University of Missouri plans to expand housing to accommodate growing enrollment

New hall will open in 2015.

By Ashley Jost

Saturday, June 21, 2014 at 2:00 am

The University of Missouri received a stamp of approval from the Board of Curators this week on the campus' Master Plan for 2014, which outlines, in detail, the projects that have recently wrapped up, those that are in progress and those on the campus wish list.

Gary Ward, MU's interim chief operating officer, presented the plan to the board Thursday. Ward discussed the new softball stadium, construction efforts for a new football indoor practice facility, the need for construction on educational and general buildings and ongoing work on residential halls.

MU has a goal with the residential hall construction, Ward said, to house all of the freshman class and have 1,000 additional beds for upper classmen or graduate and professional students at the university-owned apartment complexes. That totals about 7,500 on-campus beds.

MU administrators hope to expand enrollment to 38,000 students from the current 35,000 in the next five to seven years.

To reach that goal, Ward stressed the importance in moving forward with the residential projects in place, including the new Virginia Avenue South dormitory and the two-part update and expansion of the Dobbs Group dormitories.

The Virginia Avenue South residence hall is expected to open May 2015.

The Dobbs group renovation, including the replacement of Jones, Laws and Lathrop halls, will take place in two phases. Phase one will replace Jones Hall and add a new dining hall by 2017. Phase two will include the demolition of Lathrop and Laws halls to make two larger halls, Ward said.
The third and final project is the renovation of Manor House, a campus apartment complex for graduate and professional students, students who are married, who have children or are over 21.

Manor House residents were told months ago that the apartment complex would close in May 2015 for renovations that were recommended in the 2012 Residential Life Master Plan.

Frankie Minor, director of the MU Department of Residential Life, said for now those renovation plans are on hold. There is no set timeline on when the university will revisit its plans.

"We were doing leases for the upcoming year and students wanted updates for the year past that so they could start making plans," Minor said. "We were not able to give them that certainty, but we knew we needed to. We told them that Manor House is likely to continue past 2015. We didn't want to close it prematurely before it's ready to renovate, and there are just too many things in the air right now."

Minor said there are plans to update the plumbing system and replace old appliances and single-pane windows, among other improvements. The biggest obstacle facing renovation, aside from students being displaced, is the cost, Minor said, adding that he wants to find a funding avenue that doesn't involve rate increases for students.

"Students appreciate Manor House, considering its location," Minor said about the complex that sits on Hitt Street near University Avenue. "It serves their needs. We want to keep meeting those needs until renovation decisions are made, and we'll keep them informed of our plans along the way."

Ward told the board he hopes to have a better idea of Manor House's future by later this summer.

Ward said the biggest challenge with all of the projects is funding. The Office of Residential Life operates the dormitories and student apartments as an auxiliary function of MU, meaning the funding they use for renovations — or complete demolition — comes from the revenue the office collects from room and board charges and revenue bonds.

The UM System's Collected Rules and Regulations require each campus to bring its updated campus master plan to the curators every three years, or when significant changes are proposed, for approval.
University of Missouri to offer new health option, cap benefits

By Ashley Jost

Sunday, June 22, 2014 at 2:00 am Comments (36)

Employees at the University of Missouri will have a new medical plan option in 2015, and a new cap on the amount of their benefits.

A Total Rewards task force charged with reviewing the UM System medical plan options, retirement plans and other benefits announced changes to employee benefits at the Board of Curators meeting this week. Total Rewards is a name for the university system's comprehensive benefits package for employees and retirees.

Betsy Rodriguez, UM System vice president for human resources, spoke on behalf of the task force Thursday. Rodriguez outlined the progress the group has made on several issues, including medical plans.

Starting in 2015, the UM System is piloting a new medical program at all Columbia operations to provide a third plan option for employees. The new plan will fall somewhere between the existing two options in premium cost, Rodriguez said.

Employees have two options now: The preferred provider organization traditional option lets employees go to any provider and has about a $400-per-month premium for a family. The high-deductible plan offers similar freedom with providers with a higher deductible. For a family, the premium is about $250 per month.

The new plan would limit employees to MU Health Care offices and will have lower co-pays and no deductible.

Rodriguez also announced a new 28 percent cap on the benefits rate — the percentage of an employee's salary the department they work for pays back to the UM System so the system can then pay for medical benefits.
Department chairs have been budgeting for a 1 to 2 percent increase in benefits each year. The rates have increased from 20 percent to 28 percent during the last 10 years.

Rodriguez said the change allows department chairs or managers to give raises while the UM System receives more money to put toward medical benefits each year. Because of that, the cost doesn't shift to the employees.

The cap will be in place three years, Rodriguez said, but it likely won't extend beyond that. Afterward, the system could put a limit on benefits at the same level or at a different percentage, or not have a cap at all depending on such factors as performance of university investments and employee participation in wellness programs.

Rodriguez said she anticipates announcing progress from the task force on time-off plans by next spring. More information on changes in retirement and retiree medical benefits is expected in about a year.

Becky Stafford, Staff Advisory Council chair at MU, said she is pleased with the way Rodriguez's task force and the UM System's human resources office has asked for input as they've worked through changes, and they've promptly addressed concerns or questions from employees along the way already.

DEAR READER: It's ludicrous to say sexual assault victims are part of privileged class

By Tom Warhover
June 20, 2014 | 7:42 p.m. CDT

Dear Reader,

This is not another George Will bashing column. Really.

That would be too easy.
The nationally syndicated columnist made headlines two weeks ago when he proclaimed the issue of sexual violence on campus to be overwrought, overstated and soon-to-be over-legislated by the boogeyman known as progressivism.

He wrote that universities “are learning that when they say campus victimizations are ubiquitous (‘micro-aggressions,’ often not discernible to the untutored eye, are everywhere), and that when they make victimhood a coveted status that confers privileges, victims proliferate.”

He made headlines again Thursday when the St. Louis Post-Dispatch dropped his column. The newspaper said a change had been long considered, but Will’s recent attack “made the decision easier. The column was offensive and inaccurate; we apologize for publishing it.”

It’s not a trend — the Post-Dispatch was the only news organization to drop Will. Another 475, so far, have decided to keep him around.

To suggest that anyone is making sexual assault victims some sort of privileged class is incendiary and ludicrous. The column gets worse when Will plucks an example that I guess is supposed to produce outrage in the reader because the woman decided to report the rape six weeks after the incident. Or because the two had an intimate relationship before that night. Or because ... well, I don’t really know what I’m supposed to take away, other than she said no and the man continued.

Underlying Will’s warped sense of the world are some questions that people right here in Our Fair City have taken up.

Questions like: What constitutes sexual violence? How do you define it, and what are the responsibilities of faculty, staff and students when it happens?

**On Thursday, by clarifying terms in its student conduct rules, the UM System Board of Curators effectively broadened the definition of sexual violence on campus.**

According to the Missourian’s Rachel Brooks, “rape” was changed in the rulebook to “nonconsensual sexual intercourse,” and the definition of “nonconsensual” now includes situations in which the victim is “incapacitated by alcohol, drugs, or other circumstances
and therefore incapable of consenting.” The board also made changes to the process for investigating sexual assault.

Earlier this spring, UM System President Tim Wolfe issued an order that said almost every employee was responsible for reporting incidents of sexual misconduct affecting students.

Wolfe and the university keep moving after years of study and inaction. Look for more in the coming months.

Will’s column implies a “supposed epidemic of rape” is, in part, a result of making the definition mean just about anything. It appears the curators are more discerning. It’s true there are more scenarios under the big tent of sexual misconduct; but harassment isn’t the same as exploitation or rape.

And the rules of a university aren’t the same as the legal definitions in a criminal court. Too often we confuse the two.

Will also questioned the most cited and damning statistic: that one in five women are victims of sexual assault during their college years.

I couldn’t really figure out Will’s logic, so I went searching elsewhere. There’s general agreement the statistic comes from a study done in 2007 and based on a survey of more than 5,000 women at two public universities.

So can we really say this happens everywhere or here at MU or Stephens or Columbia College? No. That’s where complementing figures and arguments come into play. Two well-reasoned pieces I read were from the American Thinker, which defended Will, and Talking Points Memo, which didn’t.

I see the points and am still appalled — even with conservative estimates, there are still way too many cases of women assaulted by men on college campuses.

Civil people can debate degrees and definitions while we all move forward, just as the university has done. It’s the hyperbole and name-calling that get in the way. Will’s rhetoric doesn’t add to understanding, even though it could have.
Loftin provides strategic plan updates to UM Curators

Hiring John Boyer, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, has improved MU's membership standing score in the AAU by 12.5 percent.

By Covey Eonyak Son

Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin presented the key points of MU’s Strategic Operating Plan to the UM System Board of Curators at the Friday meeting during the board’s annual June session at MU.

MUSOP’s primary objective is to, by 2018, “enhance (MU’s) academic stature as measured by publicly made available metrics, including those of the Association of American Universities.”

One way to accomplish this goal, which Loftin said originated under former vice chancellor for research Robert Duncan, was to hire up to 100 non-tenure track faculty members dedicated to research.

However, Loftin said because of the lack of proposals made to hire such faculty, this aspect of the plan was since abandoned.

“We had two to three proposals come forth to hire these types of faculties and this was an abject failure as far as stimulating what we had hoped to stimulate,” Loftin said. “We are going to find a better way to do this.”

Loftin said a key step taken during 2014 was hiring nine new tenured faculty members, such as Elizabeth Parks in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology.

In addition, six new faculty members, including John Boyer from Delaware University, will join MU by the 2014 fall semester.

Boyer’s membership in the National Academy of Sciences, Loftin said, has provided a 12.5 percent increase in the metric for MU’s standing as a member of the AAU.

“We had eight (NAS) members in place; (Boyer) is our ninth,” Loftin said. “We continue to look forward to adding additional faculty from the academies to MU and also promoting the faculty we have already in place here to be recognized for membership in one of the academies.”

Another aspect of the MUSOP seeks to increase faculty salaries and benefits internally, without additional state funding.
Loftin said during FY2014, MU dedicated over $10 million to increasing faculty and staff compensations, $1.7 million to increasing salaries and $500,000 to increasing benefits for the “200 extraordinary faculty who contribute directly to our AAU metrics.”

An additional $614,000 were spent to promote associate professors to “full” professors and assistant professors to associate professors.

Loftin said he plans for 20 additional “signature” faculty hires to be made over the next four years — five in medical areas, two in health sciences, four in physical sciences, four in plant sciences, four in engineering and one in new media journalism.

As MU prepares to enter FY2015 in July, the plan is to keep compensation increases at similar levels and continue merit-based increases for “high-performing faculty.”

Each department will be expected to self-fund such increases, Loftin said.

The board concluded the June session by passing two resolutions to formally honor MU’s 175th year and MU Extension’s 100th year.

During his state of the university address, UM System president Tim Wolfe said the universities are “on solid ground,” and that he was pleased with the higher education lobbying efforts at the state level.

Wolfe also applauded campus leaders for taking steps to address sexual assault policies and campus safety concerns.

The curators will meet again on July 25 for a teleconference session.

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University of Missouri leaders urge fight against tax breaks

By Ashley Jost

*Concerns about tax cut legislation were the chief topic during the chairman's report at the University of Missouri Board of Curators meeting yesterday.*
Board Chairman Don Downing criticized the 10 tax break bills passed by the Republican-controlled Missouri legislature, and later vetoed by Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon. Nixon cited concerns about how less tax revenue would impact the money the state puts toward higher education.

"Friends, I have to tell you that the current state of affairs in Jefferson City troubles me deeply and should trouble all Missourians who care about affordable, high-quality public education," Downing said in his remarks to the board.

Downing cited numbers similar to those put out by the governor's budget office, saying the 10 bills amount to $776 million in lost tax revenue, $351 million of which will come from local government coffers. Nixon's administration estimates $425 million will come out of the state's revenue during fiscal year 2015, which starts July 1. Some Republicans have questioned Nixon's numbers. The bills' supporters say the tax breaks will provide needed relief for Missouri businesses and residents.

"Whether you take a long-term or short-term perspective, there can be no reasonable debate that these enormous tax cuts jeopardize the ability of the state to adequately fund our University of Missouri System and each of its extraordinary campuses, and our ability to provide an affordable high-quality education to our 75,000-plus students today, as well as generations of students to come," Downing said, adding that it's the job of the curators to "speak up" against emerging issues that could jeopardize university operations and funding. He said curators shouldn't necessarily oppose all tax cuts, or disparage those who support them, but should help others understand the impact that the revenue loss has on the UM System.

Downing's urging to the board and system leaders yesterday was to reach out to legislators and encourage them to vote against an override in September's veto session. He and UM System President Tim Wolfe later said that grassroots lobbying through constituent and support groups is the plan for reaching out to legislators. Wolfe stressed that their advocacy efforts will be focused on the importance of sustaining the veto for higher education as a whole, not just the UM System.

The system received $430 million in state appropriations for fiscal 2015.

Rep. Caleb Jones, R-Columbia, said it is unfortunate the governor is using threats of having to withhold money from areas like higher education because of the possible veto overrides.

"I find it disheartening the governor is holding the funding of the University of Missouri hostage for his own political gain," Jones said in a statement. "Time and time again, the Missouri House and Senate have funded the university at record levels. I hope the governor will realize that Missouri citizens' education is more important than his political future."

Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, said he thinks it's important that the curators are "standing up" for the university.
"But the curators cannot do it by themselves," he said. "It's important the university community, especially the alumni association, communicate with the legislature about how damaging these cuts are to the university."

Downing pointed to Kansas' experience with tax cuts as an example of what he fears Missouri could become.

"We as a state should not let Kansas, of all states, drag us into a race to the bottom," he said, referencing the decades-old rivalry between MU and the University of Kansas.

Wolfe, during his State of the University address, said it would be "over my dead body" that Missouri wins that race.

**UM System appoints new chief financial officer**

By Elizabeth Cardwell  
June 20, 2014 | 5:05 p.m. CDT  

COLUMBIA — University of Missouri System president Tim Wolfe announced Brian Burnett will be taking over as chief financial officer for the UM System effective Aug. 1.

Burnett, who has a doctorate in educational leadership, research and policy, will come to Missouri from his post at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, where he has been the senior executive vice chancellor for administration and finance since 2012, Burnett said.

Burnett has been at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs since 2003, and has served in a number of concurrent roles during his time there, including vice chancellor for administration and finance and Colorado University's associate vice president for administration and foundation relations, according to a UM System news release.
In addition to his educational duties, Burnett worked as the deputy executive director for the Colorado Department of Corrections, per the request of a newly elected governor, according to his resume.

Wolfe said in the release that the faculty look forward to having his expertise and comprehensive knowledge in a variety of arenas to help "direct the long-term planning efforts and strategy of the business and financial functions surrounding our system structure, all four campuses and the university health care enterprise."

Burnett said he plans to bring "creativity and strong financial support" to help meet the needs of the UM System, a skill he learned after spending time in cash-strapped Colorado.

"When you don't have a lot of state funding, you learn how to be creative on the revenue side, you just have to," he said.

After Aug. 1, Burnett will be responsible for providing management and leadership over departments such as the treasury, controller, management services, budget planning and development, internal audit functions, and procurement, according to the release.

Burnett will also act as a general officer to the university. His starting salary is set at $300,000.

*Supervising editor is Seth Klamann.*

**UM System hires a new chief financial officer**

Burnett will start begin his new post effective Aug. 1 with a starting salary of $300,000.

By Covey Eonyak Son

**UM System president Tim Wolfe announced Friday that a new chief financial officer will be hired at the system level to permanently fill the vacancy created when former vice president of finance Nikki Krawitz retired in June, 2013.**
Brian Burnett, who is currently the senior executive vice chancellor for administration and finance at the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, will begin his new position as the UM System chief financial officer effective Aug. 1 with a starting salary of $300,000.

“Dr. Burnett comes to the UM System with an extensive background in public higher education administration,” Wolfe said in a press release.

According to the release, Burnett’s new role will require him to manage the system’s departments of treasury, controller, procurement, management services, budget planning and development, as well as internal audits.

Burnett holds a master’s degree in finance from the University of Colorado-Denver and a doctorate in philosophy in educational leadership, research and policy from UCCS.

The announcement was made just after the UM System Board of Curators’ Compensation and Human Resources Committee held a closed meeting.

While UM System spokesman John Fougere could not comment on anything that was discussed during the closed committee meeting, he said the curators had approved the hire.

Tom Richards, who has served as the UM System interim vice president for finance and treasurer since Krawitz’s retirement in 2013, will continue his position as the UM System treasurer and resume his previous role as the system’s chief investment officer.

New center would help University of Missouri faculty improve methods

Proposal is in strategic plan.

By Ashley Jost

Sunday, June 22, 2014 at 2:00 am Comments (1)

Planning is in progress for a new center at the University of Missouri for faculty to develop their teaching methods and practices.
The teaching and learning center would be a place for faculty, many of whom are coming from an array of industries instead of academia, to brush up on their teaching pedagogies, learn how to incorporate technology in their classrooms and even learn from one another.

Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies, said the center is in the infancy stage, but is a priority for him.

MU used to have an outlet with a similar goal called the Program for Excellence in Teaching, which moved around administrative offices for oversight for years before it fell in Spain's lap. At the time, several years ago, Spain said the program was deteriorating because of lack of consistency. That, coupled with a lack of resources, forced Spain to close the program.

Now, the 2020 Strategic Plan for the campus includes a proposal for an operation with the same focus that the Program for Excellence in Teaching had at MU.

"In visiting with" Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, "he asked me to bring him a plan for initiating a center for teaching and learning excellence," Spain said. Its name is still in the works.

Several years ago, Spain and former graduate school Dean George Justice organized a research study that evaluated faculty needs in teaching support and advising at undergraduate and graduate levels. Spain said he still has the data, and now plans to seek additional input from faculty, department chairs and deans to confirm that those areas are, in fact, the most important. That final laundry list will be the key functions of the new center.

Spain has set a deadline for himself to finish the ongoing evaluation and have the list of functions ready for Loftin by the end of this year.

Nicole Monnier, associate teaching professor of Russian and Faculty Council academic affairs committee chair, said this new center is also a priority for faculty.

Aside from general training on pedagogy, Monnier said she hopes the new center can be an umbrella over other teaching programs at MU. Programs like Educational Technologies at MU and monthly brown bag lunch events could all advertise through one vehicle.

"I think this could be a great resource for new faculty coming in," Monnier said. "It would also be helpful for senior teachers. We tend to teach how we were taught, and the classroom is so different today from when most of us went to school."

Spain said similar centers are common among other American Association of Universities schools, a prestigious organization that MU is a member of. Other AAU schools spend from $500,000 to several million dollars each year on these programs. Spain anticipates MU spending between $400,000 and $500,000, depending on the details that have yet to be worked out.
Budget for Swallow Hall renovation goes up

By Ashley Jost

Saturday, June 21, 2014 at 2:00 am

The historic Swallow Hall located on the University of Missouri’s "red campus" is in need of significant repairs, the University of Missouri Board of Curators heard this week.

Swallow Hall was constructed in 1893 on what's now the Francis Quadrangle.

The hall is one of several buildings that sits on the so-called "red campus," a group of brick, Victorian-style buildings constructed in the late 1800s after the fire at Academic Hall.

During the Master Plan presentation by MU chief operating officer Gary Ward, curators heard and asked questions about the needs involved with Swallow Hall and ongoing renovation efforts. The finance committee and full board voted on increasing the renovation project for the historic hall by $5.4 million.

The renovation goal is to preserve the outer façade of the building while demolishing the inside, according to board documents. The curators approved the project and its initial $11.5 million price tag last June. The request for additional dollars is caused by additional structural issues with the shell of the building that crews have found during repairs, among other issues.

Curator Wayne Goode advocated for the renovation of Swallow Hall, as well as the rest of the "red campus" buildings.

"I can't overstate the importance of the red campus — it's historic and needs to be protected," Goode said. "As former chair of the House and Senate appropriations committees, I'm always careful to say nothing was so important that you had to fix it no matter the cost, but if there are any buildings that are under our jurisdiction that are close to that, it's the buildings on the red campus."
Programming returns after KOMU, DirecTV reach agreement

By Caitlin Campbell
June 20, 2014 | 10:02 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — After 70 days without access, **local DirecTV subscribers were able to tune to KOMU/NBC's and Mid-Missouri's CW programming Friday.**

The renewed access came after KOMU and DirecTV agreed to a new multiyear deal, according to a news release sent out by the station. On April 11, KOMU and all of its NBC and CW-affiliate programming became unavailable to DirecTV customers as the two companies disputed a renewal contract. The previous agreement between the two companies ended on March 31, and the station granted the cable provider two separate extensions to keep programming on the air until April 11.

"We are pleased that our DirecTV viewers once again have access to all the programs that matter most to them," KOMU general manager Marty Siddall said in the release.

During the renewal process, **KOMU requested more money because it said carrying shows from NBC and CW is getting more expensive**, according to previous Missourian reporting. DirecTV wanted the rights to digitally stream content, but KOMU does not have the ability to grant those rights.

This was not the first conflict between DirecTV and local stations. In October, **DirecTV and News-Press & Gazette were unable to renew their contract**, which led to a blackout of KMIZ/ABC, KQFX/FOX and MyZouTV, according to previous Missourian reporting.

*Supervising editor is Samuel Hardiman.*
KOMU, DirecTV reach agreement

By Matthew Sanders

Sunday, June 22, 2014 at 2:00 am

KOMU-TV has reached a deal with DirecTV to get its programming back on the satellite service.

The University of Missouri-owned station and its sister channel, Mid-Missouri’s CW, were unavailable on DirecTV since April after KOMU and the satellite provider reached an impasse over renewing an agreement to show KOMU programming. A news release posted on the KOMU website said the local broadcaster’s programming was back on DirecTV on Friday.

“More than anything, we are happy to be back on DirecTV,” KOMU General Manager Marty Siddall said in a statement. “We want to extend a huge thank you to our viewers for their patience and support during these difficult negotiations. Our commitment to our community has never been stronger.”

A major sticking point cited by Matt Garrett, KOMU’s director of audience advancement, in April was DirecTV’s insistence on being able to stream KOMU’s content online. KOMU contended it didn’t have rights to allow streaming of NBC and CW programming. Garrett said yesterday the contract with DirecTV prevented KOMU employees from talking about the terms of the agreement, including its monetary value, terms reached over content streaming and the length of the contract.

Last fall, local ABC and Fox affiliates cited the same dispute when they went dark on DirecTV. Those stations were back on the satellite service weeks later.

DirecTV in April accused KOMU of demanding unreasonable rates for its programming, saying cost increases would be passed on to subscribers.

KOMU is owned by MU but is a self-sustaining entity that gets no university or state funding.
Mixed messages

Good news, bad news

By Henry J. Waters III

Saturday, June 21, 2014 at 2:00 am Comments (1)

Thursday's paper brought some very good news and some of the other kind.

The University of Missouri has exercised its option to buy the Missouri Theatre, and Mary Pat Boatfield suddenly died.

MU’s takeover of the iconic edifice on South Ninth Street fulfilled a dream locals doubted would come true. Thanks to the heroic — and some said stupid — intervention of Missouri Symphony Society founder Hugo Vianello, the theater was saved from the wrecker's ball, so to speak. After several traumatic seasons, including a frightening period when Irene Haskins and her blessed friends took to the streets with signs bemoaning plans to turn the theater into a multi-screen movie house, Vianello and other fools bought the place, armed with hopes and dreams but very little cash.

For the moment they would keep the virtual wrecker's ball at bay, but then what?

A dreamy board hired a visionary director who orchestrated an imaginative remodeling to take the building back to its original splendor, and work got underway. Soon enough the cost outran the resources, work halted and the director moved on. Other local dreamers signed on, including Columbia's then-first lady Axie Hindman, and the roundup for additional dollars was on.

At this point we should remember, without the foolish necks-out lurch into an unknown future, the glorious theater would be … who-knows-what. Its sponsors had dreams grand enough to commission a beautiful renovation. If their accountability had been careful enough to accurately predict the near future, they might never have started. Their method is not recommended, but in retrospect can we be sorry they wandered into the fiscal wilderness?

After work halted, local benefactors contributed some cash, but not enough to ensure the building's future. At least one entreaty was made to a person wealthy enough to buy the place,
but nothing happened until one day MU announced it would lease the property with an option to buy at the end of three years. That moment has come, and the option will be exercised.

This deal has the necessary ingredients. It is a big win for both the community and the university. The community is assured its treasure will survive, and the university achieves a cost-advantaged way to acquire a long-coveted performing arts center.

What a bargain for MU. It gets the theater for $3.7 million — the amount of the unpaid debt and far below the $57.8 million planned for construction of a new building on campus. Of course, as any campus planner will explain, it's not the original capital cost that poses a put-off financial hurdle; it is the continuing maintenance and operating outlay. MU’s assumption of this obligation is a big plus for the community but, presumably, a reasonable deal for the university. The recently remodeled building is in good shape.

Acquiring the Missouri Theatre has off-line benefits for MU. The glorious facility establishes an MU outpost in the community that would not have occurred with an opera house on campus. Not only does it locate the exciting repertoire of University Concert Series productions downtown, but MU ownership comes with an agreement to accommodate the Missouri Symphony Society in its original home. Whew.

Mary Pat Boatfield was on her way to rebuilding the Central Missouri Humane Society when she suddenly succumbed to pulmonary embolism. She was only 64 and just getting started.

Mary Pat had not yet presided over a full rehabilitation of the society, but she was on her way. She was providing needed management skill, love for the project and had a good board. She was building on the work of previous board members who had struggled to maintain the operation through difficult times.

Difficult times still abound, but even from this outsider’s vantage it seems a turnaround is underway.

So, the best memorial to Mary Pat would be to carry on what she was trying to build. The local Humane Society fills a need no other agency can meet. In many ways it's an impossible task, standing ready to take in as many stray animals as possible — and a few more. These vagabonds come from all over this part of the country, and the spirit of the Central Missouri volunteers and a few staffers compels them to keep their doors open.

Most of us don't properly appreciate the job the Humane Society does. Without its work, the landscape would be full of untended animals desperately scratching for a living.

Mary Pat will be missed, but the persistent band of those left behind will find a replacement and the work will go on.
Medical school graduates could go directly to patient care in Missouri under proposal

By Blythe Bernhard bbernhard@post-dispatch.com | 314-340-8129

It could get easier to be a doctor in Missouri under a proposed law to add the classification of “assistant physician” to the state medical license.

Under the measure, an assistant physician would be a graduate of a four-year medical school program who has passed licensing exams but has not completed residency training. Residency programs are the three to seven years after medical school that doctors spend in primary and specialty clinical training.

Assistant physicians who are licensed by the state board of healing arts would be allowed to practice primary care and prescribe drugs in rural and underserved areas of the state. Their practice would be overseen by a physician who would be required to be on-site only for the first month.

The measure was approved by the Missouri Legislature. Gov. Jay Nixon has not said whether he will sign it.

“I question whether four years of medical school is enough to go out and take care of patients,” said Rosemary Gibson, a board member of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. “People in rural and under-served areas deserve a fully trained, competent physician just like everyone else.”

The first two years of medical school are typically classroom-based. The third and fourth years include clinical work with patients under direct supervision.

Medical school seniors then apply for residency programs at teaching hospitals, and most of them find a match. Just 583 of the 17,374 seniors at U.S. medical schools graduated without a residency position this year, according to the National Resident Matching Program.

Jeffrey Howell of the Missouri State Medical Association said the number of potential new doctors in Missouri could be much higher when graduates of foreign medical schools are included. As the only state in the country with the assistant physician designation, Missouri could attract medical school graduates looking to start practicing medicine, he said.

“Missouri truly has an opportunity to be a trailblazer on this type of licensure and solving the health care access problem,” Howell said. “This is a brand new idea and something that we should take advantage of as a state.”
About 37 percent of Missouri residents live in rural counties, but only 18 percent of the state’s primary care doctors practice there, according to the state health department. Several programs through the state and the University of Missouri use student loan forgiveness and other incentives to encourage new doctors to open shop in rural areas.

Critics of the proposed law, including the Missouri Academy of Physician Assistants, have said the new classification will confuse patients and providers.

Physician assistants have bachelor’s degrees and an average of two years of additional clinical training. Advance practice nurses, including nurse practitioners, have graduate degrees in nursing. These midlevel providers have successfully pushed in recent years for greater autonomy in response to the doctor shortage. But unlike the assistant physician, they cannot be called “doctor.”

At Washington University, a handful of medical school graduates do not match with residency programs each year. Usually it is because they have limited their options for geographic or personal reasons. Those students often spend another year at the school in research and clinical settings before reapplying for a residency slot, said Dr. Kathryn Diemer, assistant dean for career counseling.

Diemer said she is concerned about the amount of education the assistant physicians would receive when practicing in rural areas. An internship — the first year of a doctor’s residency program — is a critical learning opportunity, she said.

“That was a year that I learned so much about decision-making and learning how to trust my judgment,” she said. “I’m not sure medical students after two years of clinical experience could be ready to be that independent.”

Student newspapers weigh trading independence for financial support

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When leaders of Southern Illinois University Carbondale put a proposed student fee for the Daily Egyptian on the back burner this past spring, a booming Twitter campaign was launched, alerting alumni that their alma mater’s student newspaper was in desperate need of a lifeline.
The wheezing student voice wasn’t going to make payroll without help.

The rallying cry, #SaveTheDE, splashed word across social media. An outpouring of support led to the Illinois Legislature to step in and allocate a $70,000 line item for the paper in the state’s budget. The funding is on top of the $55,000 former president Glenn Poshard donated from his office’s budget last year. While these efforts keep the paper on life support, they can’t bolster its self-sufficiency. And some fear the infusion of public funding could threaten the paper’s independence.

The Daily Egyptian has been among only 5 percent of college newspapers that are financially self-sustaining.

The fear of losing an independent voice is common among college newspapers as more are subsidized by their universities.

It’s a Catch-22.

Student papers have needed university aid to keep them afloat amid the economic pressures that have hammered the newspaper industry.

But taking university funding threatens to compromise a student paper’s independent editorial voice.

This conundrum can be seen rippling through area colleges: SIU Carbondale, The University of Missouri-St. Louis, Webster University, Westminster College.

Staffs and university administrators scramble to find innovative and lucrative platforms as the papers struggle to survive. Funding can be a combination of print advertising revenue, subsidies or subscriptions from university budgets, student fees, social media revenue and donations from alumni, among others.

Print revenue, which is the staple of financial self-sufficiency for papers, is no longer viable as a sole source of income.

The Daily Egyptian has been funded through print advertising revenue, but it won’t sustain the publication any longer.

According to SIUC’s School of Journalism Director Bill Freivogel, print ad revenues for the Daily Egyptian have plummeted 50 percent since 2006, from just under $1 million a year to about $500,000. The staff is at 30, where it used to be 55. Wages were cut in half. Circulation was decreased by 5,000. The travel budget was nixed.

“All newspapers have these problems,” Eric Fidler, the Daily Egyptian’s managing editor, said. “Replacing print dollars with digital dollars doesn’t work. You can’t make enough money online to make up for the loss of print revenue.”
A plan to go digital is the mainstay of most efforts, especially those on the administrative level. But many don’t want to leave print behind.

“This is not a one-sided relationship,” Anna Glushko, editor-in-chief of UMSL’s Current, said. “What is a university without a newspaper? What is a university without a print edition? It is a point of pride, it’s keeping tradition.”

And the students seem to agree with her. A recent survey of 400 University of Missouri-St. Louis students found that 230 indicated that they preferred the print edition of the student paper, 98 said computer and 62 said mobile.

**BUDGET BATTLES**

UMSL’s student newspaper, the Current, knows the sting of relying on university funding. It receives about $20,000 from the school annually, enough for print costs. Advertising revenue covers salaries and other expenses.

Between 2009 and 2011, the paper racked up $40,000 in debt. Since then, the paper managed to cut the debt in half. But the student government nixed the paper’s funding last spring, forcing the administration to step in.

“The paper didn’t seem to be thriving, so four deans volunteered to help out working with the editor-in-chief to come up with a better business plan,” said Charles Hoffman, dean of the business school.

The university is expected to forgive the debt, with contingencies, including working with the business school to develop a solvent business plan. Ideas include luring more local business and campus vendors to print ads, along with garnering donations through crowdsourcing alumni and selling paid space to a department once every issue.

Reliance on university funding means that student papers face the prospect of participating in, rather than simply writing about, the budget process.

Gabe Burns, the editor-in-chief of Webster’s Journal, wants more student say when the university is faced with budget cuts. He said the newspaper, student magazine and radio station were approached about their budgets’ fates toward the end of the year, after many decisions were already made.

“Student leaders need to be involved in the process,” he said. “We know how our student publications work. At the end of the day, what happens with the Journal, my head as editor-in-chief is the one on the chopping block.”

The Journal’s budget is $15,000 this year, with five paid positions. Last year’s budget was $33,000 with 10 positions. More cuts are expected as the paper transitions online.
“We’ve revamped our journalism curriculum to be platform agnostic,” School of Communications Dean Eric Rothenbuhler said. “The goal is to be as ambitiously digital as possible.”

But Burns stresses the importance of print.

“Having a print edition reminds people that we’re there,” he said. “We use the paper to push people online and vice versa. And we’re a university; we’re students. This is a big part of our education. People like me want to get jobs in print, and we need those print journalism skills.”

DIGITAL HORIZON

The Columns at Westminster College in Fulton, Mo., is undertaking a transformation from print to completely online. After the university suffered budget cuts this year, the paper’s $8,000 annual allocation was eliminated by the Student Government Association. The association then approved a one-time allocation of $3,000, an amount specifically meant to pay for online start-up costs and the purchase of cameras. The paper’s production will become a one-credit class, eliminating payroll for students.

“This paper is evidence that the students have a voice,” Maureen Tuthill, the Column’s adviser, said. “While we are disappointed by the loss of the print edition, it really makes sense for us to be online.”

Across the nation, college newspapers are looking toward a more digital horizon, moving content online and opening avenues on social media. Another popular concept is that of a converged newsroom, where various media collaborate in production.

SIUC hopes to make this newsroom a reality in the next few years. This multiplatform newsroom would allow media to keep their independence while running a website of all the best content. Construction on the new building could begin in a year and is expected to take about four years to be completed.

At that time, the paper will cease using its expensive 1972 printing press and begin outsourcing printing, a process that Fidler estimates could save about $50,000 a year.

But the most immediate goal is to get a $9 student fee added to students bills this fall to support the paper’s transition to a self-sufficient model. It would generate about $144,000 a semester, which would cover its $260,000 deficit.

An executive committee of the university’s board of trustees is expected to consider the proposal at the next meeting on Tuesday, in time to add the fee to student bills next fall.

When the paper can support itself, staff say the fee will no longer be necessary. But staff said moving toward full independence again could take years.

“It sounds like a lot of money because it is a lot of money,” Fidler said. “But ad revenue is dropping fast, and it’s not coming back. We need the space necessary to transition to whatever comes next.”
Columbians to choose bus shelters

Saturday, June 21, 2014 at 2:00 am Comments (1)

Columbia residents will have a chance to view designs and register their choice for new bus shelters at an open house from 4 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Family Impact Center, 105 E. Ash St., according to a news release from PedNet.

PedNet has partnered with the University of Missouri Architectural Studies Department, COMO Connect and the city's Office of Sustainability and Office of Cultural Affairs to create designs for new bus shelters to accompany the COMO Connect revamp of the city's bus system.

Designs include materials that are recycled, recyclable and/or local, which will reduce construction costs, the news release said.