COLUMBIA, Mo. • Missouri athletics director Mike Alden met with local reporters for an hour Thursday to discuss a variety of national and local topics. Here’s the Cliffs Notes version. Look for more in Friday’s Post-Dispatch:

• As president of the National Association of College Directors of Athletics, Alden has been heavily involved with the NCAA governance issue and Division I autonomy. In short, the five major conferences (SEC, Big 12, Big Ten, ACC, Pac-12) are seeking to work under a new set of rules as related to “student-athlete welfare.” The topic will be discussed at the August meeting of the NCAA Division I Board of Directors. Alden believes the five power conferences will be granted autonomy from the NCAA on certain measures and those changes will be implemented in January. He does not believe the five power conferences will split off and form a new division.

“The goal that everybody has is for the NCAA and Division I athletics to stay together. Everybody stay under the big tent, he said. “I believe that’s going to happen.”

Under the Power Five proposal, three core items would go unchanged and stay protected under the new governance, Alden explained: access to championships, the revenue distribution formula and transfer regulations. He called those three issues “sacred” to all Division I schools.

The Power Five want the freedom to pay their athletes full cost of attendance, meaning a comprehensive figure for tuition, fees, room, board, books, supplies, transportation and other personal costs. At Mizzou, Alden said the university favors paying all athletes the same cost of attendance figure.

“If you’re going to take a look at doing full cost of attendance modeling, you’ll have to do that with all of your kids,” Alden said. “I don’t know how you can look at a football player and say, ‘We’re going to do it for you,’ but look at a women's basketball player or softball player and say, ‘We’re not going to do it for you.’”

The Power Five also seek further medical care for athletes and extended opportunities for athletes to complete their degrees.

“We want to provide (athletes) with as much as we possibly can to improve their experiences,” Alden said. “If there are five conferences that have the capability to do that, great. If there are other schools that want to have the ability to do that, no problem. Everyone will have the chance to do that.”
Alden made it clear he doesn’t support a pay-for-play model, i.e., paying athletes a salary outside of the cost of attendance figure. This falls in line with the general take from the NCAA and campus leadership across college athletics, especially in resistance to the unionizing of college players.

“We are not an advocate at all of paying student-athletes. None,” Alden said. “We are not there at all. Our thing is, are there more things we can do for our students to help them have a better experience? … They’re not employees. They’re just not. They’re students. So, to me, you’re a college student. You have a great opportunity to do things. You’re working hard. You’re working toward a passion that you have. It’s a privilege to be a student-athlete. That’s a choice, right? When you make that choice there are opportunities there and I think when you enter an employee-employer relationship, that’s a whole different model that, to me, I’ve never seen in higher education.”

“I think when you take a look at sport and see what it does for people, and there are resources generated because of that, I think that’s awesome,” he continued. “When we have faculty members here that are world class people and applying for grants that we’re getting millions and millions and millions of dollars for, do I think all these people should be compensated at a high level just because of that? No. I think that’s part of what you are as an institution.

“I don’t draw a direct parallel between a student-athlete participating in sport and that in itself being a direct correlation to all this cash being made and therefore that person should be paid. I just don’t. I don’t believe that.”

USA Today published its annual financial report on Division I athletics departments last week, detailing all the reported revenue and expenses for public universities for the 2012-2013 fiscal year. Among the 13 public SEC institutions (everyone except Vanderbilt), MU ranked 11th in athletics revenue ($76,306,889) and 12th in athletics expenses ($70,276,015). MU resides in the financial neighborhood of the Mississippi schools — at the bottom of the SEC and at least $10 million behind the middle of the pack (South Carolina, Texas A&M, Kentucky) in both categories.

For the next few years, Missouri expects to stay at No. 11 in league revenue, Alden said. The goal, he said, is to reach eighth or ninth. Here’s how that range stacked up for the 2012-13 fiscal year:

8. Kentucky, $95,720,724
9. Texas A&M, $93,957,906
10. South Carolina, $90,484,422
11. Missouri, $76,306,889
12. Mississippi, $73,390,050
In the Big 12, Mizzou climbed from 11th to around fifth or sixth by the time the school joined the SEC, Alden said.

How does MU close the gap on South Carolina, Texas A&M and Kentucky? Three areas, he said, in this order: annual giving, multimedia rights and ticket sales.

“Annual giving is the big number here,” he said. “When the SEC Network hits, everyone’s getting the exact same (league revenue). All boats will rise the same on that. Our areas of growth will be from annual giving, which is the Tiger Scholarship Fund. We absolute have to expand.”

Alden said MU has “growth opportunity” with its multimedia rights partner, Learfield, and a measured opportunity to generate more revenue from ticket sales.

“I don’t think over the course of time there’s a ton of growth (with tickets), because I think from a ticket pricing standpoint in college sport, you’ve got to be careful,” he said. “If you keep elevating the price of tickets then there’s going to be diminishing returns. You don't want to price your market out.”

• Alden does not know a projection figure for how much each school will earn in revenue from the SEC Network, which launches in August. “All of that is going to be driven by distribution,” he said. “The more we have distribution the more opportunity we have for revenue.”

• Asked why Mizzou retained longtime baseball coach Tim Jamieson after the Tigers finished 6-24 in the SEC, Alden said, “I just think with Tim we know when we were moving into the SEC … this is the toughest conference in America in every sport, in particular the sport of baseball. … We knew going into this it was going to be a real challenge. We knew we’d be adding facilities. Tim and I have worked together for a long time. We knew there were going to be some bumpy roads. We know the last couple years have been bumpy. We just want to keep working together and see if we can get that thing going in the right direction as we head into next year.”

• On St. Louis landing the 2018 SEC basketball tournament, Alden said, “It’s huge. I certainly can’t tell you how grateful we were that the SEC made that determination. I think it’s great for the state of Missouri. It’s great for Mizzou. It’s great for the SEC and our fans to be able to come to St. Louis and see a lot of energy relative to basketball in an area that’s known to support basketball at a high level.”

• Is conference realignment over? For now, yes, Alden said. “There are schools that probably are interested in being part of those five conferences, but I don't see those five conferences changing the makeup of those leagues in the near future,” he said. “I think they’re set for where we are right now. … I’m sure there’s a lot of schools that would have an interest, but you’ve got to be invited. I don’t see a lot of invitations going out for the next several years, until things get settled in. Maybe never.”
• Next week the UM System Board of Curators will vote on a comprehensive master plan for several campus projects, including the two biggest priority projects for athletics: a new softball stadium and a new indoor football facility.

• Speaking of football, setting the 2015 and 2016 non-conference schedules is proving to be difficult. Next year, Mizzou hosts Southeast Missouri State and plays at Arkansas State. Otherwise, the Tigers have two empty spots to fill. Easier said than done, especially when most teams already have their schedules filled out years in advance. Also, the Big 12 and Pac-12 play nine-game conference schedules. The Big Ten will start doing the same in 2016. That leaves fewer teams with open dates. With limited choices available, Missouri might have to play two non-conference games on the road in 2015, leaving only six games in Columbia. Alden said there’s a 50-50 chance that could happen.

“That seventh game we’ve been able to play in Columbia over the last several years have been really important to our community,” he said. “We want to make sure we’re always protecting six (home games.)”

As long as MU is playing six home games in Columbia, it’s open to playing a neutral-site game in St. Louis or Kansas City, Alden said. (The St. Louis Sports Commission is working hard to bring a Mizzou game back to the Edward Jones Dome.)

Starting in 2016, all SEC teams will be required to play a power conference opponent in non-league play. But not in 2015, which means the Tigers could add two mid-majors to fill out the schedule. Ideally, Mizzou wants to play seven home games every season, with a nonconference formula consisting of one power conference team (MU plays Purdue home and away in 2017-18), two mid-majors and one FCS team. The 2015 schedule could be an exception.

• A few quick takes, Alden on Quin Snyder, his former basketball coach, landing a new head coaching job: “I’m happy for him. I think he’ll do a heck of a job with the Utah Jazz. .. Unfortunately it just didn’t work out at Mizzou.”

On the possibility of Dorial Green-Beckham returning to Mizzou’s football team: “No.”

On playing an FCS football team every season: “I think it’s good for college football. I really do. FCS college football is really good college football. It’s good for that division. It’s good for the sport. And I’m supportive of us at Mizzou playing FCS football. One per year, which is what we’ve done in the past. That’s an OK thing to do.”

Finally, on whether Kansas will ever agree to revive the Border War: “I can’t even guess.”
Q&A with Missouri AD Mike Alden

Missouri Athletic Director Mike Alden has had a busy spring.

Between Southeastern Conference meetings, his duties as the president of the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and his new role in helping steer the NCAA’s governance future and a path to autonomy for the Power 5 conferences, he hasn’t been in Columbia much over the past month and a half.

But he was Thursday, and he took some time to provide updates on some of the pressing issues of the day.

Here is the first part of the media’s question-and-answer session with Alden, focusing on NCAA issues.

Q: Is the Power 5 conferences breaking away from the NCAA a real possibility, in your mind?

A: “I think the goal everybody has is for the NCAA and Division-I athletics to stay together. Everybody stay under the big tent. I believe that that’s going to happen. I just came from some meetings where” NCAA President Mark “Emmert was there.” President “Harris Pastides from South Carolina,” Chancellor “Rita Cheng from Southern Illinois,” Division I Vice President “David Berst from the NCAA, just met with them yesterday morning, and a bunch of ADs. I think there were about 90 of us that were together down in Orlando. I think everybody’s on the same path, making sure we keep everybody under the same tent.

“But the key piece of that, I think, is the ability to have the autonomy to make some decisions to benefit student-athletes that perhaps five conferences, and others, can be able to do. I believe that everybody’s going to be able to come together on that. I think that, when we roll that out in August, it’s going to be something better for student-athletes, it’s going to be something that’s better for the NCAA, I think it’ll be more efficient and effective.”

Q: Why is autonomy so important?

A: “The ability for schools to be able to make decisions based upon those resources that they have, if they’re making those decisions for the right reasons, to be able to benefit student-
athletes. People talk about full cost of attendance, which is a big thing. If you have the ability to do that, why wouldn’t you want to be able to do that? If you have the ability to feed your student-athletes more, why wouldn’t you? If you have the ability to help them with their medical care, perhaps after they’ve graduated. If you have a chance to help them complete their degree, however long it may take them. Stuff like that. There are schools that have the ability to be able to do that.

“And, under the current structure, because of the way the voting structure has been set, even though you may have the resources to be able to do that to help your students, you’re not allowed to be able to do that because there are other schools that may say, ‘No we don’t want you, because we don’t have the ability to be able to do that.’ I do believe there’s a way for all of us, 351 institutions in Division I, to coalesce around the fact we want to do what’s best for our student-athletes. We want to provide them with as much as we can to be able to improve their experiences. If there are five conferences that have the capability to be able to do that? Great. If there are other schools that want to have the ability to do that? No problem. Everybody will have a chance to do it. But I think the ability to make those decisions a little bit more quickly, this ability is going to allow us to do that. When it’s voted on in August -- that’s when the board of directors will vote on that and it’ll probably be implemented sometime in January -- I think you’re going to see things be able to move at a quicker clip. I think that’s good. And I think there’s going to be an ability for us to help students in a much better way.”

Q: The issues that are up for autonomy, will they be defined up front or have the ability to evolve as time passes?

A: “There are certain things we want to stay consistent with on what we know, that are going to be the areas we’re going to protect for all us, the 351. That has to do with access to championships, the revenue distribution formula we have -- keep that exactly the same as it’s been. The concern a lot of people have has to do with transfers, to make sure that the rules and regulations we have in place for transfers stay the same as they are now. You’ve got to sit a year, or whatever that may be. A couple of those things, I think it’s going to be important that those are consistent.

“And then determining those areas that folks want to focus in on from the autonomy topic area would have to do with full cost of attendance, medical care, lifetime education opportunities. Beyond that, I think those will just evolve over the course. But you’ve got to make sure that these other things are going to be sacred: access to championships, revenue distribution, transfer issues, different things like that. Those are all in shared governance. And then this area over here is going to really focus on student-athlete welfare. But I don’t think you’re going to have that defined in August. It’s going to take you time to really be able to define all of those things.”

Q: Why would it make sense for the other nearly 300 schools in Division I to support this?

A: “We had a wide discussion yesterday with people from all levels of Division I that were represented amongst those 90-odd athletic directors in Orlando. Whatever capabilities we have to provide better opportunities for our student-athletes, we want to do that. And for schools that perhaps don’t have the same level of resources, they understand that. I think what they’re saying
is, if we can develop those same level of resources, we’re going to do that as well. And we have the option to be able to do that. As long as people know they have an option to be able to do those types of things, I don’t know why they wouldn’t support that, other than you’re trying to hold somebody back from providing more benefits to student-athletes.

“As long as all 351 can feel like, ‘We’re all part of the same team here. We understand that some of the members of the team may have some more resources than we do. But we’re all on the same playing field relative to do we have access to championships? Do we have the same revenue distribution that we’ve had? Are we making sure we’re not trying to pilfer each other, so that transfer rules are going to be exactly the same? And that we know that as we grow our program, if we’re not part of these five conferences, that we also have the capability to do that.’ I don’t see a reason why they wouldn’t support that, as long as you have these areas over here that are protected.”

**Q: Would full cost of attendance scholarships be for every sport, or just revenue sports?**

A: “That would be for every sport. If you’re going to take a look at doing full cost-of-attendance modeling, then you have to do it with all of your kids. I don’t know how you can look at a football player and say, ‘We’re going to do it for you,’ then look at a softball or women’s basketball player and say, ‘We’re not going to do it for you.’ It needs to be for all scholarship student-athletes.”

**Q: How does that jibe with the scholarship limitations that are currently in place?**

A: “That hasn’t been defined yet. Our piece on that is we’re supportive of what is going to ultimately be defined as a full cost of attendance. How they may factor that in -- whether that has to do with partial scholarships, a partial piece, or full scholarships, how that all works -- that’s still to be defined. But the one thing that absolutely is consistent is if you’ve got ‘x’ amount of student-athletes that are scholarship student-athletes that are eligible for full cost-of-attendance opportunities, it should be for all sports, not just one or two sports.”

**Q: But for schools outside the Power 5, in order for them to not get weakened in a sport in which they thrive, would they get the chance to have full cost-of-attendance in just one sport?**

A: “I don’t think that’s been defined yet. I know, philosophically, what we would believe at Mizzou. We would believe that we’d want to do this with all of our student-athletes. All of them. We would want to give them the opportunity. I don’t believe it’s been defined with schools that may want to pick and choose, how they would want to do that. That’s still to be determined.”

**Q: In Orlando, was there any discussion of how Title IX factors into that?**

A: “No, not really. This was really a discussion that centered in around 90 athletic directors that were meeting, and we were just getting some feedback before that steering committee for the re-governance goes into more meetings for the next two weeks. We just wanted to give them one more shot to be able to say, ‘Hey, here’s what we think. Whether we’re coming from Coastal
Carolina, Ohio State,’ wherever that may be. And it gave us a good forum to provide the board more ideas and thoughts from us. But we aren’t in a position to make any decisions. The Board of Directors will make those decisions.”

Q: How much has Missouri talked about how it can afford this?
A: “All of us have talked about that. What’s that going to mean? How are we going to be able to pay for it? How do you budget for it? That, in itself, has got to be fluid. You don’t know exactly what that definition of full cost of attendance is going to be. You’re trying to anticipate, because you don’t know what the numbers are. But you know, philosophically, you believe in that. So what you try to do is make sure you’re consciously aware all the time of ‘Let’s get ready. Because this could impact our budget.’ It could be a $200,000 impact, or more than that. We don’t know that yet, because we don’t know how the full cost of attendance has been defined. Nobody knows what that is yet. It’s kind of a shot in the dark until you get that defined.”

Q: Is this is response to the lawsuits the NCAA is facing?
A: “I don’t know if it’s in response to it. Certainly, you see those lawsuits that are out there and they are directed specifically towards student-athlete welfare and the opportunities there. Full cost of attendance, for example, has been talked about for several years. When this was floated out there, this was voted down by the NCAA membership. Although the five conferences themselves wanted to be able to do this, it was voted down. This is something that we’ve been working on for several years. I know” Big Ten Commissioner Jim “Delany was one person that talked about this several years ago. It’s not in direct response to it, in my opinion. But it’s something that will address some of those concerns that are out there.”

Q: I know at the SEC meetings, Commissioner Slive was saying that they’d like to see the threshold for passing autonomous issues lowered a little bit from the steering committees’ recommendations. Do you feel like that’s a realistic recommendation from him?
A: "I think Commissioner Slive has been intimately involved in this entire process, and I think that the points that he was making were very good, were very supportive of that. Now, will that carry the day with regards to the board? I don’t know. That topic was brought up yesterday just as a point of emphasis, as well, but it was just a discussion point. But I know the board is going to be considering that as they go forward. But I do think his thoughts on that, his position on that, they’re important."

Q: How closely have you been following the Ed O’Bannon case?
A: "I don’t know. Probably as close as you possibly can, which for me has just been through the media — which is pretty close, because it kind of keeps you up to speed. But that’s something that for us, especially from a school standpoint, we look to Donald Remy (the chief legal officer) from the NCAA, they keep all of us up to speed on kind of how that’s coming along, and as well as in the SEC, we have outside counsel that keeps us up to speed in those types of things, as well too, so for us, it’s just trying to monitor and seeing how that will affect us. We’re getting that
information primarily through the media and then through the legal counsel of the NCAA and then our outside counsel in the SEC. They just bring us up to speed on a regular basis.'

Q: All these issues — kids getting paid and things like that — I’m sure most of your career if not all as an athletic director, these questions have been there. Why do you feel like it’s maybe gaining more steam and coming to a head now?

A: "There’s probably a variety of issues. One probably is because it has been talked about for so long, and I think there’s much more focus on that probably because of the number of years that people have been discussing it. But also, I think with the size of television contracts that all of us are entering into and the facilities that we’re building and coaches’ salaries, and you go through all the combination of all of those, and people say, “What is it that we can do to be able to benefit our students more?” And people are probably questioning, “Well, if you haven’t been doing that, why haven’t you been doing that?” I just think it’s a combination of a number of years people have been talking about it but also the people see the growth of college sport, the growth of television contracts, the growth of salaries, and they’re saying, “Hey, isn’t there something you can be doing here to be able to benefit your students as well, too.

"Now as you know, we are not an advocate at all of paying student-athletes. None. We are not there at all. But our thing is, are there more things that we can do for our students to be able to help them have an even better experience? Whether it has to do with education or healthcare or opportunities for them for personal growth, you want to be able to do that." 

"But I think it’s probably the number of years and then certainly the focus on the television contracts, facility growth, conference, realignment, coaches’ salaries — there’s a combination of things."

Q: Why is it so clear cut for you that shouldn’t be paid?

A: "Because I don’t see — they’re not employees. They’re just not. They’re students. So to me, you’re a college student. You have a great opportunity to do things. You’re working toward a passion that you have. … It’s a privilege to be a student-athlete. That’s a choice. So when you make that choice, there are opportunities there, and I think that when you start entering into an employee-employer relationship, that’s a whole different model that to me, I’ve never seen in higher education. I don’t know why …

"I can look at our band. Our band members, how hard they work. I mean this. Our marching bands members. You guys probably aren’t around here when they’re practicing. Those kids are practicing every day — 95-degree weather, humid. They’re out on that blacktop, they’re working everyday four hours a day and everything like that. Are they getting anything? They don’t get anything for that other than the pride of where they are, competing and playing and representing the University of Missouri. But they’re students at the University of Missouri, and they’re doing something that’s a passion for them, and I think that when you take a look at a college softball player, a college softball player is doing that because there’s a passion. A college tennis player is doing that because there’s a passion there. A college football player, there’s a passion there. I don’t look at our student-athletes at all. I look at them as students doing something that they
love, they believe in and that they want to aspire to be great at, just like I do with our marching band."

Q: How do you counter the argument then that you’re not going to be getting $10- to $30-milion extra dollars a year because of the band when this SEC Network comes available. Given what you just said, what’s your response to that?

A: "I think that if people are trying to draw a complete connection between a softball player playing softball and winning at a high level and money being earned for all of that kind of stuff, exactly what they’ve done — I don’t agree with that. I think that when you take a look at sport and see what it does for people and that there are resources that are generated for an institution because of that, I think that’s awesome. I think that when we have faculty members that we have here that are work-class people that are doing research projects and applying for grants that we’re getting millions and millions and millions of dollars for, do I think that all of these people should be compensated at a high level just because of that? No, I think that’s part of what you are as an institution. I don’t draw a direct parallel between a student-athlete participating in sport and that in itself that that’s got to be a direct correlation to all this cash being made and therefore that person should be paid to be able to do that. I just don’t, and I don’t believe it."

Q: That said, it sounds like when you’re talking about full cost of attendance and stuff like that, that there is an awareness of the fact that some of these guys that may be on full scholarship and they’re doing their whole deal and they’ve got their training table and their Mizzou sweats and all this other stuff but there’s not book money, there’s not take-my-girlfriend-out-for-pizza money. There’s a lot of guys that have that from their family, but it sounds like there’s an awareness that there’s guys and women that don’t.

A: "And there are. There is an awareness. You’re training and you’re working, you’re going to class, you’re doing all these types of things and currently the NCAA rules do not allow for that football player, that volleyball player, whoever that may be, to be able to get more than tuition, fees, books, room and board. So we know that, and we know realistically those kids are training hard, and they’re doing all these different types of things, so for them to be able to go out and get an outside job on top of that, that’s tough for them to do. First of all, the rules don’t allow for that. Then secondly, it would be hard for them to do it. So if we can look at that and say, ‘OK, truly what does it cost for a student-athlete to go to school?’ That’s determined by financial aid on your campus and people like that. Why wouldn’t you want to give them the opportunity to be able to do that?"

Q: How much more business-oriented has college athletics become since you first started?

A: “For me, it’s always been business-oriented. But because the size of the business has grown, it’s probably become apparent to more people that, certainly, the business aspect of it is really important. That’s a long answer, which I tend to provide. I know. I should get right to the point. For me, it’s always been a business model, and it’s the business of education. People talk about, ‘Well, it’s a business,’” and it is. Our business is educating student-athletes and being able to provide a great atmosphere for them to be able to do that. And what’s happened over the course of a number of years is, because of the size of that component, it’s become more visible to
people that it’s critically important that you’ve got a business skill set when you’re running these things.”

Q: Do you get why there is demand to pay athletes?

A: “I do. I think we have done a very poor job in college athletics of communicating our message. If we can at least be able to communicate the benefits that do accrue to student-athletes that we don’t communicate enough on, if we’re able to communicate what is actually the true cost of a scholarship of a student-athlete when you factor in academic services, the training room, all these different types of things and recognize there’s a great value that goes along with that, I think it would help the public understand more about the benefits that accrue to a student-athlete that they aren’t aware of. And that’s on us. That’s not on the public. That’s on college athletics, the NCAA and all of us. We have done a very poor job of communicating to the public what the true benefits to student-athletes are, beyond the scholarships they receive.

“I think we’re at a critical time where we have to shift that communication and be transparent about it so that people actually know this is what they’re doing for student-athletes. This is actually what’s going on. This is how they’re trying to benefit them. I think that will help us. But yes, I do understand where the question would come from, and the concerns. And I think the reason those are coming is we have done a poor job as far as communicating what the true benefits are that come to our student-athletes.”

MU adds auxiliary buildings to its inspection program

By Jack Witthaus

Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri is now including its auxiliary buildings in its regular inspection schedule.

Karlan Seville, communications manager for MU Campus Facilities, said in an email that auxiliary buildings — such as student unions, residential halls and dining halls — now are
subject to regular inspections by ISES, a Georgia-based company that has been inspecting education and general buildings at MU since 2001. The company inspects buildings on a five-year rotational basis where each year 20 percent of the buildings are inspected.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said inspections are not new to auxiliary buildings. Before the change, Basi said individual departments inspected their own auxiliary buildings on a periodic basis. Basi said the decision to change that was made to incorporate all buildings into a regular inspection cycle while MU was in the midst of having every building on campus inspected.

ISES Executive Vice President Dan Harrison said his company looks at issues such as whether air conditioners should be replaced or if a structure needs to be updated to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

This inspection is "definitely not a structural analysis," he said.

On a typical house, the owner doesn't need to replace or update things every year. But a campus with millions of square feet of building space, major things need to be replaced or updated yearly. Harrison said ISES inspects auxiliary buildings at other universities, but not every university inspects its auxiliary buildings.

"We are actually a leader in the world of higher education doing these inspections," Basi said.

Basi said MU approximately spends $70,000 to $80,000 a year on inspections.

"We are running a little behind our five-year schedule because of a couple of lean financial years but will be caught up this year," Seville said in the email.

Buildings that are 10 years old or older are subject to regular inspections, according to the email. Seville said MU occasionally hires ISES to perform analysis on new buildings to develop future funding plans.

In-house staff inspects buildings that are less than 10 years old and other various smaller buildings such as the Ashland Gravel Road greenhouses.
UM System chief of staff to be interim engineering dean

Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 1:55 pm Updated: 1:55 pm, Thu Jun 12, 2014.

The University of Missouri will tap the UM System’s chief of staff as the replacement for outgoing engineering Dean Jim Thompson.

MU yesterday announced Bob Schwartz, UM System chief of staff and custodian of records, as interim dean of the College of Engineering.

Thompson told colleagues via email earlier this week that he is stepping down Sept. 1 after a nearly 20-year tenure marked by growing enrollment and controversy over the fate of nuclear engineering program.

Schwartz won’t be a candidate for the permanent position of engineering dean, and a national search for Thompson's replacement will begin in the fall semester, according to a news release.

As chief of staff, Schwartz has advised UM System leaders, assisted in planning, served as a liaison with university officials and the board of curators and worked with the Office of Strategic Communications.

Before joining the UM System, Schwartz was interim provost and executive vice president for academic affairs at Missouri University of Science and Technology. He joined the university in Rolla as a professor in 2002. Before that he worked for B.F. Goodrich and for Sandia National Laboratories.
Researchers to study African languages

Thursday, June 12, 2014 at 2:00 pm

A University of Missouri researcher is part of a team of academics from several universities that received a four-year National Science Foundation grant for $330,000 to study African languages.

Michael Marlo, assistant professor of English, said in a news release that his team will investigate "the complexity and richness" of four varieties of Luyia, a cluster of Bantu languages spoken in Kenya and Uganda that are largely unstudied. The team will study the Bukusu, Logoori, Tiriki and Wanga varieties of Luyia, Marlo said in the release.

Others working on the project are Southern Illinois University Professor Vicki Carstens, Pomona College Assistant Professor Michael Diercks, MU post-doctoral researcher Kristopher Ebarb, University of Maryland Assistant Research Scientist Christopher Green, Ohio State University Professor Emeritus David Odden and Pomona College Associate Professor Mary Paster.

The grant is the largest ever for the MU English Department, department Chairman David Read said in the news release.

Nicklaus: Student debt overhang will remain a big political issue

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Senators killed a student debt relief bill this week, but the issue isn’t going away.
Student loans are the fastest-growing form of consumer debt in this country, and the percentage of households carrying them has doubled since 1989. Forty percent of households under age 35 still owe money for college.

There’s some evidence that student debt has made it harder for young people to buy a house and even a suggestion that college grads are delaying marriage because of their debt load.

President Barack Obama provided a little help when he signed an order allowing people with older loans to set up income-based repayment plans. Loans made since 2007 were already eligible for such plans, which cap payments at 10 percent of a borrower’s income.

The bill that was shelved Wednesday, sponsored by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., would also have allowed borrowers to refinance older undergraduate debt at 3.86 percent, the rate Congress set a year ago for new loans. Republicans blocked the bill because it also contained a tax increase on people with incomes above $1 million.

Even some people who are concerned about the student debt problem, though, weren’t sorry to see the Warren bill die.

Benjamin Harris, an economic-studies fellow at the Brookings Institution, says it wasn’t well targeted. “Some of those people who would get cuts in interest rates are doing just fine,” he said. “If I was going to put $50 billion toward education relief, there are other places I would put it first.”

Richard Vedder, a professor of economics at Ohio University, saw other problems with Warren’s approach. It would provide a windfall to borrowers who chose to take as long as possible to repay, while doing nothing for those who scrimped and saved to pay their debts off quickly.

Warren’s bill also did nothing to make college more affordable for current or future students.

Neither Vedder nor Harris, however, thinks Congress should ignore the student debt issue. Seventeen percent of borrowers are at least 90 days delinquent on their loans, up from 10 percent a decade ago.

Rising debt isn’t a problem by itself, Harris notes. “There is a higher return to education today, and it’s a good thing people are going to college,” he said.

What isn’t so good is the one-size-fits-all repayment strategy that the government imposes on borrowers by default. Unless a graduating student applies for income-based repayment – a confusing process that many borrowers don’t understand – he or she will be handed an amortization schedule that repays the loan in 10 years.

That hits grads hard during the lean years right after college. “A lot of their return on education comes at age 40 and 50, and yet we ask them to repay by age 32,” Harris says.
He favors making income-based repayment the default option and allowing graduates to make their loan payments by payroll deduction, the same way they pay their Social Security taxes or contribute to their 401(k) accounts.

The Obama administration has proposed another sort of reform, known as “gainful employment” regulations. It would penalize schools whose students fail to graduate, can’t find jobs or have high loan default rates, ultimately making those schools ineligible for federal loans.

A punitive solution may run into politically difficulties — for-profit colleges, in particular, are lobbying against it — but Congress can’t duck the student loan issue forever. If excessive debt is weighing down young Americans, it’s weighing down the U.S. economy too.