COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU Faculty Council discusses Title IX, Thursday football games

Thursday, September 4, 2014 | 10:12 p.m. CDT; updated 6:10 a.m. CDT, Friday, September 5, 2014

BY ISABELLE GUSTAFSON, RYAN MCELROY

COLUMBIA — Additional faculty and staff training is among changes that will increase awareness of Title IX and prevent future violations of the federal mandate, said Linda Bennett, interim campus Title IX coordinator, at an MU Faculty Council meeting Thursday.

Bennett gave a presentation to council members alongside Marsha Fischer, who joined the University of Missouri System General Counsel's office in May and is the systemwide point of contact for Title IX-related issues.

MU has a responsibility to protect its students, Fischer said.

"With that responsibility comes opportunity — opportunity to make a difference and opportunity to make a change," Fischer said.

A new website will provide more information about Title IX, Bennett said. She did not give a date for when the website will be online but said it will be soon.

Bennett and Fischer emphasized that employees are required to report potential violations of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, such as sexual harassment or violence. "Listen to (the students), give them the resources and report," Bennett said.

Before UM System President Tim Wolfe issued an executive order in April, there was no reporting requirement or mandatory training for MU faculty or staff for handling Title IX incidents.

Thursday night football

Also discussed at the meeting was a tentative plan for Missouri to play in Thursday football games at Memorial Stadium starting next season.
MU Faculty Athletics Representative Lori Franz said the proposed Thursday date is Nov. 5, 2015.

"We would try to limit participation to no more than one game on campus every four years and one away game every four years," Franz said.

Some Faculty Council members raised concerns that it could interrupt students' focus on academics.

"Why would we ask academia to make any adjustments when we have plenty of Fridays and Saturdays?" council member Rebecca Johnson asked. "We have plenty of weekends and only six (home) games."

Franz said the change comes from joining the Southeastern Conference. The Thursday games would be held after 4 p.m., she said.

She encouraged council members to email her with comments and concerns.

"If we're going to do it, let's move forward and start planning yesterday," Franz said.

GEORGE KENNEDY: Promising start to the school year, on several fronts
Thursday, September 4, 2014 | 4:54 p.m. CDT
BY GEORGE KENNEDY

We could hardly ask for a better beginning of the new academic year at our university.

You’ve seen these numbers, but they look so good they’re worth reviewing: Highest enrollment ever, with 35,000 or more when the final figures come in;

- Highest ability freshman class ever, with a mean ACT score of 25.9;
- Highest retention rate ever, with 86 percent of last year’s students returning;
- Highest minority enrollment ever, at 5,386 students;
• Highest international enrollment ever, 2,323 students;

• And second-highest first-time college class ever, only 14 below the record of 6,560.

The only people happier than Chancellor Loftin about that 35,000 will be the developers of all the new student apartments that are metastasizing all around town.

There’s good news on the athletics front, too. The football Tigers disposed of the pesky Jackrabbits last week. Even better, none of the players has so far been accused of anything more serious than a panicky backward pass out of bounds.

Still, I’ve always seen it as my role to find the gray cloud around every silver lining. When the university is the subject, the cloud is never hard to spot. It always looks like a giant dollar sign.

All those students bring, along with their intellectual curiosity and their cars, another essential. That’s their tuition money.

As the legislature becomes ever less willing to support the state’s flagship institution, tuition has far outpaced state appropriations as the university’s main revenue source.

Last year, university figures show, tuition accounted for 62 percent of general operating revenue; state support produced just 32 percent. (The rest came from multiple smaller sources.)

Missouri provides less support to the university, on a per capita basis, than any of our neighboring states. Arkansas does twice as well, Kansas nearly that well and Nebraska even better. Nationally, we rank a proud 44th.

In proportion to enrollment, the university gets less from the state than it did in 2001.

But that’s enough gloom for one weekend, don’t you think? Let’s get back to football.

The Wall Street Journal published a fascinating chart last week. The headline called it “The college football grid of shame.” As journalists are wont to do, the writer of that phrase focused on the negative. That’s only half the story.
The chart is divided by horizontal and vertical axes. The horizontal runs from “weakling” on the left to “powerhouse” on the right. The vertical puts “admirable” at the top and “embarrassing” at the bottom. Quickly now – which quadrant would you examine to find our Tigers?

I confess to looking low at first. I guess I was thinking of Derrick Washington and Dorial Green-Beckham. That’s not what the Journal staff had in mind. Instead, the admirable-versus-embarrassing formula included “a weighted calculation” of academic performance, NCAA violations, attendance, off-season arrests and subsidy from state or student fees.

Obviously, the upper right-hand quadrant is where you want your team to be. And that’s where you’ll find the Tigers.

In fact, the Journal rates our boys as more admirable than any other SEC team. Of recent and future opponents, only Nebraska and Indiana outshine the Tigers. Overall, Northwestern tops the admirability ranking, with Wisconsin, Stanford and Clemson just behind.

Other SEC teams, though less admirable than ours, made it into the most desirable quadrant. Florida, Auburn, LSU, Georgia and South Carolina are rated more powerful if not quite as clean. Arkansas and Vanderbilt are a bit behind the Tigers on both criteria.

The only SEC team rated a weakling is Kentucky.

The rest of our new playmates turn up in the category of powerful but embarrassing. Alabama is placed in a virtual tie with Florida State and Oklahoma as the most powerful of the shameful. (Oklahoma’s rating, you’ll be glad to know, took a sharp drop when the Sooners picked up Green-Beckham after MU booted him.)

Mike Alden, our athletics director, likes to describe his domain as the “front porch” of the university – not the most important component but the most visible.

As we start the new year, the front porch gleams and the house is full of promise. Never mind that gray cloud.

*George Kennedy is a former managing editor for the Missourian. He writes a weekly column for the Missourian.*
As the semester kicks off, enrollment numbers haven’t changed much for some smaller area institutions compared to last year.

Stephens College’s overall enrollment is around 850 students, similar to last year’s numbers, but the freshman class this year is 250, 50 more than the 2013-2014 school year.

Janese Silvey, Stephens College spokeswoman, said the college’s three-year event and convention degree that started last year is experiencing increases in enrollment, as are some of the science-related fields.

At Columbia College, enrollment in daytime and nighttime classes stayed about the same as last fall’s numbers. Daytime students reached 916 and evening students reached 1,224 at the Columbia campus.

Stephanie Johnson, director for admissions at the college, said there was some growth in science-related programs during the day. No particular major or program showed significant growth in evening enrollment.

Moberly Area Community College’s numbers have decreased from last year at the Columbia campus and all of MACC’s campuses.

MACC Spokesman Scott McGarvey said in an email that the Columbia campus has about 2,060 students enrolled this semester, down 3 percent from last year. The MACC-wide numbers are down about 7 percent.

McGarvey attributed that slight decline to the positive effect from high school dual-credit programs across the region, but when the program ends this month, it is expected that the program will boost enrollment at the college’s campuses.
The area’s largest school, the University of Missouri, saw an increase in total enrollment this year.

The university reported 34,935 students enrolled on the first day, the most in MU’s 175-year history. That’s a 2.4 percent over last fall’s enrollment of 34,111.

Total enrollment is expected to increase during the first few weeks of the semester.

Jell-O Shots: University-Approved?

September 5, 2014
By
Jake New

NO MU MENTION

Last month -- just in time for a new season of college football -- Kraft Foods released a new line of Jell-O molds in the shapes of various university logos. Four of the "jiggler mold kits" were unveiled last year, but products for 16 more teams have now been added, including the University of Alabama, Ohio State University, and the University of California at Los Angeles.

In a press release, Kraft said the kits are meant to be used in creating Jell-O treats for tailgate parties for alumni and fans. But some are concerned that the themed molds could be seen as university-endorsed invitations to create alcohol-laced "Jell-O shots" -- a mixed message for universities fighting to curb binge drinking among students. Jell-O shots are so ubiquitous that a recent Associated Press article about Jell-O's financial troubles placed the alcoholic treats right next to Bill Cosby when describing the product's enduring cultural appeal. Everybody remembers those old Cosby ads for Jell-O pudding, the AP wrote, and everybody remembers "knocking back Jell-O shots" in college.
Kraft admits that it is aware Jell-O shots are a popular way to consume the dessert, but the company told the website Vocativ that it doesn't condone using the molds for that purpose. The half-dozen universities contacted for this article did not return requests for comment.

Posts on Twitter and customer reviews on Amazon.com reveal that some fans are using the molds for making shots, but to mixed success.

The trays, customers said, are shallower than the plastic and paper cups typically used to create Jell-O shots, meaning they hold less alcohol. "These would really only make Jell-O half-shots," reads one review. Another unhappy customer gave up and transferred the Jell-O mix that came with the molds to some tried-and-true Dixie cups. The results, the customer wrote, were "delicious." The more glowing reviews come from fans who used the molds to create non-alcoholic Jell-O jigglers.

Experts on campus drinking are skeptical.

"It could be that kids all over the country on college game days are enjoying alcohol-free Jell-O shots while sitting on pickup truck tailgates," said Aaron White, the program director of college and underage drinking prevention research at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. "This could all be good, clean fun. But it's definitely sending a mixed message. If I were a student, I'd be awfully confused if I heard about the dangers of drinking and drinking games at freshman orientation and then when I got to Wal-Mart, I found these Jell-O molds with my school's logo on it."

The financial details behind the universities' licensing deals with Kraft have not been released, but colleges have a profitable history of licensing their trademarks to products that may sometimes send a mixed message to students. Shot glasses and pint glasses sporting college logos have been a mainstay at university bookstores for decades. Some colleges have even licensed their logos to appear on Ping-Pong balls and so-called "tailgate tables." Many college students have other names for the products, often used for the campus favorite beer pong.

Jell-O shots can be a particularly risky form of binge drinking, White said. Because Jell-O masks the flavor of the alcohol, it can be difficult for students to recognize how many drinks they've actually consumed. Like the similarly fruit-flavored
and highly alcoholic college staple "Jungle Juice," when students consume Jell-O shots "the line between a small buzz and a dangerous overdose is very thin," White said. Students may also think of Jell-O as food, he added, meaning the consumption could be happening on a dangerously empty stomach.

David Arnold, the director of alcohol abuse prevention initiatives at NASPA: Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education, said he doesn't believe the molds are going to sway any students into doing Jell-O shots.

"I think that students who participate in Jell-O shooters are going to no matter what's available to them," Arnold said. "I think the messages students receive during matriculation and pre-matriculation from their institutions are very loud and clear. We do know that most students make healthy decisions even in tailgate environments, where we tend to expect them not to."

White also said that most students make safe decisions regarding alcohol and that colleges work hard to prevent students from binge drinking. But if that's the case, he asked, why muddy the message with officially licensed beer pong products and Jell-O molds?

"It could be much ado about nothing, but it is at least counterproductive," he said. "The big issue is really the larger question of what message are schools sending to their students if on one hand they're putting money into prevention, and on the other hand they're profiting off products that are used in the consumption of alcohol. It's a mixed message that probably isn't worth the extra money."

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The U. of Missouri Would Like to Wish Beyoncé a Happy Birthday

Fans of Beyoncé Knowles-Carter take her birthday seriously, and among their ranks, apparently, is the person who runs the University of Missouri at Columbia’s Twitter account.
The celebration of the pop superstar by the Twitter account appeared to begin with this tweet by a Missouri student:

The university answered with a link to this .gif:

The account then broadcast its love for Beyoncé to its more than 46,000 followers, with a link to the same .gif:
And we’re off to the races:

The account has since gone bananas, tweeting out practically a .gif a minute.

Happy birthday, Beyoncé.
Parking garage coming for Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Thursday, September 4, 2014 at 11:47 am Comments (1)

Three sides of the Truman Memorial Veterans’ Hospital campus are bustling with construction activity, and more is on the way.

Construction is set to start on a 544-space parking garage in December and should be completed by October 2016. A cost estimate of the new parking garage has not been released.

“You saw that parking was probably an issue,” said Truman Memorial Director Wade Vlosich during yesterday’s town hall-style meeting at the local VA hospital.

Vlosich said the parking situation, which includes the option of free valet parking for patients and visitors, is “a huge veteran dissatisfaction.”

When the parking garage construction begins, patient parking will move to the employee parking lot on the south side of the campus close to Stadium Boulevard, said Stephen Gaither, public information officer for Truman Memorial. He said hospital officials are negotiating with the University of Missouri to lease additional space in a university parking garage for Truman Memorial employees.

The hospital already leases space for employees in the parking garage at Hospital Drive and Monk Drive.

Nearly $14 million in construction is already in progress at Truman Memorial. Relocation of the sterile processing department is a $7 million contract. The general contractor for that project is Guarantee Interiors, based in St. Louis. Relocation of the cardiology department, including cardiac catheterization labs, is a two-phase project costing $4.4 million. P.K. Construction, also based in St. Louis, is the contractor for that job as well as a $723,000 project to relocate the audiology and speech pathology departments.

IMS Contracting, based in Michigan, is handling the $1.6 million renovation of the inpatient psychiatric unit.
Other projects either already funded or in design but awaiting bid awards — in addition to the parking garage — include relocation of the intensive care unit, expansion of oncology and specialty care units, a patient education center, construction of a dental clinic, relocation of a surgical step-down unit and expansion of the outpatient pharmacy.

Several moves are also planned to free up space for clinical care. Among those moves is the relocation of human resources to a new modular building on the Truman Memorial campus.

**Forbes**

**The Raging Controversy Over BPA Shows No Signs Of Abating**

But that doesn’t mean that the two opposing sides have equal merit.

In her “Poison Pen” blog in last week’s New York Times, the science writer Deborah Blum calls attention to new research that raises alarming questions about adverse effects on the female reproductive organs from exposure to BPA (bisphenol-A). Her article is titled, “In Plastics and Cans, a Threat to Women.”

Blum described work by Jodi Flaws, a researcher at the University of Illinois, that appeared to show that exposing female mice in utero or at an early age to BPA, at levels comparable to those encountered by humans, induced adverse effects on the ovaries.

According to Flaws, similar effects have been found across a broad range of mammals, including sheep, monkeys, and humans, and she stated that, “I think most scientists working today agree that BPA is an ovarian toxicant.”

Another person interviewed by Blum, Tracey Woodruff, the director of the program on reproductive health at the University of California at San Francisco, is quoted as saying, “on this question of ovarian toxicity, all the studies are starting to line up.”

In the second half of the article, several of those interviewed by Blum acknowledged the enormous difficulties involved in this type of research, but these qualifications did little to temper the message of alarm conveyed in the article, starting with its title.

What Blum’s account leaves out is the crucial context, without which there is no chance of accurately assessing the significance of this or that individual study.

BPA has been widely used for over 50 years in plastics and in the linings of food and beverage containers. The latter use has effectively eliminated the problem of food spoilage in canned foods.
Below I lay out some of the crucial context for understanding the latest scientific reports of this or that effect in this or that experiment and helping us to avoid being misled into thinking that such reports constitute evidence of some imminent threat.

The question of possible effects of BPA exposure on health has been fraught with controversy since studies began appearing in the late 1990s. The quality of these studies varies dramatically. Thanks to recent work carried out by the FDA, the National Toxicology Program, and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratories, we now have high-quality data on actual BPA exposure, metabolism, and excretion in rats and monkeys in utero and postnatally, and on heavy BPA exposure in humans.

What these studies show is that:

- Consumer products contain little BPA, and “migration” from the container or packaging into the food is minimal.
- Although most US residents are exposed, actual exposures are very low – more than 99 percent of ingested BPA is efficiently metabolized and excreted. And this is true even in newborns (Doerge et al., 2010 & 2011).
- After 20 volunteer subjects ate food from epoxy-lined cans, BPA was generally not found in the blood using a highly sensitive method (Teeguarden et al., 2011).
- Crucially, these studies measured both free and bound BPA – only the free compound can have biological effects. Free BPA was not detected in any sample using the ultra-sensitive method. This confirmed how low human exposures are, even under high dose conditions (Teeguarden et al., 2011).

Of the many experimental studies examining a given endpoint in a particular test system, some may report a positive effect, which sounds disturbing when reported by the media. However, many such results are never able to be repeated by other researchers. In spite of this, positive and disturbing findings, like those mentioned in Blum’s blog, get infinitely more attention than studies that fail to find any effect.

There are exquisite multi-generation feeding studies that examined a wide range of reproductive effects at a wide range of doses, and found no adverse effects at doses many orders of magnitude higher than those to which people are exposed. Yet you rarely see these studies cited in the public discussion of BPA.

In order to get the judgment of a highly-respected researcher in the area of reproductive toxicology, I asked Richard M. Sharpe of the University of Edinburgh for his opinion of the Flaws studies cited by Blum. In an email, he said that, of the studies mentioned by Blum, Flaws’ 2014 study indicating that in utero exposure to low doses of BPA interferes with development of the ovaries appeared to be superior to many previous studies of the effects of BPA on the ovary. But he noted that it was based on very small numbers, and that the results might be incidental. So his first reaction was that he would like to see the study repeated.

But there was something else about the results that gave him pause. The “positive control” (i.e., a group of test animals treated with a substance that has a known effect on the endpoint one is
studying) used was DES (diethylstilbestrol), a potent synthetic estrogen, and according to Sharpe, “DES did not seem to work so well.” BPA appeared more potent that DES, which makes no sense since it is well established that BPA is more than 10,000 times less estrogenically potent than DES. Sharpe said that “it is findings like these that make me concerned that the ‘effects’ of BPA are incidental.”

He ended by calling attention to the context in which the study is “being sold” – i.e., that similar reported effects in monkeys in “earlier studies that were terrible.”

Looking at such studies carefully and critically is the essence of a scientific approach. Without making these kinds of distinctions, one can easily be misled. So, one has to be wary of claims by people involved that the different studies “line up.” If the studies aren’t solid and are not repeatable, the fact that they “line up” means nothing.

Finally, we come to most bizarre and hard-to-fathom aspect of this story – that is, the controversy over BPA raging in the scientific community.

Over the past ten or so years, two opposed camps have emerged regarding the interpretation of the science relating to BPA. These groups hold radically different views of what is sound science in this matter and what is the obligation of science toward the public.

**The first group is closely associated with a biologist named Frederick vom Saal at the University of Missouri.** He and his coworkers and colleagues at different institutions have espoused the view that BPA and other xenoestrogens — that is chemicals that mimic estrogen or inhibit its normal production or functioning — do not obey the normal laws of toxicology according to which the effects of a toxin should increase with increasing dose. These researchers contend that abundant evidence supports the operation of “low-dose effects,” whereby one sees stronger effects at low doses than at higher doses, where there may be no effect or a much slighter effect. They also maintain that there is no threshold below which effects are not observed. We can call this group “the Believers.”

This group has been extremely vocal in advocating its position and it has been the source of many of the scientific papers – and news reports – drawing attention to the danger from BPA to infants and the general population. They have also made a practice of impugning the integrity of researchers who come up with results that contradict their position, especially when this research involves industry funding. The Believers feel that their data warrant regulatory action to strengthen protections against exposure to BPA and other “endocrine-disrupting chemicals.”

Clearly, these researchers believe in their position, but it is also true that the attention from the public and from regulatory agencies gives their work an importance that it might otherwise not have and helps to attract funding.

The second camp is composed of toxicologists, analytical chemists, reproductive endocrinologists, epidemiologists and others, who agree that environmental chemicals are a worthy topic of study, but who question the amount of attention and funding that has been directed at BPA and certain other chemicals. They also vigorously question the scientific
reasoning that the Believers use to explain the anomalous findings of some studies. Based on careful reasoning, they reject the Believers’ argument about seeing greater effects at “low doses” than at higher doses. (They also point out that some of the supposed “low doses” where effects are seen are actually much higher than the levels to which the general population is exposed). We will call this group the Skeptics.

This controversy, which has been growing over the past ten years, came to a quite unusual climax in 2013 when the European Commission decided to enforce a framework for regulating “endocrine-disrupting chemicals.” This framework inexplicably ignored the EC’s own expert authority, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), as well as the conclusions of many other bodies and societies that had determined that BPA was not a hazard at levels to which people are normally exposed.

Responding to the EC’s decision, a group of toxicologists, led by Daniel Dietrich of the Faculty of Biology at the University of Konstanz, Germany, wrote an open letter to the European Commission delivering a forceful critique of the decision.

The letter charges that, “The currently drafted framework is based on virtually complete ignorance of all well-established and taught principles of pharmacology and toxicology….”

The authors question why “endocrine disrupting chemicals” should be judged by a different standard from those routinely applied to any chemical, be it a neurotoxin or dermatotoxin. They further argue that “endocrine disruption is not a toxicologically defined end point but a mode of action that may or may not result in adverse effects.”

While acknowledging that concern for certain EDC’s is justified, the authors stressed that assessment of a hazard should be based on “whole human or animal systems” and not on isolated test systems of unknown homeostatic significance” and on a characterization of “real-life potency.”

Finally, they stress the harm to science and society that will be caused by allowing the complex process of evaluating the science to be influenced by political pressures.

The letter concludes with the words, “Regulations that profoundly affect human activities that legally impose significant fines and even detention should not be based on irrelevant tests forced to be regarded as relevant by administrative dictates and on arbitrary default assumptions of no thresholds. Such standards would be contrary not only to science, but to the very principles of an enlightened governance and social contract.”

This letter has been signed by a long and impressive roster of scientists in the fields of toxicology and pharmacology in the U.S. and Europe and has been published in a number of journals in this field.

At the heart of the clash over EDCs in general and BPA in particular is a deep philosophical and intellectual divide in modern society concerning the very notions of risk, the role of science, and the appropriate basis for identifying and regulating hazards. The stakes could not be higher.
MU Health Care receives $2.4 million gift

September 04, 2014  BY Sarah Redohl

The University of Missouri School of Medicine has received a $2.4 million donation to create the France T. McAndrew Endowed Chair in Oncology. The national search to hire the first researcher to hold this post will begin soon.

Mark McAndrew, of McKinney, Texas, made the donation in August in honor of his late aunt, Frances, who was a patient at the Ellis Fischel Cancer Center. MU cancer researcher Fred Hawthorne will receive $400,000 of the gift to fund his innovative research on boron-neutron therapy as a cancer treatment.

“Growing up in rural Missouri, I can say that rural Missourians have always looked to the University of Missouri health system as a source for care above and beyond the routine,” McAndrew said. “Frances always spoke highly of the top-notch care she received at the MU Ellis Fischel Cancer Center, and I hope this gift will help continue to advance the premier research and care the MU health system provides.”

Including his latest gift, McAndrew has given more than $3.8 million to MU. Previous donations include $1.4 million to fund the Clark County Flagship Scholarship, which provides four-year academic scholarships to MU students from Clark County.

McAndrew graduated from MU in 1975 with a bachelor’s degree in business administration and is a member of the Mizzou Alumni Association. He retired as chairman and CEO of Torchmark, a holding company specializing in life and supplemental insurance.

“Mr. McAndrew’s generosity and the spirit of his late aunt, Frances, are inspirations to the entire MU community,” MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said. “This gift will allow MU to attract and retain the highest caliber cancer researchers for decades to come. The fight against cancer is a long battle, but with strong support such as this, MU will play a leading role in future advancements in treatments.”
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Engineering clubs showcase tech toys to court new members

Thursday, September 4, 2014 | 9:22 p.m. CDT

BY SHELBY KARDELL

COLUMBIA — A drone, racecars and tractors were all in Peace Park on Thursday.

**Engineering clubs such as Mizzou Torque-N-Tigers, Mizzou Steel Bridge Team and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, converged on Peace Park to recruit new members.**

Doctoral students, graduate students, underclassmen and professors were present at the gathering, which provided barbecue for attendees.

A handmade drone was sitting at one of the tables, lime green blades bright in the evening sunlight. The Mizzou Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Team built the drone themselves.

Brandon Torres, a senior in mechanical engineering, explained that in competition, the drone "navigates on an obstacle course and then drops a payload." It was enough to recruit first-year doctoral student Xiaopeng Li, who signed up to be a part of the team.

Race car 62 was also at the park, although team members were having trouble starting it as they prepared to leave. The race cars are generally named after their number in their first race.

Rory Hourihan, a mechanical engineering student, said race car 62 was also handmade. It finished 19th out of 120 in this year's competition.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Tomato Festival opens community's eyes to vegetable varieties

Thursday, September 4, 2014 | 9:55 p.m. CDT; updated 6:40 a.m. CDT, Friday, September 5, 2014
BY ROSE MCMANUS

COLUMBIA — Deep within hundreds of acres of farmland east of Columbia, farmers displayed more than 270 varieties of tomatoes and peppers for eager guests to taste Thursday evening.

The 10th annual Bradford Tomato Festival was held at the Bradford Research Center. Tim Reinbott, superintendent of the center, estimated that more than 1,000 people showed up to the festival.

Reinbott has coordinated the event since its 2005 inception. Reinbott has been interested in agriculture since he was young.

"We always had gardens, always had vegetables," Reinbott said. "Right before the first frost, we'd pick all the green tomatoes and my mom would make relish. So we've been doing this kind of stuff forever."

Reinbott planned the first festival with the agricultural community in Columbia in mind. He said the first festival had 25 varieties but that number grew over time, and he had more than expected this year.

"I thought, once we've got 120, we've got to keep going, so we've got 170 now," he said. "It really opens up the community's eyes to different types of tomatoes and peppers."

The festival also featured 101 varieties of peppers. All 271 varieties of tomatoes and peppers were available for tasting and rating at the festival.

Guest speakers offered insights on tomato farming to assist local farmers and community members alike. They gave talks about the types of nutrients and soil to use in gardens. Attendees were able to ask questions about problems they experienced in their personal gardens.
Among the gardeners was Columbia resident Dennis Bettenhausen. He took advantage of the tomato tasting to find varieties for his own garden. Bettenhausen attended the festival for the third year and has been growing his own vegetables for 25 years.

"I think it's a good asset for the growers and it's good public relations for the university," Bettenhausen said.

The center, run by the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources at the MU, is located 11 miles east of Columbia. The event promotes the university as well as many local businesses. This year, about 10 restaurants featured food samples at the event.

Daniel Huaco, owner of Carlito's Cabo in Columbia, offered samples of salsa and chips to festival attendees. Huaco said the festival provides an opportunity to promote his salsa, which is a family recipe.

"A lot of our customers come here," Huaco said. "They are always happy to see us."

Other attractions at this year's event included a kids corner and a wine-tasting event. The wine-tasting event was new this year, Reinbott said.

As far as the future of the festival is concerned, Reinbott would like to have even more variety.

"I think the next step would be to take this model and go for sweet corn or other types of foods," he said.

For now, tomato and pepper lovers alike can look forward to next year's festival.