Missouri lawmakers scrapped a proposal that would penalize university budgets for failing to meet certain performance goals and instead are planning to reward them for good performance during years the state can afford to increase higher education funding.

Under the legislation released last week, a university would work with the Department of Higher Education to develop its own goals, such as graduation rates and research projects, that would then be used to determine how much it gets if the Legislature appropriates a year-to-year funding increase.

"We are going to reward those universities for doing things that we as a state and they themselves feel are important," said Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, the bill's sponsor and chairman of the Senate Education Committee.

The funding model proposed by Pearce was used informally last year when Gov. Jay Nixon called for a $25 million increase for higher education. And it likely will set funding levels for colleges for the fiscal year beginning in July, if the Legislature goes along with the governor's plan for a $36.7 million funding boost.

Pearce said his bill would put existing practice into state law to ensure it continues after Nixon leaves office in 2016. Nixon has also urged the four-year schools to freeze tuition for Missouri undergraduates for the 2014-2015 academic year.

The state's past approach for higher education allotted money based largely upon how much colleges and universities received in the past and how much Missouri has available for the future. When a state law passed in 2012 requiring the state to change that practice and develop a funding formula for colleges, lawmakers rolled out an ambitious proposal.
Their plan would have tied 20 percent of a university's core state funding to performance goals _ 10 percent of which would have been determined by how well graduating students found work.

But the plan faced opposition from universities who did not want their existing state dollars tied to new goals. Opponents also were concerned the state's historically black colleges would lose funding because their mission is to admit high-risk students, making it harder to meet academic criteria.

"There were some winners and some losers and their core funding was at risk," Pearce said.

This year the universities are on board, although they would like to see less new money tied to performance and more go toward correcting historic funding imbalances among the universities.

"All of our institutions signed on to performance funding and they are supportive. They had a role in choosing the measures they are being evaluated on and I think they are comfortable with the system as it is," said Paul Wagner, director of the Council of Public Higher Education, which represents Missouri's 13 public four-year universities.

Pearce's plan ties 90 percent of funding increases to performance with the remaining dollars going toward the "equity" issues. Wagner said he would like to see at least an 80-20 split.

Twelve other states have performance-based formulas in place for their colleges, and four others are in the process of transitioning to the financing model, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Arkansas is in the second year of its plan to phase in performance funding with the goal of making one-quarter of a college's finances based on performance. Indiana ties a portion of its universities' budgets to degree and credit-hour completion rates.

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Higher education funding is SB 492

Online:

Legislature: [http://www.moga.mo.gov](http://www.moga.mo.gov)
University of Missouri physics and astronomy professor Meera Chandrasekhar has been awarded Baylor University’s prestigious Robert Foster Cherry award for teaching excellence.

The Cherry Award is given out biannually to honor professors across the country who show a commitment to engaging students and employing innovative teaching strategies.

Chandrasekhar will receive a $250,000 prize and teach in residence at Baylor during the spring 2015 semester. Her home department also will receive $25,000.

“I’m certainly very honored,” said Chandrasekhar, the Curator’s Teaching Professor of Physics at the University of Missouri. “It was certainly a surprise when I got that first phone call, and the surprise hasn’t worn off yet.”

“One of the things I’m really interested in is to make physics come real to students. I really like to use hands-on stuff in my classrooms, so that is something I am interested in pursuing as I teach a class at Baylor.”

Chandrasekhar said she hopes to also be able to conduct a series of public lectures that will help the Waco community at large understand and develop a greater appreciation for physics.

“If I think about what excites me now about physics, I think I really enjoy how physics is manifested in nature in what we see and so on, and I’m also excited by all of the technology that comes out of physics,” Chandrasekhar said. “That’s one aspect of physics is to see what you’re doing be used and become kind of obvious in everyday life.”

The other two finalists for the award were Joan Breton Connelly, a classics and art history professor at New York University, and Michael K. Salemi, professor emeritus of economics at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Both received a $15,000 prize, while their respective university departments were awarded $10,000 to support teaching skills development.
Baylor electrical and computer engineering professor Michael Thompson, who chaired the award selection committee, said the university assembled a diverse group of faculty members representing the different academic disciplines to evaluate the candidates.

Though all three finalists had stellar academic records, Chandrasekhar was chosen on the strength of her ability to relay complex concepts to various audiences.

“She had a real talent for making physics really accessible to students,” Thompson said. “She also had a really nice record of reaching out across all ranks, freshman through graduate students in the college world, and also K-12. She has a real talent . . . in being an ambassador for science at all levels.”

Baylor physics professor and department chairman Greg Benesh said Chandrasekhar captivated students and area residents in the fall when she delivered a public lecture on polarization, or the transforming properties of light waves, as part of the judging process for the award.

The interactive talk included a demonstration in which Chandrasekhar manipulated duct tape and a transparency film to create an array of different light colors, he said.

“It was really dramatic, the audience actually gasped when she put the transparency up there,” Benesh said.

“For people who are not in the sciences, when they suddenly can grasp an understanding of what is going on and see it demonstrated so effectively, then I think they feel like they’ve learned something, and I think that’s part of what makes a great teacher.”

Benesh expects Chandrasekhar to lead undergraduate physics courses for liberal arts majors during her time at Baylor.

The physics department also wants to use Chandrasekhar’s expertise to develop more physics educational programs with local schools, Benesh said.

Chandrasekhar has developed physics curriculums for schoolchildren and worked with K-12 teachers on incorporating new teaching methods in the classroom.

She and other University of Missouri faculty members also have worked on a statewide project to encourage teaching physics in the ninth grade versus during the senior year of high school.

“That’s kind of not a standard way in which ninth-grade science is taught, but by switching to physics we’ve found out that students really learn quite a lot and they also are much better prepared for their upper-level courses in the rest of high school,” Chandrasekhar said.
MU Professor Meera Chandrasekhar awarded $250,000 teaching award

Saturday, January 18, 2014 | 5:58 p.m. CST; updated 6:52 p.m. CST, Saturday, January 18, 2014
BY BREANNE BRAMMER

COLUMBIA — Although the teaching profession is not known for high salaries, sometimes a passion for teaching pays off. Meera Chandrasekhar, MU curator's teaching professor of physics, was awarded the 2014 Robert Foster Cherry Award for Great Teaching by Baylor University on Thursday.

She received $250,000 personally, and an additional $25,000 will go to the MU Department of Physics and Astronomy. In the spring semester of 2015, Chandrasekhar will teach in residence at Baylor in Waco, Texas, where she will also receive a furnished apartment.

She said she is not sure what she will use the money for and she is still very surprised.

Chandrasekhar was named as one of three finalists for the Cherry Award and received $15,000 for personal use and $10,000 for her department in April. The biannual Cherry Award was created in 1991 by Baylor alumnus Robert Foster Cherry, who wanted to connect Baylor students with influential educators.

Chandrasekhar earned a doctorate in physics from Brown University and has been a professor of physics at MU since 1988.

She was previously awarded the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring, the Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching and MU's William T. Kemper Fellowship for Teaching Excellence, according to her university website.
Michael W. Thompson, Robert Foster Cherry Award Committee chair and Baylor professor, said it is the award with the largest prize in North America, as far as he knows.

"It is very prestigious to be selected as the Cherry Award recipient," Thompson said. "The pool of nominees for the award is very strong with many great and talented teachers."

The process involves letters from students and a written letter of nomination, usually from a colleague or dean. Chandrasekhar was nominated by James Spain, MU vice provost for undergraduate studies.

The selection process is always very difficult, but Chandrasekhar stood out because of her track record of teaching excellence and because of the strong letters of support from her students, Thompson said.

"We are interested in the impact that great teaching has had on students," he said. "Dr. Chandrasekhar has a calming presence in the classroom that draws people in and makes physics understandable."

After all the applications are in, a committee representing a variety of academic disciplines then selects three finalists who visit Baylor.

Chandrasekhar visited Baylor in October 2013 for three days and taught two classes. She also presented a public lecture attended by more than 200 people.

She said Baylor is a friendly school and that she is looking forward to teaching there in the spring of 2015.

"The people were very welcoming and worked hard to make the visit worthwhile," Chandrasekhar said. "I got to meet students, faculty and people from different areas."

She is also interested in the education of young students as a founder of Physics First, a project that enhances the education of ninth-grade science students. It is a partnership between MU and 37 Missouri school districts and is funded by a grant from National Science Foundation. Chandrasekhar said she is very proud of the program and the collaboration that has occurred to make it a success.
"Over the past 20 years I have had a strong interest in science teaching for pre-college students and have been involved in creating programs for schools in Missouri," Chandrasekhar said.

She said her greatest joy in life is interacting with students.

The Ladder Report

Look Who’s Moving Up in Columbia

Texas A&M University President R. Bowen Loftin has been appointed chancellor of the University of Missouri’s Columbia campus. Loftin succeeds Brady Deaton, who retired Nov. 15. The native Texan earned a bachelor’s degree in physics from Texas A&M in 1970; he also holds master’s and doctorate degrees in physics from Rice University. A professor of industrial and systems engineering, Loftin became president of Texas A&M in 2010. He will begin serving as the 22nd chancellor of the Columbia campus on Feb. 1, 2014.

LEARNING CURVE

Welcome

By ASHLEY JOST
Saturday, January 18, 2014 at 11:16 am

Welcome to “Learning Curve,” the Tribune’s higher education blog. I’m looking forward to this adventure with you.
I’m Ashley, the higher education reporter at the Trib. I’ve been with the paper since the end of October, reporting part time on a little bit of everything, but started as the higher education reporter two weeks ago.

I graduated from Truman State University in December with a degree in Communication.

This post is my first of what I hope to be a weekly series called “The Roundup.” The Roundup will include “stuff” that didn’t make it into a story or a brief — and maybe some things I want to remind you of — that readers interested in higher education might want to know about. I’ll also include links that I have come across and want to share.

Shall we?

In the System

- The University of Missouri made a list of 14 schools with “iconic college campus quads” from Business Insider. The colleges weren’t ranked in order, but along with MU were schools like Harvard, Yale and MIT. Some of the photos are breathtaking, even with snow on the ground.

- There’s no way you missed incoming Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin’s appearance on Twitter this week, I hope. If you haven’t already, follow him at @bowtieger. He had more than 3,800 followers during his first 12 hours with the handle.

- Speaking of @bowtieger... Loftin tweeted a link earlier this week that I thought was really fascinating. The blog post comes from “Eduventures,” which appears to be an educational research website and blog. Anyway, the post looks at how college presidents are using Twitter. Loftin was interviewed for the post (see No. 5), which lists five things to keep in mind as an administrator on the Twits.

- The Missouri University of Science and Technology announced two of the school’s four “identifying factors” the school hopes to emphasize, per its strategic plan. The two areas are advanced manufacturing and advanced materials for sustainable infrastructure. Those areas came from proposals from S&T faculty and were chosen by Chancellor Cheryl Schrader and Provost Warren Wray. You can read more about that here.

- Also from S&T, Chancellor Schrader was named an Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers fellow. The award, listed as the highest honor for IEEE, recognizes Schrader for her work in engineering education, according to a news release.

Outside of the System

- Columbia College has a new president. If you haven’t already, read a little bit about Scott Dalrymple, who will be on campus for a formal introduction Wednesday.
- Out of Truman State this week, the student newspaper reported the school's provost, Joan Poor, who came to Truman in July 2012, has been “assigned to other duties for the remainder of the academic year.” There doesn't appear to be any information on the search for a new provost just yet.

- Monday, I'll get together another blog post after an event from Friday where Stephens College president Dianne Lynch spoke at Muleskinners about "14 things you need to know that are wrong." So, be on the lookout for that.

MU’s Gary Pinkel frustrated with contract renegotiations for assistant coaches

January 18

BY TOD PALMER
The Kansas City Star

COLUMBIA — Meeting with reporters for the first time since Missouri’s victory in the Cotton Bowl, coach Gary Pinkel expressed frustration with the ongoing effort to renegotiate contracts for his assistant coaches.

Pinkel’s Tigers matched the program record for wins, going 12-2 and winning the SEC East division title and a berth in the conference championship game.

Previously, Missouri athletic director Mike Alden indicated that Pinkel and his staff might be in line for raises after orchestrating a remarkable turnaround in the program’s second season in the SEC.

Progress hasn’t been speedy.

“It’s a slow process,” Pinkel said. “We’re disappointed to this point, but we’ll see where it goes.”

Defensive coordinator Dave Steckel signed a two-year contract last summer that pays an annual base salary of $550,000.

Josh Henson, who replaced Dave Yost as offensive coordinator for the 2013 season, also signed a two-year deal during the summer worth $500,000 per season.

Steckel’s salary ranks 13th among SEC assistant coaches, according to the USA Today college football assistant coach salary data base, and Henson’s salary ranks 18th overall.
For comparison, Georgia lured defensive coordinator Jeremy Pruitt away from Florida State, where he worked in the same position for the national champion Seminoles, for a three-year deal at $850,000 per year.

The highest-paid assistant coach in the nation last season was Clemson offensive coordinator Chad Morris ($1.3 million), while Alabama defensive coordinator Kirby Smart received a $1.15 million base salary and LSU defensive coordinator John Chavis made $1.1 million.

Of course, salaries weren’t the only thing on Pinkel’s mind. He also addressed sophomore wide receiver Dorial Green-Beckham’s recent arrest — kind of. Green-Beckham was arrested this month in Springfield after the vehicle he was riding in was stopped by police, who discovered marijuana and drug paraphernalia during a subsequent search.

“Consistent with since the day I got here, I never discuss any discipline issues that we have,” Pinkel said.

Even when pressed for a general philosophy about handling player misconduct — whether he’d wait for the legal process to play out or make his own judgment — Pinkel declined to offer specifics.

“The subject matter, I don’t particularly want to talk about,” he said. “We’ll do it another time. I’d be happy to do it, but don’t particularly want to talk about it right now.”

Pinkel did talk about running back Henry Josey’s decision to enter the NFL Draft.

“Ultimately, when a player comes to a decision, we support it and it’s the right decision,” Pinkel said. “... Everybody has their reasons for doing it and, for the reasons he expressed to me, it was important for him to do it this year. So, we support him and back him and wish him the best.”

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/2014/01/18/4760965/mus-gary-pinkel-frustrated-with.html#storylink=cpy
Plans for a teaching winery and research facility gained traction after a recent announcement that the University of Missouri raised $1.5 million of the $3 million required for the project.

Those involved in the campus's viticulture program hope the facility will allow students to have hands-on opportunities with grape and wine research before they start applying for internships or before they graduate.

Heidi Griswold, development director in the office of advancement for the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, said names of the companies the donations have come from can't be released.

"I can tell you that part of the funding comes from industry partners, and that's been a driving force behind it," she said. "It's coming from those in the state that have a stake in the success of the wine and grape industry."

The goal was to raise half of the $3 million so the school can apply for higher education capital funds, a state-created opportunity for public institutions to apply for matching grants for educational programs. Griswold said MU's application is in, and the university now has to wait until the General Assembly proceeds with the budget process to find out if the school will receive the matching funds.

Currently, MU has a small, experimental winery that is the size of a two-car garage, Tony Kooyumjian, chairman of the Wine and Grape Research Committee, said, adding that the facility is not a realistic size for students who are interested in the entire process of winemaking. The current
space allows a very small number of grapes to be processed, little space for storage during fermentation and room to cork only one bottle at a time.

"There is only so much you can learn in a book, and then you need practical experience," Kooyumjian said. "For people in the industry to have somebody that comes out of college and you can actually put them to work on their first day, that is really important."

Kooyumjian also owns Augusta Winery and said, from a business perspective, there's a need for qualified winemakers in Missouri and the Midwest. Most winemakers are trained in California or New York and tend to stay in those areas, he said.

"I've seen a lot of wineries that have had to hire winemakers from out of the country," he said. "I know of at least three major wineries in Missouri that have winemakers that are foreign to the United States."

Ingolf Gruen, interim director at the MU Grape and Wine Institute, said the location of the new facility is still being discussed.

He said a common misconception is that MU wants to compete with the wine industry, but that isn't the case.

"We get our funding from the industry," he said. "That would be shooting ourselves in the foot."

Gruen said those working with the institute want students to have the chance to build experience with the entire winemaking process in a facility that would help foster research efforts.

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**Colleges fight against flu as students return from break**

Vaccinations being offered for free.

*By Ashley Jost*  
Saturday, January 18, 2014 at 2:00 am

With two of the three local colleges back in session, and the peak of flu season in progress, schools are still trying to get students up to date with flu vaccinations.
Last semester, 4,800 flu shots were given out at the University of Missouri, but Christian Basi, associate director of the MU News Bureau, said many more students received vaccinations through their doctors at home.

Basi said the Student Health Center is working with Residential Life to promote flu prevention, including a reminder to always wash hands and stay in bed during sickness instead of spreading illness to others.

Flu shots are still available at MU's Student Health Center free to all students. Appointments are necessary.

Basi said all hand sanitizers have been restocked across campus as well. MU students return to campus Tuesday.

Judy Wood, coordinator of the Student Health Center at Columbia College, said the school's health center has given out about 200 flu shots, which is comparable to previous years.

The shots are free to day students, the majority of which she said have received the shots, but also are available to evening students, faculty and staff. There are only about 15 more vaccinations available on campus.

Columbia College students returned to campus Monday, and Wood said earlier this week she saw a few cases of influenza in the health center but some of the cases were "resolving," meaning the students had it last week when they were home for break. The students who Wood has seen with the flu all lived off campus, "luckily," she said.

Stephens College, which resumed class on Wednesday, gave out 50 shots during October, spokeswoman Janese Silvey said. Otherwise, the campus has hand sanitizers at every elevator on campus and almost every entrance.

Students can always receive a flu shot at the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services, spokeswoman Andrea Waner said. The shots are $25 each without insurance or can be billed to an insurance company.

The health department's recent numbers indicate that the 25-49 age range is still the most common in terms of reports of the flu, with 47 cases of type A influenza and six cases of type B. For the 15-24 age range, Waner said the department has seen 21 people with type A and two with type B. Waner said it's hard to say how students coming back will affect the numbers.

This article was published in the Saturday, January 18, 2014 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Colleges fighting back against flu: Vaccinations being offered for free."
MU scientists find that plants use chemical signaling in stress response

Monday, January 20, 2014 | 12:05 p.m. CST; updated 5:59 p.m. CST, Monday, January 20, 2014

From left, Jeongmin Choi, Gary Stacey and Kiwamu Tanaka recently discovered the first plant receptor for extracellular ATP using Arabidopsis plants. PHOTO COURTESY OF ROGER MEISSEN/BOND LIFE SCIENCES CENTER

BY JOAN KOKA

COLUMBIA — MU researchers have discovered that humans and plants respond to stress in similar ways, which could help scientists develop plants more resistant to stress that could lead to better crop yields.

Lead investigator Gary Stacey, doctoral student Jeongmin Choi and postdoctoral fellow Kiwamu Tanaka discovered a protein that binds to ATP (adenosine triphosphate), a high energy molecule that's vital to various life processes in both plant and animal cells.

"ATP is the currency of the cell," Stacey said.

The newly-discovered protein, referred to as P2K, is a receptor, meaning that it lives on the surface of cells and interacts with outside chemical signals.
While ATP has long been known to be involved in reactions that require energy, the discovery and study of P2K has provided evidence that ATP plays an additional role in stress response signalling.

With the help of ATP and receptors like P2K, plants are able to recognize when they are under stress and can begin repair and/or start mounting defenses against the thing that’s causing them stress, such as a pathogen or insect, Stacey said.

"We believe ATP is the hidden stress signal," Stacey said.

Considering that stress from insects, pathogens and extreme weather are a major impediment to high crop yield, Stacey said that he believes the research could lead to development of more stress-resistant crops which in turn could lead to better yields.

Stacey said the research is still in its early stages but, he hopes to move on to studying similar receptors in crop plants in the future.

Humans also use ATP signaling to respond to stress, Stacey said.

"When you cut your hand, the tissue around your cut gets red, and then after a while the cut will heal," he said. "That redness is part of the so-called inflammatory response and is, in part, due to the release of extra-cellular ATP."

Research on ATP found outside cells was initially met with skepticism, Stacey said, because people could not understand why cells would ever release such a vital source of energy.

"It’s like you're taking dollar bills and just throwing them around, you know, it just didn't make a lot of sense to people," Stacey said.

After the first ATP receptors in animals were identified and cloned in the early 1990s, skepticism diminished and there was a huge expansion in ATP research, Stacey said, noting that there are now hundreds of lab studies in the field. He said he hopes that the researchers' success in cloning the first plant ATP receptor will help dispel similar skepticism within the plant field.

"Just like in the nineties when the first receptors were cloned in animals, we think we've cloned an ATP receptor in plants that will make people think differently," Stacey said.
Study finds happy marriage benefits health

BY UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI NEWS BUREAU
Friday, January 17, 2014 at 2:00 pm

A recent study shows that married people have better mental and physical health than their unmarried peers and are less likely to develop chronic conditions than their widowed or divorced counterparts.

People who have happy marriages are more likely to rate their health as better as they age; aging adults whose physical health is declining could especially benefit from improving their marriages, said Christine Proulx, an assistant professor in the University of Missouri Department of Human Development and Family Studies. Proulx examined the long-term relationship between self-rated health and marital quality. She found that, in all stages of marriage, positive or negative relationships affect the individuals' health. Spouses should be aware that how they treat each other and how happy they are in their marriages affect both partners' health, and they should think more about their personal relationships when thinking holistically about their health, she said.

"We often think about the aging process as something we can treat medically with a pill or more exercise, but working on your marriage also might benefit your health as you age," Proulx said. "Engaging with your spouse is not going to cure cancer, but building stronger relationships can improve both people's spirits and well-being and lower their stress."

Proulx suggests that health professionals consider patients' personal relationships when designing health promotion programs or treatment plans.

"Physicians should recognize that the strength of patients' marriages might affect their health," she said. "I suspect we'd have higher rates of adherence to treatment plans for chronic illnesses if medical professionals placed more of an emphasis on incorporating families and spouses in patients'
care. If spouses understand their partners' disease and how to treat it at home, and the couple has a strong marriage, both people's health could improve."

Proulx analyzed data from 707 continuously married adults who participated in the Marital Instability Over the Life Course panel study, a 20-year nationwide research project started in 1980 with funding from the Social Security Administration's Office of Research and Statistics and the National Institute on Aging.

Most study participants were Caucasian, had more than high school educations and earned more than $55,000 in annual family income in 2000. Because of these characteristics, Proulx said the participants probably had some protection against marital and health challenges more commonly faced by people of different ethnicities or with less education or income.

The study, "The Longitudinal Associations between Marital Happiness, Problems and Self-Rated Health," will be published in an upcoming issue of the Journal of Family Psychology. Proulx co-authored the study with Linley Snyder-Rivas, an alumna of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies in the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences.

This article was published in the Friday, January 17, 2014 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "RELATIONSHIP FITNESS: Study finds happy marriage benefits health."

Missouri farmers consider using drones
Saturday, January 18, 2014 | 4:28 p.m. CST

MOUNT VERNON — Jim McCann hasn't taught his grandchildren how to drive a tractor yet, but they might already be able to teach him how to operate a piece of equipment that could be in farming's future.

McCann, of Lawrence County, is president of the Missouri Cattlemen's Association and was among more than 100 farmers who attended the 90th annual Lawrence County Soils and Crops Conference earlier this month.
Along with the usual topics — efficiently feeding hay, using cover crops, etc. — was a discussion on how unmanned airplanes, sometimes called drones, could benefit agriculture. **It was led by Bill Wiebold, who when he is not piloting the small planes is the state soybean specialist with University of Missouri Extension.**

Wiebold brought two planes, discussed how they operate and the legalities that come with using them.

"I really think there's a lot of opportunity with these things we're going to talk about," said Wiebold, who also said at first that he was hesitant to call them "drones" because of possible negative connotations.

Wiebold said each farmer would have their own reasons for wanting to use a drone, which costs about $1,000 plus $300 for a camera.

McCann, who has about 500 head of cattle, said they would be a "wonderful time saver," especially during inclement weather.

"If you're checking cattle, it would be much simpler and a whole lot nicer," he said. "If you're checking cows that are calving, it would cut your time by probably 75 percent."

Wiebold presented a video that was taken from one of the drones as it hovered over a crop field at about 175 feet. The footage was slightly shaky, Wiebold said, because there was a 20 mph wind gust.

"It's kind of fun to do, unless it crashes," Wiebold said, adding he crashed the drone shortly after taking the video.

Brent Drury, 23, of Strafford, said he'll probably buy a drone within a couple weeks.

"I'd be using it for checking livestock in the field," said Drury, who grows wheat, soybeans and alfalfa at J&K Farms east of Springfield. He also has a 300-acre cattle farm in that area.

"I thought it was very reasonable as far as how much it costs," he said.

Part of the discussion included legal and privacy issues that come with owning and operating a drone.
The Federal Aviation Administration considers drone users to be hobbyists, and the drones are not approved for commercial use. Drones can be flown under 700 feet, and the FAA considers that height to be non-navigational, meaning it will not interfere with airplanes, Wiebold said. However, there are different rules for those who live close to airports.

Farmers can fly over their own property, Wiebold said, and outlined a few other rules: Operators must stay away from populated areas; flying near spectators is not allowed until the operator knows how to fly; and the drone cannot go higher than 400 feet if it is within three miles of an airport.

There also is an iPhone application Wiebold said he uses to live stream video from the camera on the drone to his phone, and there are also goggles an operator can wear to view what the drone’s camera sees. But he doesn't advise flying the drone too far before the operator is comfortable with navigating.

"My advice is keep it within sight," Wiebold said. "The idea of a drone, really, is that it can go beyond line of sight. And in many cases you may want to do that, but at least until you get really good at running these things, keep it within sight."

Wiebold said the privacy rules are open to a lot of different interpretations and lots of different laws.

"But that’s where even counties and state governments may in fact have some of those privacy rules," he said. "So it's kind of several different agencies that we're going to have to deal with."

Drury said he thinks privacy will eventually become a huge issue.

"There's people in every aspect of life that are going to take advantage and abuse the system," Drury said.

Within the next 10 years, Drury said he thinks a lot of laws and regulations will be passed, making drones more difficult to own without being certified.

The drones Wiebold presented run on five batteries, and he changes them after a 10-minute lap.
Even though the drone's batteries may not last long, Drury said, they can be used every day to get a live feed of what's happening below.

"It's almost kind of scary, but that's the kind of world that we've grown into," he said.

Drury also said he thinks young farmers will look at the technology as the future and something that could be extremely useful.

"I think these drones are going to be a huge thing," Drury said.

Drury said he didn't play a lot of video games growing up, but the hand-eye coordination skills he developed operating farm equipment will help him fly a drone more easily.

McCann said most kids have played so many video games that they probably wouldn't even have to think about it.

"I know I've got a bunch of grandkids that would be flying that thing 15 minutes after you got it," he said.

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**MU students, sponsor describe intimate portrait of Cuban lifestyle and culture**

Saturday, January 18, 2014 | 7:31 p.m. CST

MU sophomore Megann Whitaker and a local Farmer plant a guava tree at a farm outside Ciego De Avila. PHOTO COURTESY OF JUSTIN PIERCE BY JOSH BENSON
COLUMBIA — Winter Storm Hercules delayed their trip for two days, but after the weather subsided and travel routes reopened, the group of 18 Americans finally arrived in Cuba on Jan. 7.

The group consisted of three sponsors and 15 students, most from the UM System and Moberly Area Community College. The Baptist Student Union coordinated the missionary trip with help from the Emmanuel Baptist Church of Ciego de Ávila in Cuba.

"Our mission was to go down and create connections with the people," MU junior Justin Pierce said.

They took an American Airlines flight from St. Louis to Miami, and from there, a private charter plane to Abel Santamaría Airport in Santa Clara, Cuba. They passed through customs and entered the country with religious visas.

When they landed, the hot and humid air felt like summer in mid-Missouri, Christa Wilson, a board member for the group, said.

They then boarded a yellow school bus and drove nearly three hours from Santa Clara to Ciego de Ávila, a smaller city located in central Cuba.

Along the way, Wilson was taken aback by how green everything looked, by how blue the sky was. Horse-drawn carriages shared the highway with men and women carrying sacks filled with goods. Vendors sold fruits and vegetables on the side of the road and hand-built homes appeared and disappeared into the landscape.

When the group arrived in Ciego de Ávila, they were greeted by Cuban students who are studying English at local colleges and universities, hoping to become teachers, translators and tour guides.

Although he has traveled to Canada, Mexico, Ireland and England, "Cubans are by far the friendliest people I ever met," Pierce said.

Wisley, one of the local students in Ciego de Ávil, invited the entire group of Americans to his home for dinner, Pierce said. He told his mother at the last minute but she welcomed everyone. In just a few hours, she prepared a dinner of pork, fried bananas, rice, beans, salad and chicken for 18 guests.
Pierce exchanged email addresses with Wisley, and the two have been keeping in touch. Wisley sent an email to Pierce recently and explained how the group had changed his view of the U.S. and its people for the better. That sentiment was echoed by the other Missouri students on the trip.

MU sophomore Megann Whitaker expected Cubans to be orderly and stoic but discovered that they were happy, inviting and “did a lot of dancing.”

Whitaker went to a church picnic that started at 11 a.m. and lasted until 8 p.m. She ate three ice cream cones, played dominoes and joined other students as they did cartwheels in the street.

Her favorite part of the trip was taking part in a dedication for an 18-day-old infant, whom the family allowed her to hold.

“The people of Cuba are what really touched my heart,” Wilson said. “They are so affectionate, so welcoming, so warm.”

Although the group returned Wednesday, the Baptist Student Union is already planning another missionary trip in March during spring break. For now, however, the location remains a secret, Whitaker said.

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Community events commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Several events are scheduled.

Mya Lagrange picks up trash with fellow Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority sisters along Rice Road Saturday. The cleanup is part of a service project for Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

By Ashley Jost
The importance of community, acceptance and overcoming adversity are among the principles Martin Luther King Jr. promoted during his life as a civil rights leader. Events commemorating King’s principles and marking Martin Luther King Jr. Day started this weekend and continue this week and next week.

This weekend, the city of Columbia's Volunteer Programs organized cleanups around the city. Among the participating groups were the University of Missouri alumnae and undergraduate chapters of Alpha Kappa Alpha, a black sorority.

Members went to Rice Road in northeast Columbia yesterday morning to pick up litter, an effort that alumnae chapter President Linda Garth said fit with the group's focus on serving the community and being environment friendly.

"We're excited to be able to participate in the event and help our 'beloved community,' as Dr. King called it," Garth said. "We want the community to flourish for all of its members."

Mya Lagrange, programming chairwoman for the undergraduate chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, said every year her family participates in the MLK Day March in New Orleans, her hometown. Though she can't be home this year for the event, with classes at MU starting Tuesday, she said she's "happy to be able to take part in something for the day with her sisters."

Typically, Alpha Kappa Alpha also participates in the Poor People's Breakfast, one of many other events occurring this week. The breakfast is open to everyone, free of charge, and takes place from 9 a.m. to noon tomorrow at St. Luke United Methodist Church, 204 E. Ash St.

Also tomorrow, the NAACP is hosting its annual MLK memorial service, with this year's theme being "Reaffirming a Legacy of Hope."

Mary Ratliff, NAACP state president, said the event will begin with a short ceremony at 11 a.m. at Battle Garden, 800 W. Stadium Blvd., where some of the civil rights leader's words will be shared in his honor. About 11:15, Ratliff said attendees will depart for Second Baptist Church, 407 E. Broadway, where there will be a free luncheon and prepared speeches.

Another annual event taking place tomorrow is Douglass High School's candlelight walk. Participants are gathering at Douglass, 310 N. Providence Road, by 6 p.m. and at 6:30 will walk to St. Luke United Methodist Church, where a ceremony will be held.

Stephens College is hosting events throughout the day. Kathleen Brandt, a genealogist who has done research for the TLC TV show "Who Do You Think You Are?" will give two presentations at Stephens tomorrow.

At 9 a.m., Brandt is hosting a workshop using a historical case study to show students how to overcome obstacles. Then, at 3 p.m., Brandt will give her keynote address, called "The Invisible Staircase." Brandt's speech is based off advice from MLK about taking the first step, regardless
of being able to see the whole staircase. Both events take place in the Kimball Ballroom at Lela Raney Wood Hall.

Next week, MU is hosting Hill Harper as its annual MLK Day speaker. Harper is an actor on TV shows "CSI: New York" and "Covert Affairs," author of multiple books and winner of several NAACP awards. The event, at 7 p.m. on Jan. 29 at the Missouri Theatre, is free to the public but tickets are required. Information about tickets is available at mlk.missouri.edu.

This article was published in the Sunday, January 19, 2014 edition of the Columbia Daily Tribune with the headline "Service sends message: Several events are scheduled."

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Posted in Local on Sunday, January 19, 2014 2:00 am.

State historical society a valuable resource

By Warren Dalton

Sunday, January 19, 2014 at 2:00 am

The main branch of the State Historical Society of Missouri, in the bottom level of Ellis Library on the University of Missouri campus, has for 115 years welcomed those interested in Missouri heritage. The society was founded in 1898 by the Missouri Press Association. In 1901, it became a trustee of the state.

The organization is guided by the board of trustees and supported by volunteers and donors. Gary Kremer, the current director, leads a talented staff.

Two of the first places you will encounter are the main office and the new gift shop. If you want more information about the society or its services, they can help. There also are useful brochures and flyers in the corridor. The Benton-Bingham gift shop is the perfect place to pick up books, cards, prints, T-shirts and other items relating to Missouri.

Walking down the corridor toward the research center, you can stop and look at the art and editorial cartoons exhibited in the Corridor Gallery.
The research center contains many treasures. I've used the newspaper microfilm collection many times. My colleague David James found articles about Columbia fires including one about the burning of the Boone Building, the old Guitar home. Tracking down more information led us to the Guitar Street story, which resulted in the "Guitar Street: Columbia, Missouri" booklet. Newspapers from 1808 to present are in the collection — more than 3,500, from every county in the state.

The research collection also contains thousands of books and publications, including city directories dating to the early 1900s, which I use in nearly all my columns.

Manuscript collections contain personal papers, oral histories, correspondence (such as the letters that told me how James Bennett died and where he was buried), diaries, journals, memoirs, organizational records, church minutes, business account books and much more. Just about anything people wrote about can be found in the research collection.

Genealogists find the center useful with its census records, county and city histories, atlases, plat maps, and state and federal records. The Missouri Daughters of the American Revolution library is held in the research collection as are other lineage organizations records.

Maps and photographs from the 1700s forward show us the faces of the land, the people and events. You can see the faces of ancestors, track the changes created in the land by earthquakes and floods or revisit your past in visual images.

The art gallery and collection are filled, literally, with artwork, an extensive editorial cartoon collection and major works by Missouri artists George Caleb Bingham and Thomas Hart Benton. Exhibitions are changed throughout the year, but, like most museums, only a tiny percentage of the collection is on exhibit at one time. More than 400 artworks and 13,000 editorial cartoons are online.

In addition to the various collections, the State Historical Society of Missouri does outreach programming and collaborates with other organizations for events and celebrations. The two best known are Missouri Conference on History and National History Day in Missouri. National History Day is held on the University of Missouri campus. Every year on that springtime Saturday, the area around Ellis Library and Jesse Hall teems with students preparing exhibits, rehearsing presentations and making sure their IT equipment is working.

The official journal of the society is one of the benefits of membership. The Missouri Historical Review, established in 1906, is the only quarterly scholarly journal published in the state. It is filled with articles about Missouri's history and culture. It's also a good way to learn about the newest books about Missouri and its people. With the digital age, access to the information is greatly improved, and more and more information is available online.

Our State Historical Society of Missouri is a valuable resource. Moving it to a building that is more functional and more accessible would be of great benefit to art lovers, scholars, schoolchildren, historians and researchers of all types.
City leaders rally for tax increment financing district to fund infrastructure upgrades

By Jacob Barker

Saturday, January 18, 2014 at 2:00 am Comments (3)

Infrastructure upgrades might have been the city’s rallying cry for a tax increment financing district, but a city project map of the proposed area shows a little something for everyone.

There are gateways on the edges of downtown, pulled from the wish list of the Downtown Community Improvement District. For those who remember the Sasaki Plan, that 2007 planning document’s idea of punching Elm Street through to College Avenue is under consideration. Think the Business Loop’s power lines are ugly? Well, the TIF could pay to bury those.

City officials have talked of using a TIF for a museum district south of Broadway, fixing stormwater and sewer issues in north central neighborhoods and even building a downtown depot for the Columbia Star Dinner Train.

The question is whether these projects, potentially funded with revenue from a new TIF, are enough to get the public on board.

Still, Columbia officials say the main thrust of a TIF covering more than 600 acres from the University of Missouri campus to Interstate 70 is to upgrade electric and sewer infrastructure that is at capacity. With close to 2,000 additional bedrooms being contemplated downtown, the city says it can’t handle the demand that would be placed on its existing systems.

“We’ve pressed pause for anything in the downtown grid or sewer area,” City Manager Mike Matthes said at a Downtown Community Improvement District meeting this week.

Although Columbia has used TIFs sparingly in the recent past — both helped fund downtown hotel projects — the approach this time would put the city in control of the money collected from rising property and sales taxes. And unlike those projects, Matthes said, the TIF district isn’t being created to “underwrite” private developments.
“It’s not a financial instrument, at the end of the day,” Matthes said. “Our goal is to create infrastructure.”

City officials have been working for months to craft a plan for a central-city TIF, which would capture increases in property and sales taxes from a baseline set at the district’s creation. Not only does Matthes say it would pay for the utilities developers need now, but it would provide capacity for future development in the central city.

Specifically, he said the central-city grid needs three new feeder lines, which cost around $5 million each and would add about 21 megawatts of power capacity to the area, and a new 31-inch sewer pipe that would collect waste from three downtown sewer lines that flow into a pipe smaller than their combined capacity. “Just between the sewer and the three feeder lines, that’s $21 million,” Matthes said.

Matthes and other city leaders say higher rates, taxes and fees could run aground with fatigued voters. A TIF, on the other hand, doesn’t immediately raise costs for residents and can be passed with a simple majority on the Columbia City Council.

The mechanism has critics. They say TIFs amount to a grab of future tax revenue that would have gone to other entities, such as schools. Proponents counter that they catalyze development that could not occur otherwise, thus growing the tax base and creating new revenue. Even if they do catalyze new development, that new revenue could be a long way off. The districts last for as long as 23 years, although the entity creating them can shorten their lifespan and return some of the increment to taxing entities if it so chooses.

Matthes left open that option, indicating some sort of natural appreciation in tax revenue could be returned to entities such as schools, the county, the library and the CID.

“There’s a negotiation period here at the TIF commission level where we can kind of horse-trade,” he said.

Whether that and the projects the city has outlined are enough to get taxing entities on board remains to be seen.

“Is cutting curbs and gutters on Broadway and getting two gateways worth it?” CID Executive Director Carrie Gartner said. “That’s the question” CID board members “have to decide.”

Columbia Public Schools, which collects the most out of all taxing districts from property taxes, has not said much since the TIF effort came to light. City officials, though, have indicated they could use the TIF to help with capital projects for schools within the mechanism’s boundaries. Columbia Board of Education President and TIF Commission appointee Christine King said she is waiting for the commission to see a formal proposal before making a judgment.
“I’m a big one on the process, and I want to respect the process and go and listen and ask all of our questions and get all of our answers,” she said. “I really want to make sure we keep an open mind and get all of our questions answered.”

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