MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

Sept. 30, 2014
University of Missouri gets $830,000 federal grants

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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COLUMBIA, MO. - The University of Missouri has been awarded two federal grants worth more than $830,000 to implement programs on family farms.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports (http://bit.ly/1Byd3Zs) Monday that the U.S. Department of Agriculture innovation grants will focus on building soil health and wildlife habitat using cover crops. They will also address waste heat recovery in poultry barns.

The grants require that the university match the USDA's contribution for each of the grant recipient projects.

About $16 million worth of innovation grants were awarded nationwide. A state conservationist says the grants will help transfer innovative ideas from academia to private farms.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/state/missouri/article2332111.html#storylink=cpy
Missouri swimmer arrested in connection with Hawthorn Hall fires

Monday, September 29, 2014 | 10:02 p.m. CDT; updated 6:43 a.m. CDT, Tuesday, September 30, 2014
BY TAYLOR WANBAUGH

COLUMBIA — The MU Police Department arrested a member of the Missouri swim team Saturday on suspicion of starting fires in Hawthorn Residence Hall.

A Hawthorn Hall employee recognized the man who appeared on a surveillance video near the fire.

Keiser Witte was arrested around 8:05 p.m. Saturday on suspicion of two counts of first-degree arson. Police said he caused Saturday morning's fire, and they said he admitted to starting another fire in the residence hall that was found on Jan. 6. No one was injured in the fires.

The MU student directory lists Witte as a sophomore studying English.

Witte was immediately suspended from the Missouri swim team, according to a text message from Kate Lakin, MU Athletics' associate director of strategic communications. The suspension is indefinite.

Witte was being held Monday night at Boone County Jail on $20,000 bail.
Arrest made in connection to Hawthorn fire

Witte, a Mizzou swimmer, is being held in the Boone County Jail with a $20,000 bond.
By Aaron Reiss and Covey Eonyak Son
Sept. 27, 2014
Updated Sept. 29, 2014 at 8:52 p.m.

Sophomore Keiser A. Witte, a member of the Missouri men’s swimming team, was arrested by MUPD around 8 p.m. on Saturday and charged with two counts of first-degree arson.

MUPD spokesman Scott Richardson said the department identified Witte as a suspect after reviewing surveillance footage from Hawthorn Hall. Witte was then contacted by the department and brought in for questioning.

Richardson said Witte was arrested upon completion of the interview, but declined to comment on whether Witte had confessed to counts of arson as the case is still under investigation.

Mizzou Athletics spokesperson Kate Lakin provided the following statement: “Over the weekend, Athletics became aware of the situation, and Keiser was immediately suspended from the program. The suspension is indefinite as we continue to work with authorities to learn more.”

Witte was booked into the Boone County Jail at 10:30 p.m. on Saturday. He is currently being held there with a $20,000 bond.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said a “small fire” around 10 a.m. Saturday at Hawthorn Hall triggered the building’s sprinkler system and prompted an evacuation.

Basi said all residents were safely evacuated for about an hour and a half and no injuries were reported.
Basi said the Columbia Fire Department is investigating the incident. Officials from the department were unavailable for comment.

Basi said the sprinkler system caused water damage to 16 rooms in the building.

He said Department of Residential Life staff are working with residents to replace and repair damaged belongings and find new living spaces.

Boone County, Columbia, and Mizzou celebrate 175 years together

Posted: Sep 29, 2014 7:31 PM by Spencer Wilson, KOMU 8 News
Updated: Sep 29, 2014 8:35 PM

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin gives Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid and Boone County Presiding Commissioner Daniel Atwill a gift at the Town and Gown event in Columbia, Missouri on Sept. 29, 2014. Town and Gown was held in Columbia at City Hall to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the University of Missouri.

COLUMBIA - 175 years ago, Louis Daguerre took the first picture of the moon. This was the same year the state founded the University of Missouri in Columbia, Missouri.
During a steamy fall afternoon, the Commissioner of Boone County, the Mayor of Columbia and the Chancellor of the University of Missouri gathered in front of city hall in order to appreciate their history together.

Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid said since the beginning of their relationship, the university and the city have relied on each other for growth.

"The university draws in people, who then graduate and help create new businesses and new jobs, and sometimes continue to live here," McDavid said. "That in turn helps the city, which then makes the university more attractive."

University of Missouri Chancellor Bowen Loftin also said the school has done much more than educate the students who go there.

"We began with very few students, and now we are at 35,000," Loftin said. "The city is about 117,000 I think, so we are a huge fraction of the city, and by far the biggest economic driver in the city and county both."

Several MU pieces were displayed in an exhibit in city hall. A few of the items included a ceremonial mace made for Loftin’s inauguration, a tiger mascot costume Truman was modeled after, and a grade book from Walter Williams.

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**Ridiculous Ruling Says University Can't Release Course Syllabi Because That Would Violate Professors' Copyright**

College syllabi are handed out *en masse* at the beginning of a course for students. Sometimes they’re kept and carefully followed; sometimes they’re tossed away when the student decides not to take it after all. Professors often post their syllabi online. They are not treated like creative works.

*Therefore, the idea that syllabi are the copyrighted property of the professor seems far-fetched. The idea that the university that employs the professor must refuse requests for copies of them under a state’s “Sunshine Law” seems even more so. But that is exactly the situation in a dispute involving the University of Missouri and the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ).*

As a part of a national study meant to evaluate education school programs – the training future teachers get in college – NCTQ sought the syllabi from numerous institutions. Most schools cooperated, if grudgingly. (You can read about NCTQ’s analysis of education schools and programs [here.](#))

The one that absolutely refused was the University of Missouri. That caused NCTQ to take the further step of formally requesting the syllabi under the state’s Sunshine Law, which is supposed to let the public
know what government and governmental institutions are up to. The university still refused, so NCTQ sued.

So far, NCTQ has lost.

On August 26, a Missouri appeals court held that course syllabi are protected by federal copyright law. That trumps the state’s Sunshine Law, so the court ruled that the university is correct in refusing to allow NCTQ or anyone else to have copies. NCTQ will appeal the decision to the Supreme Court of Missouri.

One University of Missouri professor who disagrees with the decision is Michael Podgursky, chairman of the Economics Department from 1995 to 2005. In an op-ed published in the Columbia Tribune on September 14, he argued that the university’s stance is misguided.

Podgursky points out that professors frequently adopt much or even all of existing syllabi by other professors who have taught the same class. “Rare, indeed, is the new assistant professor who does not borrow copiously from the syllabi of his mentor professors when he starts a new teaching job,” he writes. No one ever complains about that practice.

Furthermore, he argues, taxpayers have a right to know what is being taught in the universities they support. “If I’m using a Jane Austen novel instead of an economics textbook in my principles of economics course, the public certainly has a right to know that,” Podgursky writes.

Addressing the wider implications of the case, Erich Veith, attorney for NCTQ, observes in Missouri Lawyers Weekly (unfortunately, the article is not available online) that the decision would hinder access to public records and compel public agencies to “scour requested documents for any copyright issues.” In short, it will be harder for investigators to let the sun shine on governmental conduct.

The Missouri Press Association also assailed the ruling. In the same article cited above, Jean Maneke, an attorney with the Association said that it would file an amicus brief supporting NCTQ’s position since the court’s ruling could encourage public and quasi-public entities to close their records or at least delay their release.

On legal grounds, the University of Missouri’s refusal to release the syllabi looks very shaky. Do professors really hold copyright over their syllabi?

One expert in copyright law, Chapman University law professor Tom Bell, thinks not. In an email to me, he wrote, “While debate continues over whether scholarship prepared in the course of employment with a university falls within the work-for-hire doctrine, there can be little doubt that syllabi do, meaning that the copyrights in them vest in the university rather than the professor.”

Another reason for believing that the court’s ruling is incorrect is the “fair use” exception to copyright. Under “fair use,” people are permitted to make reasonable use of copyrighted material. Among the factors that are to be considered are whether the use is for a non-profit educational purpose and how the use would affect the market value of the work. Here, the analysis to be done on the syllabi is for a non-profit educational purpose (assessing the quality of the education school courses), and it has no impact at all on the market value of the syllabi, which is zero.
It is easy to see what is going on here. The University of Missouri is trying to avoid possible criticism of its education school by hiding behind a legally risible defense that it is merely protecting the rights of its faculty members.

If Missouri’s position were to stand, that would greatly strengthen the widespread perception that copyright has been taken to ridiculous extremes. For example, in his recent book *Intellectual Privilege: Copyright, the Common Law, and the Common Good*, Professor Bell makes a powerful case that whatever public benefit there is in copyright is heavily outweighed by the harm it does. He would like to see copyright abandoned in favor of common law arrangements that would create a better balance between the interests of creators and the interests of the public.

I will have more to say about Bell’s thought-provoking book in a future article.

For now, let’s conclude by going back to basics on copyright — the Constitution’s language authorizing it. Under Article I, Section 8, Congress is given power to establish copyrights and patents, “To promote the progress of science and the useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.”

Exactly how does it promote the progress of science or the useful arts for college professors to be given the exclusive right to their course syllabi? Obviously, it doesn’t do so at all. Much of what now passes as copyright law would have been laughed at by the Founders and this case is a prime illustration of how copyright has mushroomed far beyond its intended scope.

**Banning Frats?**

**September 30, 2014  by Jake New**

**NO MU MENTION**

This month was not kind to the already-embattled image of the American college fraternity.

Wesleyan University announced that its fraternities would have to go coeducational amid a push from students and faculty members who say that fraternities encourage sexism and mistreatment of women. Clemson University suspended all fraternity activity following a member's fatal plunge from a bridge. The Texas Tech University chapter of Phi Delta Theta was suspended after displaying a banner that read "No Means Yes, Yes Means Anal."
And with research and college health experts noting that incidents of sexual assault and high-risk drinking are particularly prevalent among fraternity and sorority members than other students on campus, a question inevitably arises: Why don't colleges just do away with Greek life completely?

"That creates two more questions," said Elizabeth Armstrong, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Michigan. "The first question is, is that actually realistic? Can that actually be done? The second, what are the potential consequences, both intended and unintended? Some campuses have actually made the move, but they are small liberal arts colleges on the East coast. It's difficult to see Ohio State or Mississippi making a move like that. These are really powerful organizations there."

Banning fraternities -- with their deep pockets and even deeper roots -- from large state universities would be a difficult (if not impossible) endeavor. The same can be said for Ivy League institutions like Dartmouth College, where more than two-thirds of students belong to a fraternity or sorority. That hasn't stopped students, faculty, and even college presidents from suggesting it. At Dartmouth last month, hundreds of students said they would like to see the college's Greek system "abolished."

But some say that abolishing fraternities and sororities would not help curb instances of sexual assault and heavy drinking -- and could actually exacerbate them.

While the majority of fraternity members do not commit rape, they are three times as likely to commit rape as non-members, according to a 2007 study. Another study, published in the NASPA Journal in 2009, found that 86 percent of fraternity house residents engaged in binge drinking, compared to 45 percent of non-fraternity men. Fraternity house members were twice as likely to fall behind in academic work, engage in unplanned sex, or be injured after drinking.

Fraternity members were more likely to have unprotected sex, damage property, and drive, all while under the influence of alcohol.

"It's not just a stereotype," said George Koob, the director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. "There is pretty good evidence that fraternity individuals are drinking more, particularly in the heavy range of binge drinking. They have more problems associated with drinking. They have more impairment in occupational functioning related to drinking, such as getting homework and term papers done. But, I don't think you should go about banning fraternities. Punishment is rarely the way to go about anything like this. If you punish a behavior, it comes back with a vengeance."

In the case of banning a Greek system, that behavior could come back in the form of off-campus houses or underground fraternities that could not be regulated by colleges.

"There's always the risk that if you force fraternities off campus, they just form their own houses off campus," said Kevin Kruger, president of NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. "They're still there, exhibiting the same behaviors, only now they don't really have to answer to anybody."

That's already the case with fraternities like American University's infamous "secret" frat Epsilon Iota and Wesleyan's Beta Theta Pi, a house that's facing a sexual assault lawsuit and where a sophomore fell from a third-story window earlier this month. Wesleyan has no say in how the chapter itself operates, so it instead resorted to banning its students from the house.

Thomas Fox, the national executive director of Psi Upsilon, said that if banning fraternities and sororities drives houses off campus, many issues could be exacerbated by colleges' inability to intervene.
"Quite frankly, bans don’t accomplish anything," Fox said. "The problems that fraternities and sororities are facing exist outside of the Greek system as well. We offer educational opportunities to help combat these issues and have alumni volunteers to help mentor our members. When done right we are complementing the academic mission of the institutions where we exist."

For many college presidents, too many aspects of Greek life are not being "done right," Kruger said, and patience is wearing thin. The colleges that have abolished fraternities -- mostly small private liberal arts colleges like Colby, Bowdoin, Middlebury, and Williams -- say publicly that they do not regret the decision. While the bans at these colleges did lead to secret fraternities sprouting up off-campus, their influence has waned over the years.

Some colleges and universities are trying to split the difference -- acknowledging the values of a Greek system by not banning it outright, but ordering dramatic changes to some longstanding traditions. This month, Dartmouth banned pledging at its fraternities and sororities, and Sigma Alpha Epsilon has forbidden pledging at all of its chapters. A handful of colleges in recent years have forced Greek houses to become coeducational, including Trinity College in Connecticut and, last week, Wesleyan.

"Only about 4 or 5 percent of the student body belongs to a Greek organization," said Kate Carlisle, public relations manager at Wesleyan. "Since this change only involves two residences and a relatively small number of students, the practical aspects of the transition are likely be easier than at larger public colleges."

While Wesleyan currently has just two recognized fraternities and one non-residential sorority, Ohio State University, for example, has 38 fraternities and 24 sororities. At the University of Mississippi, 32 percent of undergraduate men are fraternity members and 34 percent of women are in sororities. More than 7,000 of the University of Alabama's 30,000 undergraduates are members of the Greek system. At these universities, even banning individual chapters is a lengthy and time-consuming process, Armstrong said, and, as some of the houses are owned by national Greek organizations, much-needed student housing "just sits there empty" after a fraternity has moved out.

Outright bans of Greek life are not really considered to be on the table at these types of colleges, Kruger said, and the same can be said for going coeducational. Some universities have taken smaller actions to change Greek culture, however. Last year, Pennsylvania State University's Interfraternity Council banned parties during a key college party weekend known as State Patty's Day. This summer, all fraternities and sororities at Purdue University went dry -- officially, at least.

"It's understandable knee-jerk reaction to say, 'Why don't we just get rid of them?,'" Kruger said. "The really negative things are really so awful. But I think for many campuses, trying to work within the Greek system is better than not having it at all. When fraternities and sororities are done well, they really are extraordinary leadership opportunities. But when they are done poorly, it's truly horrific."