. "Because writing applications, submitting applications, and reviewing applications is extraordinarily costly to the community."

The idea is likely to find opposition. "I'm not sure what that does for you," the association's president, M. Peter McPherson, said afterward in an interview. He said he disliked any solution that involved "just discouraging people from applying."
Shifting Peer Review to Campuses?

Public-university leaders at the annual gathering were similarly wary. Samuel L. Stanley Jr., president of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, said he saw no gain in efficiency from pushing a peer-review function onto individual campuses. Gene D. Block, chancellor of the University of California at Los Angeles, said one important value of the NIH's peer review, even for unsuccessful applicants, was the feedback from a nationwide community of peers.

Ms. Rockey said she became intrigued by the idea after her office conducted an analysis last year of data from the top 100 NIH-supported institutions from 2007 to 2011, and found no correlation between the number of applications submitted by each institution and the percentage of funded applications.

It appeared, she said, that some universities were making an effort to submit only their most-promising applications. Still, the idea of encouraging that approach more widely, or even requiring it, is only one of many possible steps being considered by the NIH as a way of coping with continued budget cuts, she said.

Other ideas, she said, include shifting more grants toward a system, such as that employed by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, that puts more emphasis on the credentials of the applicants than on the quality of the proposed project. Ms. Rockey and others have said that tactic would hold out the possibility of larger and longer-term awards, though at the cost of providing even fewer grants and reaching fewer younger researchers.

Turnover in University Research

Again, Mr. McPherson and some of the university presidents gathered for the conference were skeptical. Mr. Block said that during his years as a researcher of circadian biology, he appreciated having to compete even after winning 28 years of federal grants.

"You still have to write a grant that's critical and as crisp as a 31-year-old who has just come out of a postdoc," he said. "I think that's reasonable."

Either way, the NIH is not looking to push anything on universities that they don't want, Ms. Rockey said. "We have to have a conversation together about how to do all this," she said.
Universities are also considering ways they could change. Mr. McPherson's association took the occasion of its conference to report the results of a survey of vice presidents and vice chancellors for research at its member institutions. The survey found there may soon be considerable turnover in those positions, with about 50 percent of the top university-research officials due to leave their jobs in the next three years.

But the survey also found that most of those research officials expected their successors to have followed similar career paths. That finding raised what the survey's authors described as the possibility that universities may miss an important opportunity to reshape how they manage their research enterprise.

The public-university association also joined in the release of a separate survey of public and private research institutions that outlined the harm to them caused by the federal government's budget cuts through a process called sequestration.

Conducted along with two other university groups, the Association of American Universities and the Science Coalition, the survey found 50 percent of responding institutions reported cuts in staff positions as a result of sequestration and 24 percent had layoffs.

Such cuts pose grave dangers to the future of technological capacity in the United States, Mr. McPherson and university presidents warned. Mr. Block and Dr. Stanley acknowledged, however, that there was still some elasticity in the system, and that university research could recover if financial support were strengthened.
The president of the Association of American Universities said on Monday that public research institutions were once again moving forward, thanks to a renewed focus on undergraduate education and a willingness to "be extremely aggressive" in taking advantage of new financing opportunities.

Hunter R. Rawlings III said that, for the first time in his career, senior faculty members were spending time and effort on teaching. "Our main job at universities is educating students," he said during a panel discussion here at this week's annual meeting of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. "We forgot about that for a while. But now it has hit us with full force because tuition increases have caused the public to be angry, or skeptical at least, about the quality and the value proposition that they're getting."

Mr. Rawlings, a former president of Cornell University and the University of Iowa, spoke at a session titled "Implications of Evolving Funding Models for Public Research Universities," along with J. Bernard Machen, president of the University of Florida; Michael R. Gottfredson, president of the University of Oregon; Kelvin Droegemeier, vice president for research at the University of Oklahoma; and Russell Moore, provost of the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Mr. Machen described how his institution had met its financial challenges by embracing change and sharpening its strategic vision. The university has sought private support for research and has resisted increasing its undergraduate enrollment to pay bills. "We made a conscious decision that we were not going to try to grow our way out of fiscal difficulties," he said.
Florida has also added "economic development" as a fourth core mission to the traditional pillars of teaching, research, and service. "The Legislature likes that," Mr. Machen said. "They're willing to support things under the umbrella of economic development that they would never support in another way."

'Properly Angry at Us'

He advised colleges not to fear a move toward performance-based financial support, saying that the University of Florida was building other revenue streams to create a backlog so that the performance funds could be treated like "the old-time state-appropriation increase." Mr. Machen said, "You're going to have to be more entrepreneurial. You're going to have to stick your neck out more."

Mr. Droegemeier, of Oklahoma, called for a "disruptive" approach, suggesting that undergraduate researchers, properly mentored, could help make up for flat funding of graduate-level research by the National Science Foundation. He also suggested that every APLU institution volunteer to send faculty members to Washington to serve as research experts to federal lawmakers to help them better understand the science behind legislation they are considering.

But it was the AAU's Mr. Rawlings who offered up the most provocative remarks about higher education, saying that universities had essentially abrogated their responsibility to students over the last 30 or 40 years by allowing them to choose whatever classes they wanted as long as they had 120 credits that included some courses in their majors.

"The fact is that students don't know best," Mr. Rawlings said. "That's why they change their major four and a half times during their four, five, or six years at our institutions because they don't know. We have to help them, and I think you do that by having a well-thought-out, coherent curriculum."

Mr. Rawlings also chastised college leaders for "bragging" about how little of their revenue comes from the states. "It says to the people of the state: 'We don't care that much about you. We are the big university,'" Mr. Rawlings said. But institutions should care what members of the public think, he said, "because they are the taxpayers who have been properly angry at us for some years because we've been raising their tuition and not giving them a good, valuable undergraduate education."
WASHINGTON — Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students are flocking to U.S. colleges and universities, helping to drive the number of international students studying in America to record levels.

Similarly, all-time high numbers of American students are studying abroad, though there are far fewer and they tend to do much shorter stints than students coming to the United States.

The findings are in an analysis being released Monday that was conducted by a nonprofit group that worked with the U.S. Department of State.

They say international education programs do more than advance cultural enrichment; they also are an economic boon to communities that host foreign students and to the students themselves, who improve their job competitiveness.

Foreign students contribute about $24 billion annually to the U.S. economy and about two-thirds of them primarily pay their own way or their families do, according to the Institute of International Education and the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

All told, 819,644 students came to the United States to study abroad in the 2012-13 school year. The highest numbers were from China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia and Canada. That's a record high, with a 7 percent increase from a year earlier and 40 percent from more
than a decade ago. Despite the increases, international students make up less than 4 percent of all students.

There was some slowdown in the number of students coming to the United States in the years after the Sept. 11 attacks, in part because of visa issues, but the number has since rebounded.

About 235,000 of the international students were from China, a 21 percent increase. A burgeoning middle class combined with a view that America has quality colleges and universities were factors cited as driving the demand. About one-third studied business and management once they arrived, the report said.

"Chinese students and their parents are looking for high quality education, get the importance of international education, and it's making America the No. 1 destination because we actually have the capacity to absorb international students," said Allan Goodman, president and CEO of the institute.

The number of students from Saudi Arabia studying in the United States jumped 30 percent, to 45,000. These students are largely funded by a Saudi government scholarship program nearly in its 10th year, the report said.

The top destinations for international students were the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Champaign, Ill., Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., New York University, and Columbia University in New York.

By contrast, 283,332 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit — a 3 percent increase from a year earlier.

In the past 20 years, the number of U.S. students studying abroad has tripled. But less than 10 percent of American students study abroad during their college years. The United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France and China were the top destinations.

Attention tied to the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing and more classes taught in English are factors starting to drive more American students to China, Goodman said. A State Department program called 100,000 Strong, which officially started in 2010, aims to send 100,000 American students to China over a four-year period.

The report found that 14,887 Americans studied in China in 2011-12 — a 2 percent increase, but that doesn't include students going to China for noncredit programs.
"We encourage study abroad whether it's short term, long term, whether it's credit, noncredit," said Evan Ryan, a State Department official, on a conference call with reporters.
What will winter be like for St. Louis? Depends on who's predicting

4 hours ago • By Tim O'Neil toneil@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8132

The folk wisdom predicts a cold winter. The nation’s meteorologists aren’t ready to prognosticate.

Foreshadow or not, a wide blast of arctic air is snuffing the last lingering blooms and reminding of winter’s gathering approach. Today’s high will struggle to reach into the mid-30s, with blustery winds. The low early Wednesday is expected to drop into the mid-teens in the outer regions of the St. Louis area.

At least the deep chill will be brief. The National Weather Service says the cold wave will move quickly to the east, allowing temperatures in St. Louis to rebound into the low 50s by Thursday.

The coldest temperature last November was 22 degrees, one year ago today. The normal low for today’s date is 40. The record low is 12 degrees, set 102 years ago.

The cold wave that arrived Monday evening is from a wide blast of arctic air that will push temperatures below freezing as far south as Jackson, Miss. Chicago may have snow this morning. The Weather Service says the cold wave will move quickly along to the east.

So what does it all mean? Anecdotal reports on woolly bear caterpillars and persimmon seeds, two folk indicators of winter to come, suggest a cold one. Old Farmer’s Almanac, a 222-year-old publication that hazards a forecast every fall, recently predicted a cold winter.

The Weather Service, a more sober institution, hasn’t yet issued its official outlook for the coming season. The agency’s long-range indicators don’t offer evidence for anything but normal temperatures and precipitation.

Fred Glass, a meteorologist at the local office in Weldon Spring, said there are no signs of an El Niño or La Niña in the Pacific Ocean, or of an Arctic Oscillation up north — three patterns that make for more predictable winters. “Right now, there is no signal for winter,” he said.

Some people say the colors on woolly bear caterpillars and the insides of persimmon seeds can predict winter weather. The preponderance of evidence at the 17th annual Woolly Worm Festival, held one month ago in Lewisburg, Pa., was for a cold, snowy winter.

**Patrick Byers, southwest regional horticulturalist for University of Missouri Extension Service in Springfield, Mo., was featured in a tongue-in-cheek video report in October for his office on the prophecy hidden in the seeds.**
“There is not a lot of science behind this, but folklore is often an interesting thing to examine,” Byers said of the old Ozarks tale. His verdict: average snowfall, below-average temperatures.

Chip Tynan, horticulturist at the Missouri Botanical Garden, doesn’t hold much truck for caterpillars or persimmons as instruments of prophecy. “Ask me next May what winter was like,” he said.

Tynan said serious gardeners can place bed sheets today on their surviving blooms and possibly preserve them a bit longer. As a long-range strategy, “it’s an exercise in futility,” he said.

More promising is the Weather Service forecast for Sunday: highs in the low 60s.