A week of events set to honor Loftin, MU's 175th anniversary

Wednesday, September 10, 2014 at 10:00 am

In honor of the University of Missouri’s 175th anniversary and the school’s newer administrative leader, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, the school is hosting a series of celebratory events next week.

The official installation for the chancellor — who came to MU in February — is from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Sept. 18 at the Missouri Theatre. The event is free and open to the public, but seating is limited.

Before the installation, an inauguration processional of MU faculty and administrators will walk in a parade from the Reynolds Alumni Center to the Missouri Theatre for the ceremony.

Among the week’s other events is a symposium addressing the future of land-grant institutions as well as the “innovation deficit,” a phrase coined by an alliance of university groups — including the prestigious Association of American Universities — to note the decline in federal funding to agencies that fund university research.

At the symposium, Peter McPherson, president of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, Kevin Reilly, presidential adviser for leadership with the American Council on Education, and Hank Foley, vice chancellor for research and graduate studies at MU, will all discuss the issues ahead for higher education research and land-grant schools.

For a full list of the week’s events, visit chancellor.missouri.edu/inauguration/.

MU Title IX office investigates report of sexual assault

Wednesday, September 10, 2014 at 11:38 am Comments (2)

The University of Missouri’s Title IX office reported a sexual assault to the MU Police Department yesterday, but the victim has chosen not to talk to the police, according to a news release.
MUPD Capt. Brian Weimer said Title IX officials investigated the sexual assault report, identified the victim and worked with her to gather information.

The victim reported to the Title IX coordinator that sometime between midnight and 1 a.m. Friday, she was sexually assaulted by an unknown man near the benches between Jesse Hall and Hill Hall on the MU campus, according to a news release from Weimer. The victim said the suspect penetrated her vagina with his finger, Weimer said. The suspect was described as a man taller than 5 feet 8 inches, wearing all black clothing.

Weimer issued the information as a so-called Clery release. Campus police nationwide are required to disclose information about crimes on or near school property.

MU Title IX Coordinator Linda Bennett started in her role this summer. In August, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said in an email that the Title IX office was investigating reports of sexual assault.

Anyone with information is asked to contact CrimeStoppers at 573-875-8477.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Parking lots not a ticket-free zone for Missouri football players

Wednesday, September 10, 2014 | 9:26 p.m. CDT
BY MICHAEL SHAW

COLUMBIA — Like many residents and students, Missouri football players are not fans of university parking tickets.

Several Missouri football players, including kicker Andrew Baggett and defensive tackle Lucas Vincent, took to Twitter earlier this week to complain about ticket enforcers in the Missouri Athletics Training Complex lot.

Vincent seemed upset at the level of enforcement in the complex's 130-space parking lot. With 520 Missouri student athletes, who use services inside the complex such as tutoring and the dining hall, parking can come at a premium.
Shortly after Lucas' tweet, Baggett had a few thoughts of his own about the complex's parking situation.

**Mike Sokoff, the director of MU Parking and Transportation Services, said the school doesn't issue parking permits specifically for the complex's lot. Drivers can use any kind of campus parking permit issued by the Parking and Transportation Services office.**

"We will accept any paid permit in that particular lot," Sokoff said.

That means student athletes aren't the only ones who get to use the complex's lot. In fact, MU Parking and Transportation Services doesn't issue parking permits specifically for student athletes. Sokoff said they have to apply for permits like every other student.

However, there is one group that gets special treatment in the complex's lot: coaches.

Missouri football coach Gary Pinkel and his staff have specific passes for the lot. And when their spots are taken, or when students park illegally, Sokoff and his office hear about it from Missouri Executive Associate Athletics Director Bryan Maggard.

When Sokoff receives a complaint from Maggard, he sends enforcement officers and sometimes tow trucks to deal with the illegally parked cars. That's what happened Monday before the team's weekly media session, and some vehicles were towed.

The NCAA has recently allowed for unlimited snacks for student athletes and appears to be moving toward paying them more than the value of their scholarships.

But the NCAA also bars student athletes from receiving illegal benefits, defined by Missouri's athletics department as "material benefits or services that are not available to the general student body."

That means no parking ticket immunity.
Lecturer disputes influence of money on elections, policy

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, September 10, 2014 at 10:55 am Comments (10)

In 2012, political candidates, parties, political action committees and “dark money” organizations that don’t disclose their donors combined to spend $7 billion to influence federal elections, according to the Federal Election Commission.

In Missouri, state candidates reporting to the Missouri Ethics Commission raised $109.5 million. The public worries about that money, said Jeffrey Milyo, a University of Missouri economics professor who last night delivered the 11th Annual 21st Century Corps of Discovery lecture. There is a general sense that offices are for sale, campaign contributions are legal bribes, money distorts policy decisions and, as a result, people feel alienated and don’t vote.

The resulting push for restrictions on political money is intended to increase confidence in government. His studies, he said, show money is not a controlling factor in elections and campaign finance restrictions do not make people feel better about elected officials.

“These public concerns, I would say, are overstated, and that’s the dirty secret,” he said. “Things aren’t so bad. I know that is an incredibly unwelcome message to many people. To say, ‘Things aren’t so bad, politicians aren’t so corrupt, money isn’t driving things,’ is an unwelcome message for a lot of people and they are quite skeptical.”

Milyo has published several studies of the influence of money on elections and policy. Last night, he emphasized whether large increases in the money available to candidate helps them win by bigger margins and whether stricter policies on campaign finance mean heavier taxes or regulation on industries that invest heavily in contributions and lobbying.

His conclusion is that although money helps a politician get started, a lot of extra money doesn’t help their margins. And regulating money doesn’t have a big impact on policy, he said.

“When you look across all 50 states, over time, you do not find that kind of a relationship, between campaign finance regulation and, more regulations say leading to higher taxes on
alcohol and cigarettes,” he said. “Some people have looked at corporate taxes. I’ve looked at Medicaid generosity. We don’t see those kinds of effect on public policy.”

The purpose of campaign finance regulation, he said, is to eliminate the appearance of corruption by people with undue influence. “The problem is that is a rather vague term, isn’t it? And after studying this for 25 years I have never heard anyone define undue influence,” Milyo said. “If you can’t define that then I don’t know what undue influence is. It is usually I don’t like your politics and you are too successful.”

Some members of the audience were skeptical of Milyo’s conclusions. Elizabeth Cogswell noted that his research is funded in part by the Koch Foundation and the Searle Foundation and that he is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. Koch Industries has been a major player in using “Super PACs” to engage in independent spending on elections. Searle has helped fund the American Legislative Exchange Council, which writes model conservative legislation.

“How do you make sure that doesn’t affect your methodology or conclusions?” Cogswell asked.

In reply, Milyo said his work is peer-reviewed and screened before it is published. He also said the question highlights why it might be a good idea to hide the names of political donors.

“If sort of smearing people and saying, ‘You got money from here, therefore you are connected to them,’ and, ‘They got money from here, and you are connected to them,’ if that works, people are going to do that.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

True/False adds three MU sites, one downtown as venues

Wednesday, September 10, 2014 | 10:18 p.m. CDT
BY RYAN MCELROY

COLUMBIA — MU's Bush and Keller auditoriums and Rhynsburger Theatre will become venues in the 2015 True/False Film Fest to provide enough seating while Jesse Hall is being renovated, the festival announced Wednesday. The Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge, a 180-seat venue where a few films were shown last year, will become a full-time screening location.

Jesse Hall is being renovated as part of the Renew Mizzou project. The renovation is expected to be completed in spring 2015.
Production, operations and installations manager for the film festival Camellia Cosgray said accommodating festival-goers without Jesse Auditorium won't be easy.

"It's going to make for a challenging year for a lot of reasons," Cosgray said. "We'll have to have additional staff because there's not another venue in town as big as Jesse that will work for True/False."

The changes will also mean additional costs, but Cosgray said, "We're up to the challenge."

The three MU auditoriums combined have about 1,200 seats, so they don't match Jesse Auditorium's 1,730-seat capacity, said John Murray, MU's senior director of event operations. But he credited the festival staff for coming up with a workable solution.

"We asked them to bring us a plan, and they brought a very well thought-out one," he said.

Having additional venues at MU won't affect scheduled classes, exams or any other aspect of academics; that was priority one, he said.

In addition to the festival, Jesse Auditorium typically hosts many events throughout the year. Those are also scheduled elsewhere while the auditorium is closed.

"We certainly have been able to accommodate most of them with the Missouri Theatre," Murray said. "Before we were operating that space, it wouldn't have been an option to close Jesse for a year."

Still, he said, MU hasn't been able to accommodate all events because with 1,200 seats, the Missouri Theatre is a bit smaller than Jesse Auditorium.

Although the auditorium will not be open before the 12th year of the film festival in March, it will not be closed for the entire 2014-15 academic calendar.

"We're right on track," Murray said. "Everything is moving along real well. It is not an option for us not to do the May commencements in Jesse, so we will be open no later than mid-May of next year, but it's looking like it will be earlier."

Meanwhile, the film festival is making adjustments.
"We are trying to add more screenings where we can, but it's already a fairly tight schedule," Cosgray said. "It's a tight turn around, and there's not a whole lot of wiggle room."

The festival is scheduled for March 5 to 8 next year. Approximately 43,000 tickets were sold for the 2014 festival, co-founder Paul Sturtz said.

Ferguson and the summer of 1967

By Chuck Henson

Henson is a law professor at the University of Missouri School of Law.

White man shoots and kills black man. Predominantly black population protests, riots, loots. Predominantly white police force overwhelmed. Governor calls out the National Guard. Curfew imposed.

Similar events took place in Newark and Detroit in the summer of 1967. President Johnson responded by dispatching what would become known as the Kerner Commission to find the causes and propose a solution. The commission’s basic conclusion was “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal.”

Among its findings, the commission reported action against “local symbols of white American society, authority and property.” No single triggering event caused the “disorders.” They were part of a disturbed atmosphere in which tension-heightening prior incidents, often police action, became linked in the minds of blacks “with a reservoir of underlying grievances” in communities where blacks were grossly underrepresented in government. The two most intensely held grievances were police practices and unemployment.

The most fundamental reason for civil disorder in 1967 was “the racial attitude and behavior of white Americans toward black Americans.” Contributing factors included exposure through the media to unparalleled white prosperity, an unemployment rate more than double that of whites, and the frustrated hopes of unfulfilled expectations aroused by the major events of the Civil Rights Era.

The commission’s proposed solution was not equality, but equity. De jure equality, meaning everyone is promised the same amount of access, the declaration of a “colorblind” society, already existed in 1967 because of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The commission recognized that it was too late for de jure equality. Equity, granting more to those who need the most, was the cure: “Only a commitment
to national action on an unprecedented scale can shape a future compatible with the historic ideals of American society.”

The commission’s proposal required “the will to tax ourselves to the extent necessary, to meet the vital needs of the nation.” At the local level: a guaranteed meaningful voice in politics, the recruitment and fair promotion of more black police officers. At the federal level: the specific creation of jobs for blacks and the delivery of a sense of community ownership by providing access to the ability to own and situating affordable housing in areas outside of the existing ghettos. Blacks required authority and property so that those symbols of white American society could become symbols of a shared American society.

There was no equitable reallocation of resources to support the commission’s solution. The proportion of black unemployment to white in the United States has been about 129 percent for the past 50 years. In the St. Louis metropolitan area, including Ferguson, the black unemployment rate is 300 percent higher than the white unemployment rate.

Ferguson’s population is 67 percent black. The mayor is white. The city council of six has one black representative. The 53-member police force contains three black officers. As the commission reported in 1968, Ferguson this summer contained all of the ingredients for “disorder.”

The events in Ferguson evidence the enduring truth of the commission’s major conclusion of separate unequal societies. The “reservoir of underlying grievances” remains as well. The United States’ civil rights experiment attacked only the worst forms of discrimination. In the 1960s, television showed the worst forms: attack dogs and high-pressure fire hoses being turned on black protesters in cities like Birmingham, Ala. Those are not the only or most pervasive forms of discrimination. Covert intentional discrimination and unconscious bias remain unabated.

Despite the commission’s report, the danger of missing the point is again at hand. The perennial issues remain the lack of shared authority and property and their symbolic racial exclusivity. Those who are blind to these issues have never been concerned about their place in American society. What can be seen by all is of dubious relevance to the creation of a single American identity: Was Mr. Brown armed, what had Mr. Brown allegedly done earlier, what Officer Wilson knew, were the protesters rioters, were they locals or in words reminiscent of George Wallace in 1964 “outside agitators”? Separateness, focus on irrelevancies and obliviousness to the meaning of the symbols generates questions like: “What’s wrong with those black people?”

Officer Wilson did not recognize that Mr. Brown’s walking in the street was a demonstration of property and authority. For a person with no share of actual property or authority, walking in the middle of the street creates and sustains a belief that they have property (the space on which they stand) and authority (the ability to command that cars go around them). Officer Wilson did know that, after accosting Mr. Brown, Officer Wilson was in fear of Mr. Brown. Fear of Mr. Brown is part of Officer Wilson’s culture. We fear the unknown. We despise, vilify and ultimately come to hate what we fear.
The Kerner Commission highlighted the testimony of a witness who had studied the reports of the investigations of riots in Chicago in 1919, in Harlem in 1935 and 1943 and the McConne Commission report on Watts in 1965. According to that witness: “I must again in candor say — it is a kind of Alice in Wonderland — with the same moving picture re-shown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.”

The last two weeks in Ferguson represent an opportunity to make a choice. We can embark on the Kerner Commission’s project of the “creation of a true union — a single society and a single American identity” by choosing equity as a national policy. Or, we can choose, as we always have, inaction, and await the next Ferguson.