Reynolds Journalism Institute fellowship program grows

13 individuals and groups selected.

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, May 21, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The Reynolds Journalism Institute expanded its fellowship program this year, opening the door to institutional fellows, leading to an expansion of the overall number of people and groups studying how to improve journalism.

RJI announced the year's round of fellows last week, including institutions such as The Washington Post, St. Louis Public Radio and The Texas Tribune. Other institutional fellows are LION Digital Media, Huckle Media and VML.

The individual fellows are divided into three categories: two residential fellows who are moving to the University of Missouri to work in conjunction with RJI on their projects of choice; three nonresidential fellows, or people who are working remotely on their projects; and two MU campus fellows who are faculty or staff at the university who will work on their proposed projects from the campus, as well.

RJI's executive director, Randy Picht, said the organization received 267 applications this year for fellowships, a large increase from previous years.

"This year, our two campus fellows are from other departments on campus," Picht said. "We've been trying to encourage that interdisciplinary aspect for fellows, but it's been a challenge. This year is different."

Campus fellows are Mary Grigsby, associate professor of rural sociology, and Bimal Balakrishnan, director of the Immersive Visualization Lab. Grigsby will look at millennial mobile device use and how it affects products and services news organizations should be thinking about, according to a news release.
Balakrishnan, who has a degree in architecture and a doctorate in mass communication, plans to explore how 3-D video, among other things, can be used to boost engagement with media.

"I have always been interested in the media's capacity to engage the audience, and I'm intrigued by the possibility of what 3-D can do," Balakrishnan said.

St. Louis Public Radio's project as an institutional fellow is already in the works, Engagement Editor Kelsey Proud said.

The organization, which recently merged with the St. Louis Beacon digital publication, hopes to create a database of sorts, as Proud describes it. The database would include information and contacts that would be considered experts in different fields.

Students from a capstone class at MU have already started helping Proud and Public Radio, she said, by collecting a few sources and helping some of the thought process behind the project.

"We hope people will find value in helping us help them discover our coverage," she said. "We also hope we gain value in gaining their perspective on our coverage."

Institutional and nonresidential fellows receive $20,000 for their year with RJI, and residential fellows receive $80,000. Picht said RJI's funding for the fellowships comes from a different source than the Insight and Survey Center, a part of the institute that lost three full-time employees and an unspecified number of part-time staffers in recent budget cuts. This year, RJI will fund 13 fellows, compared to nine last year.

For a full list of the fellows and their projects, go to rjionline.org.

**Loftin looks to private developers to replace campus child care**

By Covey Eonyak Son

**Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin announced a plan to issue a “request for proposals” from private developers with hopes of replacing the Student Parent Center, which is scheduled to close June 30.**

MU spokesman Christian Basi said the private developer would run the new facility, with no contribution from MU other than providing the land.

Basi said a location for the new facility would not be determined until the proposal process begins.
At this time, it is unclear whether the current level of affordability will continue at the new facility.

“We would hope the operator would be able to provide MU students, faculty and staff with discounts based on the university’s land contribution,” Basi said. “I can’t speculate on any future fees at this time.”

Loftin’s announcement follows a recent report from a task force — consisting of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs; Interim Provost Ken Dean; Gary Ward, interim vice chancellor for administrative services and Deputy Chancellor Michael Middleton — that had been gathering feedback from around the MU community regarding the future of child care services on campus since March 13.

According to a 2013 statement from Family Friendly Campus Committee chairman Dale Fitch, the report stated that nearly 1,400 students have dependent children based on FAFSA applications.

The committee also surveyed 1,267 MU student and personnel — 29 percent of which were staff, 24 percent undergraduate students and 17 percent graduate students — and found that over half of the surveyed would need child care in the next two years.

Former Graduate and Professional Council President Jake Wright, the task force reported, said the inadequate or unaffordable child care on campus has led some graduate and professional students to leave MU.

“GPC believes that the lack of childcare on campus is, and ought to be, viewed as an issue of women’s right to higher education and that women should be afforded the necessary resources to pursue higher education including childcare,” Wright said in the report.

While the Child Development Lab remains an on-campus child care service, the report also found, the facility has a standing waiting list and is “one of the most expensive facilities in town.”

The report also stated that all other Southeastern Conference schools, except Auburn University, have some form of on-campus child care service.

However, the report stated, there is no definitive plan for MU to replace the Student Parent Center at this time due to financial constraints.

“It is highly unlike that we will be able to put everything in place to provide quality, affordable and convenient childcare by the beginning of the fall semester,” the report said.

Taking these factors into consideration, the task force concluded that providing an affordable child care service on campus would be desirable among graduate and professional students, faculty and staff, and recommended an evaluation of the feasibility of providing such service.
“I’m very grateful and appreciate of the task force members and all those in the MU community who took the time to talk with us about this issue during the past six weeks,” Loftin said in a news release. “A great deal of information was received, and I’m aware of the time and effort that was involved in this work.”

EPA water task force to work with MU, other universities

Wednesday, May 21, 2014 | 2:41 p.m. CDT; updated 9:04 p.m. CDT, Wednesday, May 21, 2014
BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DES MOINES, Iowa — A task force established by the Environmental Protection Agency to curtail farmland pollution that flows into the Mississippi River said Wednesday that it has reached an agreement to work with 12 universities, including MU, on the problem.

The Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Task Force will also work with Purdue University in Indiana, University of Illinois, University of Arkansas, University of Kentucky, Mississippi State University, Ohio State University, University of Tennessee, University of Minnesota, University of Wisconsin, Iowa State University and Louisiana State University.

States already collaborate with their local universities on local water quality research and agricultural programs, but there hasn't been a formal process for sharing research and ideas across the 12 states in the task force, the EPA said in a statement.
This agreement "will encourage university research into nutrient reduction strategies, will help communicate water quality messages and will encourage more involvement in voluntary science-based nutrient reduction efforts," said Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey, a co-chairman of the task force.

The task force is a partnership of five federal agencies, tribes, and environmental quality, agricultural, and conservation agencies from 12 states from which water flows into the Mississippi River. It's working to address nutrient pollution and the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, an area the size of Connecticut that's largely devoid of marine life. High levels of nitrates and phosphorous, largely the result of runoff of fertilizer and livestock manure applied to farmland, lead to excessive plant and algae growth that depletes oxygen to a level inadequate to support aquatic life.

In 2008, the task force set a goal of reducing the dead zone to less than 2,000 square miles — still larger than Rhode Island — by 2015. The EPA said the agreement announced Wednesday brings additional expertise to develop farm runoff reduction strategies.

The agency said nutrient pollution is one of America's most widespread, costly and challenging environmental problems. More than 100,000 miles of rivers and streams, close to 2.5 million acres of lakes, reservoirs and ponds, and more than 800 square miles of bays and estuaries in the United States have poor water quality because of nutrient pollution, the EPA said.

Not just love: Pets offer health benefits, too
The Doctors, USA WEEKEND 5:33 p.m. EDT May 21, 2014

Animal companions may provide more than affection:

Pets may protect your heart.

Owning a dog is associated with reducing your risk of heart disease, according to the American Heart Association. One study found dog owners who walked their pooches had a 34% higher chance of getting the federally recommended amounts of physical activity.
Dogs can tell when you're sad (and happy).

Scientists in Hungary captured dogs' and humans' brain activities while they listened to people and canine sounds. They processed emotional cues the same way—the happier the barks or giggles, the more that brain region lit up; the sadder the growls or whines, the less it responded.

Children with autism may benefit.

Dogs offer companionship, stress relief and opportunities to learn responsibility, says a University of Missouri study; they can also serve as a bridge to help kids with autism communicate with their peers.

Mexico, US seek to boost student exchanges

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Americans studying in Latin America have stopped looking so intently at Mexico, which has dropped from first to fourth for U.S. students going abroad in the region in 10 years. Only about 4,000 U.S. students study in Mexico, with crime and drug violence being the main deterrent. More American students go to Costa Rica, Argentina and Brazil today than Mexico.

The U.S. government wants to boost the number to 100,000 for Latin America, one reason for coinciding visits Wednesday by both Secretary of State John Kerry and former Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, who heads the 10-campus University of California system.

Kerry will announce the new exchange goals to launch a bilateral forum for higher education, innovation and research. President Barack Obama's new higher education exchange initiative aims to have 100,000 U.S. students studying in Latin America and 100,000 from the region in the U.S. by 2020. A similar program in Mexico, "Proyecta," has the goal of sending 100,000 Mexican students a year to the U.S. by 2018. Little more than 14,000 Mexicans study there today.

Mexico was once the top location for U.S. students studying in Latin America, with so many economic and familial ties between the two neighbors. But the numbers dropped with the spike in drug violence, especially during the stepped-up attacks on cartels by
the administration of President Felipe Calderon, who left office in 2012. He served at the same time Napolitano was in charge of homeland security for the United States, which openly supported Calderon's strategy.

"Once (the exchanges) are delayed or stopped, institutions set up affiliations and programs elsewhere, having longer term consequences for the numbers," said Shannon O'Neill, senior fellow at the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations. "So even if violence wanes, it can be hard for the numbers to rebound."

Current Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto argues that the violence is down, but several hotspots around the country belie his depiction, including western Michoacan state, the Texas border state of Tamaulipas and both Morelos and Mexico state surrounding Mexico City.

Justin Bogda, 21, did an internship at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City in the summer of 2013 while studying at the University of Southern California. He said when he told his family about his plans, they were frightened.

"They said, 'Oh my God, there's all the violence' because of what they see on the news,' " said the Kinnelon, New Jersey, native, adding that in some places like Mexico City, it's more the perception than the reality.

According to the Institute of International Education, 8,360 Americans studied in Mexico in the academic year 2000-2001, a number that dropped more than 100 percent to 3,815 in the 2011-2012 school year — the most recent figures available.

"It's the perception of safety, that's the main reason," said institute president Allan Goodman.

Today, laid-back Costa Rica is the No. 1 pick, with nearly 8,000 American students. The increase in students there can also be attributed to the U.S. emphasis on environmental studies, with Costa Rica's rainforests and national conservation programs, he said.

In a document describing the "Proyecta" plan, the Mexican government also acknowledges the "perception" of insecurity has inhibited U.S. students. It also cites a lack of English speakers in Mexico and Spanish speakers in the U.S. as obstacles, noting that most Americans know nothing about educational opportunities in their neighboring country to the south.

Goodman said both countries would benefit from increased exchanges, especially given the number of Americans now of Mexican origin.

"To have Americans growing up and know nothing about our Spanish-speaking citizens ... means that our education is incomplete," Goodman said. "Knowing Mexico to me is as important as taking another course in economics."