Incoming Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin finds something special at MU

By Karyn Spory

Friday, December 6, 2013 at 2:00 pm

R. Bowen Loftin said it would take something special to get him to leave Texas A&M University, and apparently the University of Missouri was that special.

"There aren't many schools I would have even thought about" leaving "Texas A&M for, but Missouri fits all the pieces," Loftin said yesterday after he was announced as the new chancellor of MU. Over the summer, Loftin had announced plans to retire as Texas A&M president to return to teaching.

Loftin noted similarities between the schools: Both are members of the Association of American Universities, were members of the Big 12 before departing for the Southeastern Conference and are land-grant universities.

Loftin said he could be the "poster child for a land-grant" universities. He said he grew up in a very poor family — his father only completed sixth grade before being pulled out of school to work, and his mother only had a high school education. "They worked very hard to put food on the table and clothes on our back," Loftin said, adding that it was his father who insisted he go to college.

"Texas A&M was that land-grant that reached out to me, gave me the kind of support financially that I had to have to go there and then gave me a great education; I truly believe in the land-grant mission," Loftin said.

Loftin received his bachelor's degree in physics from Texas A&M in 1970 before going on to Rice University to receive a master's and doctorate in physics. Loftin served as professor of industrial and systems engineering before being named the 24th president of Texas A&M in February 2010.

In July, Loftin announced his plans to return to teaching.

"I really like students … but" in teaching "you affect dozens, perhaps hundreds in classes and laboratories, but not the thousands and thousands I've been able to deal with as president," Loftin said of his decision to put off going back into the classroom for at least a little while longer.
Harry Tyrer, professor of electrical and computer engineering and former chairman of the MU Faculty Council, said he had heard Loftin described as an advocate for students and really felt that as Loftin spoke yesterday.

"I think that's very good," Tyrer said, adding he believes Loftin will do a lot for research because he understands the "relationship between research and the value it brings to student education."

Sudarshan Loyalka, a curators' professor of nuclear engineering, said he believes Loftin will make his mark by the appointments he makes. After Deaton's announcement this summer that he would retire, MU saw a string of high-level administrators leave, including Provost Brian Foster, Vice Chancellor of Research Rob Duncan and Jackie Jones, vice chancellor of administrative services.

"My hope is he creates a new culture," Loyalka said.

Loyalka said he was impressed with Loftin's values. During his reception, Loftin noted MU's values of respect, responsibility, discovery and excellence and said he would add one more — integrity.

"I was impressed when he said 'integrity.' … I think he will be great if he emphasizes that and invites leadership here, not only at his level, but all levels" to share in that value. Loftin starts the job Feb. 1.
Loftin’s background could help boost engineering at MU

Loftin's training seen as crucial.

By Karyn Spory

Friday, December 6, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (1)

Faculty members in the University of Missouri College of Engineering believe having a chancellor with a background in engineering will be a positive thing for the college.

Jim Thompson, dean of the College of Engineering, said incoming MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin could help all of the so-called STEM fields — science, technology, engineering and math.

"With that background it means communicating with him — all of us that are in the STEM fields — I think we will find a receptive ear, and someone who understands the national situation and the state situation in terms that we need more engineers, and he clearly knows that," Thompson said.

He added that Loftin also will understand the importance of science on the MU campus.

Loftin has bachelor's and master's degrees and a doctorate in physics, served as a professor of electrical and computer engineering at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., and was a professor of industrial and systems engineering at Texas A&M University before becoming president there.

According to a news release, Loftin also was a frequent industry and government consultant in the areas of modeling and simulation, advanced training technologies and scientific/engineering data visualization.

Thompson said having a chancellor who is well-respected in the engineering field could help to grow the college by getting out the word about the institution.

"He can communicate at a high level that we have a very fine College of Engineering," Thompson said. "I saw Gov. Nixon on the TV last night, and he thinks" Loftin "has outstanding credentials, so this is already affecting the visibility of the university and subsequently the College of Engineering."
Mark Prelas, professor of nuclear engineering, said Loftin has a tremendous track record of promoting engineering and the sciences, as well as the expertise, experience and reputation to work through tough problems, such as the fate of the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute, or NSEI.

In March 2012, George Justice, then-dean of the MU Graduate School, announced NSEI would close and admissions were halted. Administrators proposed moving the institute to the College of Engineering.

Since that decision, admissions have reopened with a promise from former Chancellor Brady Deaton to keep existing curriculum in place for the next five years. However, some faculty members are still not pleased. Faculty Council members have called for an audit of the program and review of administrators' decisions.

"I hope" Loftin "will very rapidly resolve the NSEI situation," said Harry Tyrer, professor of electrical and computer engineering and former chairman of Faculty Council. "I think that's an important thing that needs to be done."

Tyrer said he also hopes the new chancellor addresses the explosive growth of students in the college and the need for additional faculty.
On Tuesday, while discussing Gary Pinkel tying the school record for career football victories, Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden looked at the accomplishment on a macro rather than micro level. He called it "recognition of a commitment of a university."

Rattling off all the university chancellors and system presidents — with one exception — who have worked with him throughout Pinkel's tenure, Alden noted that MU had collectively charted a course of stability and investment in athletics that had contributed to success on the field.

"What that says is you have a whole group of people that have worked together and understood what it would take to build a consistent program," Alden said. "So as I look back on it, it's a key thing. As you look around the country, if those areas become fragmented, then you can't sustain success. You'll see people do it real quick, and then all the sudden things start to fragment and they do this, they do that.

"I think that's what was happening with Mizzou for 20 years. So finally we got to a point where everybody said, 'Let's all lock arms together and understand there's going to be some tough times, but if we can do this together, keep investing, stay the course, stay to the core values, then good things are going to happen.' "

In Chancellor Brady Deaton, Alden had an ally. They agreed Missouri needed to move from the Big 12 to the Southeastern Conference. Yesterday, MU announced that Deaton's replacement will be R. Bowen Loftin, who spearheaded Texas A&M's move to the SEC. Although you couldn't get much more academic than the bow-tie enthusiast Loftin, who has a Ph.D. in physics, he also has a passion for athletics. He was in town over the weekend — wearing Aggies gear — for Missouri's 28-21 victory over Texas A&M that propelled the Tigers into the SEC Championship Game.

Under his watch, Texas A&M started a $450 million expansion of Kyle Field that will make it the largest stadium in the SEC with a capacity of 102,500. Missouri is in the process of a more modest expansion of Memorial Stadium as part of a wide-ranging facility improvement campaign over the next decade that is projected to cost $200 million.
How important athletics should be to a university is a different topic than how important athletics is to a university. Loftin will be the boss of Pinkel's boss, and he will make $450,000 annually, which is less than 20 percent of Pinkel's salary. It's an upside-down scenario, but the wise administrator uses the outsized interest in athletics to the best advantage of the university.

"I've recognized the criticality of athletics as a way to attract people to see who you are," Loftin said. "When you have that attraction in place, you use it, not simply to highlight your athletic programs only, but other things, as well. That's kind of a given.

"The move to the SEC, the primary reason I promoted that move for Texas A&M, was because of visibility. A&M is a big university. It's got impact. It's got visibility. But now it has much, much more. So does Mizzou. This move to the SEC by both universities has given them a larger stage. That stage provides you the opportunity to not just highlight athletics but also academics, history, traditions and really educate people that might not otherwise see you in any other way."

The importance of a like-minded university administration to an athletic director cannot be overstated.

During Alden's tenure, the one period of sustained dysfunction came when a rift developed a decade ago between former UM President Elson Floyd and Alden over the handling of the basketball team's notorious problem child, Ricky Clemons. Floyd's wife and the wife of associate athletic director Ed Stewart badmouthed Alden — among other colorful topics — during recorded jailhouse calls to Clemons. The feud almost cost Alden his job when Floyd ordered two internal investigations of the botched firing of basketball Coach Quin Snyder.

Floyd, the one name Alden didn't mention in his roll call of helpful administrators, left to become the president of Washington State in 2007. Alden's relationships with Floyd's successors, Gary Forsee and now Tim Wolfe, have been smooth, and the same goes for his bonds with Chancellors Richard Wallace and Deaton.

Judging by Alden's reaction after Loftin's introduction yesterday, he expects the same with Loftin.

"That's a pretty significant statement for the university and how it impacts intercollegiate athletics," Alden said. "I know Dr. Loftin at Texas A&M, the support he gave" Athletic Directors "Bill Byrne and Eric Hyman and the entire department. It certainly speaks volumes on his focus of not only the mission of higher ed but also the value of intercollegiate athletics. So I see this as really important."
MU joins South African preservation effort

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) - The University of Missouri is teaming up with South African researchers to preserve historical records related to political prisoners at an infamous symbol of the apartheid era.

Missouri's College of Education has signed a research agreement with the University of the Western Cape in Capetown and the Robben Island Museum. The island is where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for most of his 27 years behind bars in the country he would later lead.

Missouri already works on several projects with the historically black university in South Africa, including a study-abroad program in the MU law school.

The new agreement will enlist archivists and research librarians from Missouri to help digitally preserve Robben Island documents for use by researchers worldwide.
University of Missouri helps preserve Nelson Mandela’s legacy

December 6

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

With the death this week of Nelson Mandela, an arrangement between the University of Missouri and the University of Western Cape to digitally preserve some of his historic papers has taken on more significance.

In the spirit of documenting the many facets of Mandela’s life for future generations, the two universities and the Robben Island Museum are collaborating on a project to provide global access to thousands of papers, photographs and other items that chronicle the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

“While the loss of Mandela has saddened everyone, Mandela’s legacy of reconciliation and forgiveness, towards the vision of the ‘rainbow’ nation, will live on in this way,” Daniel L. Clay, dean of the MU College of Education, said Friday in a statement.

The collection includes records on political prisoners held on Robben Island, including Mandela, who was jailed for 27 years — 18 years on the island — for his fight against white minority rule.

In 1994, four years after he was freed, Mandela became the first black president of South Africa and a symbol of peace, tolerance and democracy.

Among the materials are films, about 120,000 photographs and papers from more than 300 individuals and groups involved in the struggle.

“This is birth-of-a-nation type stuff,” said Tom Kochtanek, associate professor in the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies.

Kochtanek said when the MU team went to Western Cape to see the collection, it had been well preserved and was housed “in four rooms in the bowels of the university.”

The MU team will select and scan documents and make them part of a website.
In 1996, Kochtanek’s team began a similar project putting millions of pages of documents from the Truman Library on a website accessible to anyone anywhere in the world. The team has been working on that project for 17 years, and it gets about 50 million hits a year, Kochtanek said.
Pinkel awoke a sleeping program to join school's coaching legends

By Joe Walljasper

Saturday, December 7, 2013 at 2:00 am Comments (2)

When Jim Sterling was appointed to the University of Missouri Board of Curators in 1987, fellow curator Bert Bates informed him that one of the perks was travelling to bowl games on the university's chartered jet.

Sterling's term ended in 1993.

There were no bowl games.

"I can remember when we were drawing 30,000 people a game," said Sterling, now a professor in Missouri's School of Journalism. "I was standing out in the parking lot afterward and was going to get in my car and drive out. And I was thinking, 'If we ever get to the point where we fill this thing up again, I'm not going to complain how long it takes to get out of the parking lot.'

"Now, I'm sitting out there annoyed, 'God, it takes a long time to get out of this parking lot.'"

Indeed, a good measure of how far the Tigers have come is how long it takes to get anywhere after a game.

Under Coach Gary Pinkel, Missouri has experienced a run of football success unseen at the school since the 1960s, posting double-digit win totals in four of the last seven seasons. With that has come corresponding expectations. When the Tigers flopped in last season's SEC debut, Pinkel didn't get much credit for services rendered.

"All last year we had to listen to, 'Gary Pinkel needs to go. He isn't fit for the Southeastern Conference. The Tigers shouldn't even be in that conference,'" said Sterling, who counts Pinkel as a friend. "I got tired of being defensive, so I just started shaking my head."

The head shaking has continued, although for a different reason. In the course of one 11-1 season, Pinkel has gone from the "coach on the hot seat" lists to "national coach of the year" lists. He has led a Missouri team picked to finish next-to-last in the Southeastern Conference Eastern Division to today's SEC Championship Game against Auburn. In a year in which he was
supposed to be fired, he has tied Don Faurot for the most career victories in school history with a 101-62 mark.

In December 2000, Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden was looking for a football coach for a program that had been referred to as a "sleeping giant" for so long that it was more like a "comatose giant." The Tigers posted losing records from 1984-96. Larry Smith staged a brief revival, with consecutive bowl games in 1997-98, but then regressed with two straight losing seasons, which caused Alden to fire him.

Alden said there were four obstacles to Missouri achieving sustained football success at that point.

"We hadn't done enough work on our infrastructure. We had done a renovation of Faurot Field and done the Devine Pavilion, but we had to elevate that because the people we were competing with had better facilities," Alden said this week. "The second thing was we hadn't done a good enough job of having a presence as far as a destination place in the state of Missouri. We hadn't really worked hard to control our borders in recruiting. A third one probably was, and this goes hand in hand, the exposure around the state for the Missouri Tigers. What I mean by that is we weren't going out and about, whether it was our student-athletes or coaches or whether it was speaking to groups or spending time with folks or running a higher-level camp. Then the final one was we needed to do a better job of reinforcing the core values of the university and of our program. We needed to elevate the academic performance of our kids and some other expectations."

Alden met with Pinkel early one morning at a Courtyard by Marriott in Toledo, Ohio.

"He was very organized, very disciplined and had a level of detail he used in describing what they did at Toledo and how perhaps those things could transfer to what we're doing," Alden said. "What I mean by that is he was showing me data and statistics about the progress of the 40-yard dashes, the bench presses, the shuttle times, all these things he had kept data on and continued to monitor."

Pinkel had a history of planting roots rather than job-hopping. He spent 11 years as an assistant under Don James at Washington. Then he spent 10 years at Toledo, compiling a 73-37-3 record. The ideal hire at Missouri would be someone that would win, of course, but also someone who would treat Missouri as a destination rather than a launching pad.

When MU's chancellor at the time, Richard Wallace, asked Alden what he liked about Pinkel, loyalty was part of the explanation.

"Mizzou had gotten into this cycle of turning over coaches, my goodness, every four or five years — athletic directors and coaches," Alden said. "They kept turning them over. We talked about the fact that we needed some stability here. We needed to have somebody that could demonstrate stability. It was going to take us some time to build this, so we were all going to have to pull together, be patient and understand that over the course of time we believe that was going to work."
There was nothing quick or easy about turning the Tigers into winners. Pinkel inherited a roster that had a good running back in Zack Abron, a star receiver in Justin Gage but not much else. Pinkel is fond of telling the story that only after taking the job did he realize there was only one scholarship cornerback.

Convincing high school coaches in Missouri that things were going to be different at MU was a bigger chore than he imagined. Particularly in St. Louis — where, for whatever reason, the coaches and influence-peddlers were more high-maintenance than their counterparts in Kansas City — Pinkel found fences hard to mend.

Worth noting, too, he stepped into a Big 12 North Division that was no joke. Nebraska was in the twilight of its dominance, but the Frank Solich-led Cornhuskers did play for the national championship after the 2001 season. Kansas State was regularly winning 10 games under Bill Snyder. Gary Barnett had Colorado rolling.

Pinkel's first season ended with a whimper, with Missouri rolling over for Michigan State. The next year, 2002, Missouri went 5-7, the program's 17th losing season in 19 years. But there was a glimmer of hope. An unheralded recruit that no one else projected as a quarterback — Brad Smith — was a revelation.

The surest way to win is to have a good quarterback, and Pinkel usually had one playing and another on deck. Smith led the Tigers to winning seasons in 2003 and '05 then handed the reins to Chase Daniel, who had more weapons and knew how to use them. Pinkel had started to win over the best recruits in Missouri, but, even more important, his staff found hidden gems such as Sean Weatherspoon, Ziggy Hood and Danario Alexander off the beaten path in Texas and developed them into NFL players.

It didn't hurt that as Missouri ascended, the rest of the Big 12 North crumbled. Nebraska, Colorado and Kansas State made poor coaching hires in Bill Callahan, Dan Hawkins and Ron Prince. The Tigers went from good to great in 2007, coming one win from playing for the national title and finishing a 12-2 season with a 38-7 thrashing of Arkansas in the Cotton Bowl. The 2008 team was a little disappointing but still won 10 games. The 2010 team, led by quarterback Blaine Gabbert, was a pleasant surprise at 10-3.

Along the way, Pinkel received some interest from other schools — Washington in 2008 and Michigan in 2010 — but Alden had been proactive in giving him extensions and raises along the way, and Pinkel never seriously considered leaving. When the Big 12 started to splinter, Alden and MU Chancellor Brady Deaton jumped at the chance to join the more stable and lucrative Southeastern Conference. The football complex was redone, and a stadium expansion project that is part of a $200 million facilities campaign got the green light from the Board of Curators.

But a few cracks were showing, too. Late in the 2011 season, Pinkel was arrested for driving under the influence, embarrassing himself and the university. The Tigers entered the 2012 season eager to prove they were perfectly capable of holding their own in the SEC but endured a humbling 5-7 season. Injuries to quarterback James Franklin and the offensive line contributed to
that record, but it could also be argued that a lack of capable young backups exposed declining recruiting classes.

By last December, fans were surly. So was Pinkel.

"That was a real difficult month," Pinkel said. "I love Christmas music. I love all music, but I love Christmas music. But I'll tell you one thing, we weren't going to a bowl and I didn't listen to any Christmas music. I didn't want to feel good. That's just the way I am.

"You've got to live with it. That's part of this business. I remember Coach James talking about that in this business, the people that make it when things get tough are the ones that make it."

If the offseason perception of the Missouri football program was that it was going nowhere, the players had different ideas. Senior-to-be L'Damian Washington was one of the guys who came back early from Christmas break and started preaching the gospel of higher expectations. Pinkel, himself, was motivated by regaining the respect the Tigers had lost in their SEC debut.

"He was as lasered in as I've ever seen him," Alden said.

There was one major offseason change. Weary offensive coordinator David Yost — who had taken on too many responsibilities, including recruiting coordinator, resigned — and Pinkel promoted Josh Henson as his replacement, switching Andy Hill from receivers coach to quarterbacks coach and hiring Pat Washington as receivers coach. The offense was tweaked, with fewer empty backfields, more attached tight ends and a north-south running attack.

Not much else is different, other than the health of the team, which has been far luckier with injuries than last year's star-crossed squad.

Pinkel said he did the usual evaluation of the program after last season and came to a familiar conclusion. He speaks of the program's template, handed down from James, as if it arrived on stone tablets.

"Here's something everyone needs to understand about Coach Pinkel: Nothing's changed," senior offensive lineman Max Copeland said. "He has kept the exact same approach with little changes — changes I see as minor. The foundation of our program has not changed.

"He's very determined and strong-willed in that we know what we do works. And if it's not working, you need to do it harder, you need to do it better. That's why you're seeing the success you are. We haven't changed any ideology. We're just doing it better."

The media picked Missouri to finish sixth in the SEC East, ahead of only Kentucky, and selected only one MU player on the preseason All-SEC teams — E.J. Gaines, as a third-team cornerback. Pinkel was generally considered the conference's only coach on the hot seat.

"Me on the hot seat? Are you kidding me? Was that out there?" Pinkel joked on Monday.
"Honestly, it gets back to what I told you about Coach James. I've never, ever worried about that.
I've been there before at Toledo. I think I've been there before here. I've never, ever worried about that. Ever. I focus on doing my job."
Pinkel likely to get big pay raise

December 07, 2013 1:15 pm • By Dave Matter dmatter@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8508

ATLANTA • At the conclusion of Missouri’s football season — whether or not that ends with a BCS bowl game — athletics director Mike Alden said he will sit down with football coach Gary Pinkel for a “broad-based review” of the program, which Alden indicated could lead to a significant boost in salary for the head coach.

“We talk all the time,” Alden said Friday at the Georgia Dome, site of today’s SEC championship game between No. 3 Auburn (11-1) and No. 5 Missouri (11-1). “What do we have to do to keep moving forward? Man, we’ve got to add these facilities faster. ... We’ve got to adjust our recruiting. We’re going to change our budget. When we get done with this season, we’re going to do those things.

“Particularly, when you’re doing that, I want to recognize the significance of what that guy has done for the University of Missouri — not just football but for the university. What do we need to do to not only keep the program moving forward but to recognize that guy and our staff?”

Alden’s comments came on the heels of Pinkel recently rebuffing a chance to interview at the University of Washington, where he coached as an offensive assistant from 1979-90.

Before hiring Boise State’s Chris Petersen, Washington athletics director Scott Woodward had multiple discussions with Pinkel’s agent this week.

“I can confirm for you that we were contacted by Washington and that I spoke with its athletic director, Scott Woodward, a few times over the span of the last several days,” John Caponigro, Pinkel’s agent, said in an email Friday, “the most recent time of which was to let him know of Coach Pinkel’s decision to remain at Missouri.”

It’s not the first time Washington contacted Pinkel. He was a finalist for the head coaching job there in 1999 and was approached again in 2008 but declined an offer to interview.

Heading into this season, Pinkel’s guaranteed base salary of $2.35 million is in the bottom half of the SEC. He’s also hit on four contract incentives that will pay him $300,000 in bonus pay this year. He’ll make another $25,000 if Missouri wins the SEC championship game today, plus $25,000 for earning a BCS bowl berth.

NEW BOSS

A day after he was announced as Missouri’s next chancellor, R. Bowen Loftin attended Pinkel’s news conference at the Georgia Dome, wearing his trademark bow tie, a black and
Loftin, who takes over at Mizzou on Feb. 1 after spending the last three years as Texas A&M’s president, was instrumental in the Aggies’ departure from the Big 12 to the SEC.

Alden is thrilled with his new boss.

“He’s certainly done a terrific job at A&M, but if you’re an athletic program or an athletic director, you see the support he provided for the Aggies, it gives you a lot of encouragement to have that type of leader at Mizzou,” Alden said.

SPOTLIGHT ON MIZZOU

Is this the biggest weekend ever for Mizzou sports? Alden’s been running the athletic department since 1998 and can’t recall a more significant time. Missouri’s undefeated women’s volleyball team is hosting the first two rounds of the NCAA Tournament at the Hearnes Center, while Frank Haith’s men’s basketball team plays host to UCLA in a nationally televised game on CBS, the lead-in for today’s SEC football championship game on CBS.

“The opportunity for us to really elevate the brand of the university, not just athletics, is extraordinary,” Alden said. “We always talk about athletics as the front porch or the greatest advertising vehicle that the university can have. That’s what’s going on. And we’re harnessing that right now. What it’s doing is creating the greatest awareness for the University of Missouri and the brand Mizzou since the time I’ve been here.”

NO COMMENT

Both Pinkel and Auburn coach Gus Malzahn declined to use Friday’s platform as a chance to lobby voters who will decide who plays in the BCS national championship game.

Should No. 1 Florida State and No. 2 Ohio State win their conference championship games today — against Duke and Michigan State, respectively — the bulk of the voters in the USA Today coaches poll and Harris Poll would have to vote the SEC champion ahead of the Seminoles or Buckeyes to ensure that an SEC team plays for the championship Jan. 6 in Pasadena, Calif.

Asked if the SEC champion deserves to play for the national title, Pinkel wouldn’t take the bait.

“I’m going to focus on the game tomorrow,” he said. “That’s where my focus should be, my team’s focus should be. That’s where it’s going to be.”

Malzahn read from the same script.

“All I know is we got the best league in college football,” he said. “I’m focused on the Missouri Tigers. We’ll worry about that after the game.”
SEC NATION COMING SOON

When the new SEC Network launches next August, it will feature a two-hour Saturday morning live pregame show that will rotate from campus to campus around the conference. ESPN’s Joe Tessitore will serve as host for the new show, SEC Nation.

“We’re going to cover the energy, the atmosphere and document what I feel are the most ready-made storylines and really weave ourselves into the fabric of this conference,” Tessitore said. “And that is really all that’s needed because this conference has the best story lines. If you follow it closely enough, you’ll probably realize it’s probably the greatest soap opera in all of sports.”

SEC Nation will debut Aug. 28, a Thursday night, at South Carolina when the Gamecocks host Texas A&M. SEC Network will televise that game, plus Temple at Vanderbilt in a Thursday doubleheader. The show’s first Saturday episode will air Aug. 30 at Auburn when the Tigers host Arkansas. That game plus two more will be televised on SEC Network.

SEC commissioner Mike Slive also announced plans for more episodes of the documentary series SEC Storied, including the upcoming “Bo, Barkley and the Big Hurt,” about Auburn icons Bo Jackson, Charles Barkley and Frank Thomas. The conference is producing another episode called “Super Fans.”
In TV for Tween Girls, Appearance Still Counts

Female characters focused more on looks and being attractive than male characters on shows aimed at eight to 12 year olds.

That’s the conclusion from a new study that found even if girls were doing the same things as boys, they still had to look attractive.

The report, published in the journal *Sex Roles* by investigators at the University of Missouri and the University of Delaware, looked at gender portrayals in 49 episodes of 40 different shows that aired on popular tween channels such as the Disney Channel, Nickelodeon and the Cartoon Network in 2011 in the two main tween genres — teen scene, directed at girls, and action/adventure, aimed at boys. They found that in action/adventure series, boys outnumbered girls more than three to one and that boys had a range of looks, not all of which were always attractive. There were no unattractive girls portrayed in any of the shows, whether for the male or female audience. Moreover, girls were portrayed as being concerned with their beauty, working at it, and often receiving comments about it.

These findings are worrying for several reasons, says study co-author, Ashton Gerding, a doctoral student in communication at the University of Missouri. For boys, seeing so few girls in the world of action and adventure may lead them to think males are more important. For girls, the message is that no matter what else you do, you have to be good-looking. “Only attractive girls can appear in these shows,” says Gerding. “That is culturally created.”

The authors and adolescent experts find such media portrayals potentially more harmful than gender stereotyping in adult programming. For one thing, tweens watch more television than any other group, between 4 1/2 to 5 hours a day. They are also at a particularly vulnerable age when it comes to forming their sense of self, which they often model from the society and culture that surrounds them.

“The “tween” period is one in which children learn ‘what is cool, who is cool and how to be cool,’” says Ramel Smith, a licensed psychologist at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. This is the period, he says, when they are creating identities separate from that of their parents, and are looking for a guide from the culture and their peers.

It is also a time of physical changes and awkwardness that can make kids self-conscious about their bodies. Girls can feel especially anxious about these changes, says clinical psychologist
Jennifer Powell-Lunder. “These shows do a disservice to these girls because they prey on these feelings of vulnerability and awkwardness.”

That makes both boys and girls at this stage more impressionable, less experienced and critical. “Adults, “says Smith, “are more stable cognitively and can distinguish (usually) reality from fantasy. However, for most of these children, these constructs and images are forging their realities.” For this reason, the study authors argue that this age group should be given media literacy training to help them view what they see more critically. Parents, they say, can help their children do this by watching TV with them and talking to them about their impressions.

Another complicating factor in tween programming, cultural observers point out, is that the characters on these shows are generally played by actors who are older, usually 16-19. “Frequently, young adults that are far past the days of pimples and braces portray teens in high school,” says Aeva Doomes, a board certified child psychiatrist. This mismatch is one of the factors that can make these shows a “minefield,” she says, for a young girl’s feeling of self-worth. Pubescent girls are already focused on their attractiveness, so media that reflect these tendencies feed off each other, sometimes in a negative cycle. “These issues of appearance are a concern for tween girls, but they become a greater concern the more they are exposed to media that makes it a concern,” says Isaiah B. Pickens, a clinical psychologist in New York City who works with children and teens.

While some culture scholars believe that this focus on beauty and perfection for women is an especially American obsession, others see it as more global. “Cultural preferences for attraction show up in every international market,” says Kristine Weatherston, a media studies professor at Temple University. “Putting attractive people on television occurs globally because TV is a visual medium and human beings pay more attention to what we find attractive.”

At least if you’re female. The good news from the study is that in programs for both boys and girls, girls were represented as being just as brave and true and smart. They could be tech wizards or courageous rescuers of children or kittens. They just had to make sure their lipstick was on straight first.
The changing face of downtown Columbia

MU mention pg. 4

City leaders say no more development can occur downtown unless the infrastructure is improved, and they’re once again floating the idea of a TIF district to pay for upgrades.

By Jacob Barker

Saturday, December 7, 2013 at 2:00 am Comments (1)

After a year on the back burner, an old idea has resurfaced to pay for public projects without asking voters to open their wallets.

City officials once again are floating the idea of a tax increment financing district, or TIF, encompassing a large swath of the central city, including downtown. Mayor Bob McDavid has started making the rounds to community groups, and City Manager Mike Matthes has been talking TIF, too.

But while a conversation about using the mechanism on a large scale to fund central-city infrastructure and catalyze development stalled last year, bogged down by community opposition that proponents seemed unwilling to challenge, there is a more immediate impetus this time — a wave of large downtown development proposals that can't open without more sewer, water and electric capacity.

"If we don't find a way to finance the infrastructure, they can't build here," McDavid said in a November interview.

Matthes said no new projects can open until the city upgrades its infrastructure. There are five or six projects that would have started already, he said, but the city doesn't have the electric and sewer capacity to accommodate them. Without more funding, he said, downtown Columbia will look the same as it is now for a long, long time.

"We are really at the point where if we want to see anything developed downtown, we have to see that infrastructure improved," Matthes said.

Park 7 Group, the developer behind a proposed 25-story high-rise at Sixth and Elm streets, is bumping up against an electric and sewer system that doesn't have the capacity to serve the roughly 700 people who could live there.
"They have every intention of moving forward and building and developing this project, but time has sort of stopped for them until they get the basic" city "approval of: 'We will have infrastructure to serve this project,' " said Robert Hollis, the attorney representing Park 7.

Other projects near Conley Road and Fourth Street would add nearly 1,000 students if they go forward. There, too, the city does not have the power to turn the lights on or the pipes in the ground big enough to handle 1,000 additional people.

As Columbia continues to grow, the smart money is on more large projects downtown. Plenty of concrete has been poured there already: hotels, a grocery store, a new pharmacy and hundreds of apartments that have brought about 2,000 students to the city's core.

For the downtown development boom to continue, the city will need to plan for infrastructure beyond these latest proposals. Because even if they don't happen, others eventually will.

"That could fall apart," First Ward Councilman Fred Schmidt said about the Park 7 project. "And there will be another one. ... It's just inevitable that the city will build up."

**THREE OPTIONS**

As McDavid sees it, the city has three choices in this situation.

It can do nothing, and no development will occur.

It can raise revenue by asking voters to approve higher property tax or sales taxes or raise electric and sewer fees. Neither Matthes nor McDavid think voters have much of an appetite for either right now.

The third option: It can set up a TIF, the option McDavid and Matthes favor.

The two downtown hotels already have used the mechanism to help finance their projects. On an individual property basis, it allows a developer to freeze the property and sales taxes generated on the real estate. Local governments still collect whatever taxes were being paid before the project starts. As the site is redeveloped or improved, its value rises, and more property taxes and sales taxes would go to local coffers. But instead, the TIF lets the developer use that increased tax revenue — over a period of as long as 23 years — for project costs, either directly or by selling a tax-exempt bond paid off with TIF revenue.

A TIF district expands that concept across a larger area, and it would be established and administered by city government. The taxes paid to local entities would be frozen across downtown or even a larger area. Increases in assessed valuation, and the corresponding hike in property tax, would go to a city-administered TIF fund, as would a portion of sales tax increases.

The city could then dole out the money for infrastructure projects.

The TIF district could be customized so not all of the tax increment goes to the city-administered fund. That's important to getting taxing entities such as the school district and county
government on board. The city collects less than 10 percent of all property taxes levied, with about three quarters going to the Columbia Public Schools and the rest to other taxing entities. That's why some critics, when the city manager's office pitched the idea last year, say a TIF district amounts to the city grabbing revenue that would otherwise go elsewhere.

This time, though, the city has a clear case where development might not happen without additional infrastructure funding. Without the TIF, proponents argue, there would be no increase in taxes for any entity.

"We've got a clearer case that but for the TIF, there simply wouldn't be electric transmission and sewer capacity to allow these developments to occur," Schmidt said.

A TIF district has several advantages for city leaders who need to act fast. Unlike raising taxes, it doesn't require approval from voters. And it can be done fast, unlike an election that has to be scheduled months in advance.

"I would rather try to defend a TIF district and using an outside investor's property tax increment than asking citizens for a general property tax increase to pay for it," McDavid said.

Boone County Assessor Tom Schauwecker, a critic of TIFs who opposed the idea of a central-city TIF last year, said he thinks there are probably other ways to come up with money for necessary infrastructure improvements.

"I concur there's an issue with infrastructure," he said. "I do think there are other methods that could achieve financing for improvements ... without diverting money from other taxing entities."

Matthes, who, like McDavid, listed three options for fixing central-city infrastructure, said the city's electric and sewer utilities don't have the reserve funds to pay for the needed improvements. Water and Light, he said, had a bad year last year because of the mild weather and lost millions in revenue.

"That's the volatility of that business; it happens off and on," Matthes said. "They're at the point where they really don't have any money to throw around."

DETAILS, DETAILS

There are still a lot of unknowns, but Matthes said the projects that need to get done are in the tens of millions of dollars.

"I could tell you, ballpark, we've got $100 million of infrastructure we're going to need to add to, fix or replace that's nowhere in the budget," he said.

Water and Light spokeswoman Connie Kacprowicz said the department has just started studying the issue. There might be a need for new distribution lines, she said, and there would have to be
enough water pressure to allow for firefighting at a building as tall as 25 stories. Matthes said a new electric substation is probably needed downtown.

As for sewer, Matthes said the city knows it needs a sewer feeder line, for instance, that would run $5 million or $6 million — equivalent to about all of the unrestricted cash the sewer utility fund had as of its most recent audit June 30. There are plenty of other sewer projects needed in the central city, and the rush of development and new residents to the area has been "a perfect storm" that caught it off guard, he said.

Schauwecker, though, questioned why some of these projects weren't added to the sewer bond voters just approved last month. "I don't believe this is a new problem, and I believe we had an opportunity to address part of it in November," he said.

How it would be structured and how it would finance projects is another unknown. There are good TIFs and TIFs that have run into trouble in other cities, Matthes said. The ones that get into trouble usually involve a municipality backing debt taken on by a district, betting on new development that doesn't meet expectations. If Columbia moves forward, it won't be guaranteeing TIF debt, Matthes said. "Good TIFs don't risk the financial health of the city," he said.

But "if we know something like a TIF would be there, to pay us back," the city could come up with a few million dollars for some of the more immediate needs by dipping into fund balances and deferring other projects, Matthes said.

**LOOMING DEBATE**

A debate is looming, and proponents of a TIF have already started getting their message out. McDavid has spoken to community groups such as the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, Missouri United Methodist Church and the board of Regional Economic Development Inc. about funding infrastructure fixes.

**One of his arguments is that the University of Missouri is going to continue to grow beyond the almost-35,000 students already enrolled, and the community has to decide whether they want them scattered around the city or near campus.**

"I take President" Tim "Wolfe at his word when he says the University of Missouri would be best served at 40,000 students," McDavid said.

**UM System spokesman John Fougere did not respond directly to a question about the 40,000 figure but sent an emailed statement: "MU's strategic plan metrics include the goal of growing total enrollment to 38,000 students over the next 5-7 years."**

Even if MU doesn't grow its enrollment, interest in downtown seems unlikely to abate unless the city decides not to expand infrastructure. Some of the developers behind the projects proposed now say they are already targeting more than students, including Park 7's 25-story high-rise, which includes about 100 one-bedroom units.
The bigger question might be whether a TIF has four votes on the Columbia City Council. Schmidt said he thinks it could, but other ideas could be injected into the debate.

Third Ward Councilman Karl Skala said he wants to bring back the idea of higher impact and development fees to put more of the costs of infrastructure on developers, an issue he campaigned on. Right now, they only pay a fraction of the cost of the strain they put on public infrastructure, he said.

"I'm not saying they ought to pay for everything, and I'm not saying they don't contribute anything, I'm just saying we ought to straighten that out," Skala said.

Whether other council people go for that or not, proponents of the TIF likely will butt heads with some county officials who are strongly opposed. But with downtown looking likely to keep growing if the infrastructure can accommodate it, the city sees a chance to access tens of millions of dollars to fix and add to its outdated pipes and wires.

"This may be a generational opportunity," McDavid said. "This confluence of low interest rates, of rapid growth — this may be a generational opportunity to upgrade our infrastructure."

And urging them on will be the developers waiting for that infrastructure. "Park 7 is now waiting on the city with the hope it can keep the property under contract," Hollis, the company's attorney, said referring to the property at Sixth and Elm streets that could house the 25-story high-rise.
Former MU football players sue NCAA over head injuries

Head injuries led to ailments, lawsuit claims.

By STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Friday, December 6, 2013 at 2:00 pm Comments (5)

Two former University of Missouri football players are suing the NCAA in federal court over head injuries they suffered decades ago, joining a cascade of recent lawsuits against college sports' governing body related to traumatic brain injuries.

Tony Van Zant and Sharron Washington filed the suit Tuesday. Both played for Missouri from 1987 to 1991. Van Zant is now running backs coach at Division II Lincoln University in Jefferson City.

Both say they suffer headaches, depression and other ailments. The lawsuit seeks medical monitoring and testing for former college players who have similar head injuries and didn't advance to the NFL.

Van Zant, a running back, suffered traumatic head injuries during practice during the 1987-88 football season and during games against Kansas State and Illinois, the lawsuit said.

Washington played cornerback and free safety for the Tigers. The suit alleges that Washington was injured during a game against Baylor in 1990 in which he was taken out and put back in without being evaluated for a concussion. It said he was hit hard in the head, bit through his mouthpiece and part of his tongue and afterward had no recollection of the rest of the game. He also was hit hard in a game against Illinois in 1991, the suit said, after which he felt dizzy for a week.

There is at least one inaccuracy in the suit: Missouri played Baylor in 1991, not 1990.

The lawsuit also seeks class-action status on behalf of other players who "are so numerous and geographically dispersed that joinder of all members is impracticable."

Similar lawsuits have been filed in recent months in Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota and Tennessee by ex-players from schools such as Georgia Tech, North Carolina State, Oregon and Vanderbilt.
The NCAA has yet to file a response in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. Attorneys for Washington and Van Zant were not available for comment this morning. Van Zant did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Van Zant was a much-heralded high school prospect whose college career was hampered by a knee injury. At Mizzou, he carried the ball just 51 times for 205 yards and one touchdown. Washington has the seventh-most tackles in a single season for Mizzou, with 139 total tackles in 1991.
Natraj Katta, assistant professor of internal medicine at the University of Missouri School of Medicine and a hospitalist at University Hospital, has been elected a fellow of the American College of Physicians. The distinction recognizes Katta’s achievements in internal medicine with the specialty of adult medical care. Katta was elected a fellow based on the recommendation of his peers, as well as a review by the American College of Physicians’ credentials subcommittee. He also is certified in internal medicine by the American Board of Internal Medicine. The American College of Physicians is the second-largest physician group in the United States. Membership includes more than 137,000 internists, related subspecialists and medical students.