Second MU provost candidate to visit campus

By Ashley Jost

Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at 11:45 am Comments (1)

A second candidate for the University of Missouri provost position is coming to campus.

John Wiencek, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, will speak and field questions from faculty, staff and students at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday in Stotler Lounge III on the first floor of the north wing of Memorial Student Union.

Wiencek has served as interim provost since May after Virginia Commonwealth’s former provost, Beverly Warren, was chosen to be president of Kent State University. Before his appointment, Wiencek was the professor and senior vice provost for administration and strategic initiatives and a professor in the Virginia Commonwealth Department of Chemical and Life Science Engineering since August 2013.

Before going to Virginia Commonwealth, Wiencek worked as a dean and professor at the University of South Florida in the Department of Chemical and Biomedical Engineering. He also has held administrator roles in addition to being a professor at the University of Iowa and Rutgers University, according to his curriculum vitae.

Wiencek received his bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from the University of Cincinnati before getting his masters and doctorate, also in chemical engineering, from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

“There are three units that need a lot of help — one is engineering,” MU Faculty Council Chairman Craig Roberts said. “Having a provost with an engineering background does give the university an advantage.”

Wiencek’s visit comes about a week after the first candidate visit from Michele Wheatly, the former provost at West Virginia University.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said there is no information available at this time about how many candidates there will be or when the other candidates will visit campus.
The traveling Tiger: Where in the world is Chancellor Loftin

Since February, MU has spent more than $30,000 for Loftin’s travels.

Since becoming MU’s chancellor on Feb. 1, R. Bowen Loftin has visited New York City, Los Angeles and many cities in between.

According to public records, the university has spent a total of $29,284.65 for Loftin’s travel expenses from Feb. 1 to Oct. 9, the date of the most recent available records. MU spokesman Christian Basi said funding for the trip came from the general university budget.

Travel records were not yet available for Loftin’s trip to Washington, D.C., last week.

The records list 20 trips to locations across the world. Four of the trips were within Missouri, 15 were to locations around the U.S. and one was to Western Cape, South Africa.

The trip to South Africa was the most expensive, with a total cost of $10,160.17 for a flight, seat upgrade, travel agent fee and personal expenses. According to Loftin’s Twitter account, the purpose of the trip was to visit with the University of Western Cape, a partner of MU.

@bowtieger Today begins visit to long-time #Mizzou partner, University of West Cape. >1,000 students/faculty have come here to study and do research.

Basi said 12 of the trips have been “advancement visits,” which are trips to meet with donors or potential donors to the university that sometimes include alumni events.

Other purposes for out-of-state travels include meetings for the Southeastern Conference, the Association of American Universities and the Homeland Security Advisory Council.

Loftin also travels out of town with the MU football team for every away game. So far during this season, those trips have been to Toledo, Ohio; Columbia, South Carolina; and Gainesville, Florida.

According to Basi, these trips with the football team are paid for by the athletic department, which is why they are not included on the travel expense records.

Basi said the university uses Adelman Travel to book flights for out-of-state trips. According to the expense records, $460 has been paid to the company in agent fees since February.
@bowtieger Just landed in Toledo with @MizzouFootball and the team looks great! #TigersRuleTheField

@bowtieger About to join @MizzouFootball to head to the "other" Columbia. Our objective is simple: bring back a W tomorrow night. #TigersRuleTheField

@bowtieger About to leave CoMo with @MizzouFootball to get a W in Gainesville. #TigersEatGatorsForDinner

Within Missouri, Loftin attends UM System Board of Curators meetings and other MU-related events. In August, he traveled around central and western Missouri to sites of MU Extension, a program that brings university research and education to locations around the state.

“This was an opportunity for him to see some of the programs that MU Extension offers to Missouri citizens and how Extension has a significant impact on the local and regional economies,” Basi said.

Todd McCubbin, executive director of the Mizzou Alumni Association, said because Loftin is the first chancellor from outside MU since 1996, he wants to familiarize himself with the university.

McCubbin said the association organizes the events Loftin attends with alumni around the state and country. He said the trips give Loftin the opportunity to represent the university and update alumni on current happenings as well as to personally meet them.

“We’re in the relationship business,” McCubbin said. “Our job is to maintain and create a positive relationship with each one of our graduates. When you have a chance to put the chancellor in a room with a few hundred alumni in different places and they get the chance to hear his vision and interact with him, they get a better feeling about what’s going on.”

Although Loftin has traveled multiple times each month since taking office, McCubbin said the amount of travel is not unusual for a chancellor in his first year in the position, citing former chancellor Brady Deaton as an example.

McCubbin said the alumni-related trips are usually planned based on where Loftin will already be for other purposes.

“We make sure to use his time wisely,” McCubbin said. “We keep in mind where he’ll be for other things and how can he maximize his time traveling.”
RHA chooses five working names for new residence hall

Congress determined their top five hall names to be Gateway, Carver, Caspian, Justice and Sustainability.

Virginia Avenue South Housing is just the temporary name of the new residence hall opening on campus next fall, and it is up to the Residential Halls Association to come up with something a little more creative.

"Whenever we start a project for building a new residence hall, we have to come up with a name of the project," Director of Residential Life Frankie Minor said. "Then we have to eventually come up with a working name."

The four RHA committees, Advocacy, Operations, Programming and Residential Living, were tasked with coming up with a list of ideas for the working name, RHA speaker of Congress Garrett Wilt said.

There was only one guideline for the committees as they brainstormed.

“They are not allowed to be named after people that are living,” RHA President Steven Chaffin said. “The university likes to leave those people open for potentially donating to the university at some point. It is essentially a temporary name because they like the permanent name to be after someone who has donated.”

Instead, Chaffin said he suggested the committees think of names that would relate to Missouri’s history.

After each committee had voted on their top name choices, those choices and the choices of the RHA executive board were compiled and voted upon in Congress, Wilt said.

Congress determined the top five choices: Gateway, Carver, Caspian, Justice and Sustainability.

The reasoning for the top name, Gateway, comes from Missouri’s history and the goal of the residence hall.

“Missouri is often thought of as the ‘Gateway to the West,’ so you have that historical aspect,” Chaffin said. “Also, with the university being the first established university west of the Mississippi, you have that historical ‘Gateway to the West’ aspect to it. At the same time, this new residence hall will be more sustainable than any that came before it.”
The new residence hall will feature thermal water heating and use construction materials recycled from the old Johnston Hall. It will be the second residence hall to be LEED-certified, Chaffin said.

“This is essentially a gateway to the future of college campuses and how we hope to see residence halls in the future,” Chaffin said.

The list of names was passed in the form of a resolution, and was then taken by Chaffin to Minor.

“From there, he took it to (Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs) Cathy Scroggs,” Chaffin said. “After they both approved it, I then sent it to Chancellor (R. Bowen) Loftin. We’re still waiting to hear back from him, but should he approve, it will then go to UM System President Tim Wolfe. He will have the final say concerning the name.”

Minor said that if the chancellor endorses the resolution, Wolfe would probably endorse it unless he has a strong objection to it.

This process differs slightly from the process of permanently naming a residence hall, in which the final say would go to the UM System Board of Curators.

“If at some point in the future there is a distinguished alumnus they want to name the hall after, they have the ability to take off this name and do that,” Minor said. “But at least we’ve got a good functional and, I’d say, meaningful name until that point.”

McKee, Waters, Mumford renovations remain unfunded

Renovations for McKee, Waters and Mumford could take a while to begin as the state legislature debates funding.

Walking through McKee Gymnasium — one of three buildings rated over 0.5 on the Facilities Conditions Needs Index last year — is like taking a step back in time.

Foggy windows, stairs and walls with chipped paint, and old wooden floors and doors are several of the building’s most outdated features. The building was built in 1922 and hasn’t received a complete makeover since.
But McKee, which scored 0.8 on the index, isn’t alone. Waters Hall also scored 0.8 and Mumford Hall scored 0.5, meaning that about 80 percent and 50 percent of the buildings need to be completely renovated.

**The university’s goal is to reduce overall campus FCNI to 0.3 in 10 years, according to a previous Maneater article.**

Waters and Mumford have also received no significant updates since they were first constructed, with only regular maintenance repairs to ensure the building can still function.

The three buildings serve academic functions and house several departments, such as the Department of Nutritional Sciences and Exercise Physiology (in McKee), the Division of Plant Sciences (in Waters) and the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics (in Mumford).

Campus Facilities spokeswoman Karlan Seville said the buildings were deemed safe for occupancy by inspections performed at the beginning of this year, and they are currently in use by students and faculty. However, she said, the buildings are still outdated and not optimal for how they are used today.

“None of the buildings are designed for today’s technology and today’s teaching styles,” Seville said.

Renovating McKee is expected to cost about $15 million, while Waters and Mumford are anticipated to cost $22 million and $24 million, respectively.

The university’s total facilities backlog has been estimated at $1.3 billion, with $186 million considered “urgent.” At a UM System Board of Curators meeting in January, the board discussed the possibility of imposing an annual student fee of $300-350 to raise funds for facilities.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said the Missouri Board of Higher Education asks for MU’s requests for capital improvements every year. McKee, Waters and Mumford were all included on this year’s list.

Basi said MU officials would not know the specific details of the projects until funding is approved by the state legislature.

“Once funding is in place, a lot of action starts taking place … but we hesitate to make any significant steps before then because we don’t want to overplan until the money is secured,” he said.

Basi said MU personnel consider how they can more efficiently use the existing space with every renovation. For example, Basi said, many of the campus’ older buildings have high ceilings that can be renovated to add an additional floor for more classrooms and laboratories.

“Every time we renovate a building, we are making a concerted effort to improve the overall academic performance of the campus,” Basi said.
Despite their high rankings on the FCNI, the three buildings are among 30 that need to undergo renovations, Seville said.

According to Seville, MU does not have a list outlining the priority for renovations, but buildings that house STEM-field majors will likely be the university’s first priority.

Seville said securing funding for Lafferre Hall has been one of the university’s top priorities for several years.

Missouri Students Association Senate Speaker Ben Bolin said that having so many outdated buildings reflects poorly on the university.

“When I was thinking about going here, I was taken away by the botanical garden and inspiring atmosphere, but to have buildings that are an eyesore or that need to be redone takes away from the great atmosphere that we’re trying to create here,” he said.

Bolin said MSA will wait to see if the state legislature approves funding for the three buildings before they take action. Last year, the group traveled to Jefferson City to rally for funding for Lafferre Hall with members of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri.

“Students need to have something that’s conducive to technology today because if these areas aren’t updated, it negatively impacts students’ productivity and our ability to learn,” Bolin said.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Kyiv Post editors speak on unique reporting of Ukraine conflict

BY KENDALL FOLEY

COLUMBIA — Diving into freezing rivers to retrieve documents dumped there by a former president isn't usually part of a journalist's job description.

But unique situations often arise while reporting on Ukraine's conflict, said Kyiv Post editors Brian Bonner and Katya Gorchinskaya, who were in Columbia to receive one of seven Missouri Honor Medals for Distinguished Service in Journalism awarded by the Missouri School of Journalism. The two spoke at 2 p.m. Tuesday in MU's Fisher Auditorium. Through two dictatorships, a revolution and now an ongoing war, Ukraine's only
English-language paper has operated for 19 years as an editorially independent newspaper in Ukraine.

Deputy chief editor Gorchinskaya showed photos of people diving into a freezing river and dodging ice chunks to retrieve documents that former Ukraine president Viktor Yanukovych dumped into the Dnipro River in February. Gorchinskaya said the former president abandoned evidence of embezzlement and "black lists" of active journalists among other incriminating evidence before fleeing the country.

Even among the difficulties of working for an independent paper in a harsh environment, Bonner explained that keeping integrity is essential. He has been fired and re-hired twice by the same person for deciding to report on issues he thought were important.

In one of these instances, Bonner published a story against his publisher's order to cancel it due to outside pressure. His publisher called him immediately the next morning and fired him, Bonner said. Gorchinskaya led a strike of the staff of the Kyiv Post until he was re-hired, Bonner said.

Bonner said he knew it was a lose-lose situation.

"I decided to answer to my conscience and the people," he said. "I could have kept my job that way, if I'd just killed the story. But then I would have lost the respect of my staff and the readers."

According to Reporters Without Borders 2013 World Press Freedom Index, Ukraine is the 126th worst on the list of 179 countries based on the amount of violence against journalists, governmental transparency and media independence. The U.S. is 32 on the list.

Gorchinskaya also showed a list of tips on how to stay safe while reporting in a war zone. It included "never wear camouflage," and "stay away from soldiers, they're targets." She also chuckled at journalists' early precaution of wearing bicycle helmets, which they now realize isn't very effective in a war zone.
Bonner and Gorchinskaya said that, surprisingly, the best way to report in such a divided culture and during turmoil is to make sure all sides are being heard, regardless of personal bias.

Throughout the revolution and war, journalists strive to "leave feelings at home" and dig into the grit of both sides, Gorchinskaya said.

"Journalists are human, too," she said. "It's impossible not to take a side."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Documentary photographer Eugene Richards clicks with students

Tuesday, October 28, 2014 | 7:00 p.m. CDT
BY JILLIAN VONDY

COLUMBIA — About 25 students, staff and faculty members listened to documentary photographer Eugene Richards speak at the Missouri School of Journalism on Tuesday about his photography and creative process.

Richards is one of seven recipients of the 2014 Missouri Honor Medal for Distinguished Service in Journalism awarded by the journalism school.

Richards spoke in depth about several of his documentary projects such as "A Procession of Them," about psychiatric institutions around the world, and his personal approach to photography and the creative process.

At 2 p.m., he also led a master class titled, "The Run-on of Time," at the Fred W. Smith Forum.

His photography portfolio can be viewed on his website.
Branson showman Yakov Smirnoff is coming to the University of Missouri, but this time it’s for personal research rather than laughs.

Sometime in the next few weeks, Smirnoff is scheduled to sit in on classes related to relationships — particularly classes focused on intimate relationships — to gain some additional perspective for a sitcom under development.

“Happily Ever Laughter” has been in the works since March, Smirnoff said. He is working with the Carsey Werner Co. — which produced shows such as “The Cosby Show,” “That ’70s Show” and “Roseanne” — and director Jay Sandrich, who directed episodes of “The Cosby Show” and the “Mary Tyler Moore Show,” among others.

The script is being polished now, Smirnoff said. The sitcom focuses on Smirnoff, a Midwestern comedian, college professor and a marriage counselor.

Smirnoff would play himself in many ways — he is a comedian with a daily show in Branson and teaches part time at Missouri State University and Drury University in Springfield. Ideally, he said, he hopes the setting of the show is based on a similar-size Midwestern college town such as Columbia at a university where the class sizes are large. Experiencing a large class is part of the reason he is coming to MU, he said.

The sitcom will feature Smirnoff putting his background to good use. He has a master’s degree in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania with a focus on positive psychology, the study of positive factors that help people thrive.

“The show has to do with the pursuit of happiness and laughter being the gauge or measurement of happiness,” Smirnoff said. “As a comedian, I measure” happiness “every minute, or every second, actually, and I’ve found the same thing happens in relationships with people we care about. Laughter is there when people are connected and not when people are disconnected.”
Smirnoff said the companies and people he is working with to produce the show tell him the age of the sitcom is returning after years of reality television dominating the market. Smirnoff believes there is a place for a program that would show the audience how connected humans are through positive interactions. He is hoping to start shooting the show next fall.

Smirnoff has been working with a professor at MU the past few months to gauge her thoughts on the sitcom as the script has developed.

Christine Proulx, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, said Smirnoff has been particularly curious about why students are interested in classes on interpersonal relationships.

She said the college-age generation is made up of many students who are the children of divorced parents, and that might make them even more keenly interested in the everyday give-and-take between romantic partners.

“He has a genuine passion and interest in fusing relationships based on laughter,” Proulx said about Smirnoff. “I love that he’s interested in communicating that out to the masses. Sitting down and watch this show together and laughing together, people might see a bit of themselves in the show and learn from it.”

Astronomical find: Ancient Greek wine cup may show constellations

A 2,600-year-old two-handled wine cup currently on display at the Lamia Archaeological Museum in Greece has long been thought to depict a random assortment of animals.

But the piece of ancient pottery, called a skyphos, may actually contain one of the earliest Greek depictions of the constellations, a new analysis shows.

The study researchers suggested that other ancient artistic representations of animals may also portray constellations, and hold clues to what the early Greeks knew about astronomy, said study researcher John Barnes, a classical archaeology doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri.
"If we go back and re-evaluate other animal scenes that might have been originally categorized as hunting scenes or animal friezes, then maybe we can find more [depictions of constellations] and get a greater understanding of how the ancient Greeks viewed the night sky," Barnes told Live Science.

**Ancient Greek astronomy**

Most of what's known about early Greek astronomy comes from various literary texts, such as Aratus of Soli's *Phaenomena*, a poetic text that describes the Greek constellations known by the third century B.C. However, these valuable documents only date as far back as the Classical period of Ancient Greece, which lasted from the fifth to the fourth century B.C.

To learn about how the ancient Greeks viewed the night sky before then, researchers must rely on visual depictions of the sky, such as those found on ceramic pottery but these artifacts are relatively rare, and what's left of them generally only show one or two constellations. For example, one of the oldest constellation images from Greece comes from a pottery fragment from the Late Geometric period (760 to 700 B.C) found at a site on the island of Ischia in Italy, but it only depicts what may be the constellation Botes ("the Herdsman").

Barnes didn't set out to find ancient Greek constellation portrayals, but rather stumbled upon the curious skyphos while visiting the Lamia Archaeological Museum. The artifact, which dates back to 625 B.C., was originally discovered in a debris-filled trench next to a temple in the seventh-century acropolis of Halai, which is located about 25 miles north of Thebes, Greece.

About a third of the wine cup (including one handle) is missing. What's left of the skyphos depicts an array of animals: a bull with only the back half preserved, a snake, a hare or small dog, a large dog, a scorpion, a dolphin and the front half of a panther or lion. Though the skyphos was labeled as showing a simple animal scene, Barnes immediately thought it showed something else.

"My dad raised me on astronomy, and to me, the snake, rabbit and dog together looked like constellations," Barnes said. "That group jumped out at me."

**Seasonal constellations**

Animal friezes (horizontal bands of decoration) and hunting scenes are common types of decorations in ancient Greece, but the skyphos's particular collection of animals is atypical, Barnes said. For instance, the dolphin is out of place with the land animals. Additionally, scorpions are uncommon motifs that don't often show up as actual animals, and are instead represented as shield emblems. And while a dog chasing a rabbit is often seen in hunting scenes, the snake underneath the pair is unusual.

What's more likely is that the animals are constellations, Barnes said: The bull is Taurus; the snake is probably Hydra (rather than Serpens or Draco, two other serpent constellations recognized by the Greeks); the rabbit is Lepus; the dog is Canis Major or Canis Minor; the scorpion is Scorpius; the dolphin is Delphinus; and the lion is Leo.
Interestingly, Barnes added, the animals are not arranged on the skyphos in the order they appear in the sky. "If they are not arranged as they are in the night sky, then either the specific arrangement is not important, or they were arranged for another purpose," Barnes said, adding that he thinks there’s a seasonal aspect to the arrangement, with the constellations separated into fall, winter, spring and summer groups, in accordance with when they rise and set throughout the year.

Specifically, the bull and (presumably) other constellations from the missing third of the skyphos represent fall; the snake, rabbit and dog make up winter; the dog (again) and scorpion belong to spring; and the dolphin and lion(and perhaps other missing constellations) signify summer, Barnes added.

However, the skyphos likely didn't function as an ancient calendar, and instead merely showed a generalized representation of time throughout the year, Barnes said.

Barnes' analysis of the skyphos was detailed in the April-June issue of the journal Hesperia.

Police body camera footage increases workload, prosecutor says

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Boone County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Knight makes it clear he supports the use of body cameras by police officers, but he said the new technology has created a “huge additional workload burden” on his prosecutors who have to review all of the video.

Knight has requested an additional assistant prosecutor in his office’s 2015 budget and another office specialist to help with the process of scanning documents to transition the office to a paperless or “e-filing” system.

The new positions would add $109,000 to the prosecutor’s budget, which would total $2.5 million for 2015, up from $2.3 million each of the past two years. A proposed county budget is due to the Boone County Commission from county Auditor June Pitchford by Nov. 15.

Pitchford and the county commission hosted budget work sessions Monday with the sheriff’s department, offices that receive some support from the 2002 law enforcement sales tax and the
prosecutor’s office. The commission has set aside time Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to wrap up the budget sessions.

Monday’s sessions featured Knight’s comments about the additional prosecutorial work generated by body cameras, which are now worn by some 115 Columbia police officers. “I think it is going to be a great thing for law enforcement, no doubt about it,” Knight said, adding, “It’s creating quite a bit of additional work” for assistant prosecutors.

For instance, one incident that police responded to might generate a one- or two-page report for Knight’s office. Now, rather than reviewing that single report, an assistant prosecutor must review what could be “hours” of video evidence, especially if more than one officer responds to a call, Knight said.

When the prosecutor’s office receives a case from a Columbia police arrest, the body camera footage is included. Because the footage is part of the case, it must be shared with defense attorneys as part of the discovery process.

Knight told commissioners Monday that he would probably be justified in asking for an additional investigator and support staff, too, because his office is already dealing with “more and more video evidence” even without the body camera footage.

“There certainly would be enough work for those people to do,” he said.

In his budget request for an additional prosecutor, Knight said that as of Aug. 25, each prosecutor in his office was handling an average of 438 pending cases.

Presiding Commissioner Dan Atwill said the extra workload resulting from the use of body cameras was a classic case of “unintended consequences.”

Knight said the workload likely will increase further if the city’s proposed property tax increase is approved by voters in November. The tax would add as many as 40 more police officers over the next five years.

“And each of those new cops will have a body camera,” said Northern District Commissioner Janet Thompson, who also worries about the extra time needed for time-strapped public defenders to review all the new video evidence.

“With more police officers on the street, I think it’s pretty logical to think there will be more cases coming our way,” Knight said.

Columbia Police Assistant Chief John Gordon said the use of body cameras does create an additional burden for the prosecutor’s office. “They are having workload issues, anyway. For us, it’s obviously proved to be beneficial,” he said. “The benefits will outweigh the negatives.”
Knight and Gordon both described body cameras and the volume of video evidence as “the new reality.” Gordon said the new technology is something the nation will have to deal with and that the police department supports Knight’s request for additional staff.

“But I still say the benefits, at least to the Columbia Police Department, are greater,” Gordon said. “It’s a sad day in the state when an officer’s word is not good enough, but this is where we are. … I don’t see them going away.”

Gordon said University of Missouri police are scheduled to begin using body cameras by mid-November. The Boone County Sheriff's Department is considering a body camera pilot project.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Missouri executions proceed at record-setting pace

JEFFERSON CITY — After years of conducting few executions, Missouri is on track to conduct a record number in 2014.

Missouri’s ninth execution of 2014 was scheduled to take place at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, but the U.S. Supreme Court granted a temporary stay late Tuesday evening. Another execution is scheduled for Nov. 19. Even as other states' execution procedures come under scrutiny, executions in Missouri continue because of reliable access to execution drugs, strong state-level support for capital punishment and conservative federal judges who regularly deny inmates' requests for stays.

"I don't like talking about human beings as a backlog, but essentially what we’ve seen is a backlog of cases working their way through the system," said Paul Litton, an MU law professor who teaches death penalty law.

Mark Christeson, who was convicted in a 1998 triple murder near Rolla, had been scheduled to be put to death. Missouri Department of Corrections spokesman Mike O'Connell said late Tuesday that the execution would not take place Wednesday and that no new date has been set.
The state last executed nine inmates in 1999, the most in a single year.

Sean O'Brien, a death penalty expert at the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, said weak legal defense can also send prisoners to the execution chamber.

"It's a perfect storm of aggressive prosecutors, conservative courts and weak defense," O'Brien said. "When you put these things all together, this is what happens. Missouri has turned into Texas."

O'Brien said poor legal defense is particularly relevant in Christeson's case. His attorneys missed a 2005 filing deadline for federal review of his case. Shortly before his scheduled execution, Christeson filed a Supreme Court brief asking to switch lawyers. The Supreme Court stayed his execution to consider the request.

Several court cases, a more liberal Missouri Supreme Court chief justice and an execution drug shortage nearly halted executions in Missouri between 2006 and 2012. A federal judge temporarily suspended Missouri’s death penalty in 2006 pending the outcome of a cruel and unusual punishment case. The state won the case, and the death penalty was reinstated in 2007. Missouri executed one inmate in 2009 and another in 2011 during a period when many states had trouble obtaining lethal injection drugs.

The recent uptick in executions correlates with an October 2013 announcement that Missouri's execution team would switch to a single drug, pentobarbital, for future executions. Since November 2013, the state has executed roughly one inmate a month.

Missouri's team and many other states' teams once used a three-drug combination before drug shortages forced them to change drugs. O'Brien said the new drug can explain only part of the increase in executions.

"(The Missouri death penalty is) a deep, deep subject," O'Brien said. "There are just a ton of layers to it. Every time you peel back a layer, there's more and more to it."

Rita Linhardt, board president of Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, said the pace of recent executions has given her group less time to organize before each execution. The group coordinates with defense attorneys to file amicus briefs and organize clemency letters. It also holds vigils in cities across Missouri before each execution and advocates for death penalty abolition.
"Our efforts have intensified because there have been so many executions, but our goals have remained the same," Linhardt said. "We used to have much more time. (The uptick in executions) puts more pressure on us and also on the attorneys."

Historically, Missouri is a leader in executions. It has executed 78 inmates since 1976. Just four states, Texas, Oklahoma, Virginia and Florida, have executed more. O’Brien said execution rates have fallen in many other states, except Florida, which has seen an increase. Like Missouri, Florida has state-level legislators who support the death penalty and conservative federal judges in its district.

Litton said although the number of executions has increased in the past year, many government officials have always supported the death penalty.

"The support for the death penalty seems to just be stronger here," Litton said. "There are anti-death penalty voices, but there’s support (for capital punishment) from both parties."

Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat, routinely denies prisoners' requests for clemency. In statements issued from his office, Nixon called reviewing clemency appeals "a process and a power of the Governor I do not take lightly" and has said he reviews the facts of each case before making a final decision. He granted clemency — commuting a death sentence to life in prison — once in 2011, but gave no explanation for his decision.

Attorney General Chris Koster, also a Democrat, is another staunch supporter of the death penalty. During the 2013 drug shortage, he suggested Missouri could revert to its gas chamber — an execution method that remains approved in the Revised Statutes but has gone unused since 1965 — to allow executions to continue. More recently, he said the General Assembly should set aside funding for a state-run drug laboratory that would allow Missouri to manufacture its own pentobarbital. The state currently relies on an unnamed compounding pharmacy for the drug.

Missouri’s reluctance to name its execution drug supplier has led to several pending lawsuits. O’Brien said the lawsuits are unlikely to slow the pace of executions. It’s hard to say what would, unless the Supreme Court takes up a new death penalty case.

"Unless one of these dynamics changes, I don’t know what’s going to stop the train," O’Brien said.
Cooking with carp: MU researchers say it is time to eat tasty invasive species overrunning Midwestern rivers

By Marcia Vanderlip

Tuesday, October 28, 2014 at 1:00 pm

Here’s a scary thought as Allhallows’ Eve approaches: Asian carp are on the loose and wreaking havoc in Midwestern rivers. The invasive fish are usurping the habitat of native species in the Missouri River and Mississippi River basin, said Mark Morgan, an associate professor in the University of Missouri Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism. He is leading an MU project to control the growing silver carp population.

These voracious plankton eaters harm the ecosystem and the livelihood of fishermen, Morgan said. Furthermore, they are skittery creatures, notorious for injuring boaters as they leap out of the water when they are startled by boat motors. Morgan said. Carp won’t take bait, “so you have to spear them or catch them with nets,” he said.

He knows from experience. He attended the 2013 Redneck Fishing Tournament in Bath, Ill. “It is fun, until you get hit by a fish,” he said.

“No spot is safe on the boat,” according to its website, originalredneckfishingtournament.com. You’ll also find cleaning tips and recipes on the website. More then 7,000 carp were “caught” during the 2014 tournament.

The Asian carp invasion began after silver and bighead carp were imported from China in the 1970s to control algae in aquaculture pond and wastewater treatment lagoons. However, they escaped into the wild by the 1980s and have since been multiplying and moving north toward Canada by way of Midwestern rivers and streams. In 2009, Obama administration created the Asian Carp Regional Coordinating Committee to control the carp and protect the Great Lakes from the invaders, “threatening the environment and to the fishing industry,” Morgan said.

Morgan wants Midwesterners to fight back by eating them, but that might take some convincing in this country, outside the redneck tournament circle.
“Carp is a delicacy in China,” said Hsiao-Mei Wiedmeyer, a founding member of Columbia Friends of China. There, the fish is eaten whole, and “children learn at a young age how to eat around the bones,” she said. But carp is a tougher sell in America, Morgan said. “Carp are a bony fish, and people don’t want to mess with bones,” he said.

Since 2013, Morgan and two graduate students have been working on a research grant project to convince people to eat silver carp. The team partnered with Schafer Fisheries in Thomson, Ill., where the fish is processed.

The bone problem was solved at Schafer Fisheries, Morgan said. “The fish is filleted, but it still contains numerous Y-bones,” so the processing plant presses the filleted fish against a wire mesh screen leaving the skin and bones on one side and the flesh on the other side, bone free.

“It looks and acts like ground turkey,” Morgan said. “It has a mild fish flavor. It is not a bottom feeder, like catfish it is a mid-stream-feeder.” He said that in taste tests, the carp fared better than catfish.

There are other reasons to hop on the carp-eating bandwagon. It is heart-healthy, “low in fat, and we found that it is lower in mercury than other fish” because it does not eat other fish. We had it tested,” Morgan said. An increase in demand also would help the small fishermen, he said. “This is a win-win for everyone.”

Still, the Asian carp have an image problem. Some have even changed the name to make it sound more appetizing. Louisiana chef Philippe Parola calls silver carp “silverfin” and promotes eating it on his website, chefphilippe.com. He is not afraid of the bones and shows in a video how to filet the fish and how to eat it, working around any small bones after baking the mild white fish. He offers recipes for cooking the filets and said if one of these “fish jumps into your boat, remember, if you can’t beat them, eat them.”

On Oct. 3, some Columbians got their first taste of silver carp. Morgan arranged for Moser’s Discount Foods, 705 Business Loop 70 W., to receive 80 pounds the ground silver carp, frozen and packed in 1-pound tubes. It sells for $1.99 a pound.

The next day, Morgan and his assistants, Yun Ho and Tim Wall, MU graduate students in natural resources, offered samples of carp chili in the meat department as they talked up the benefits of eating silver carp.

Generally, customers were willing to try fish chili, and many said they liked it. Some were surprised that it was so good and that it didn’t taste fishy. Those who wanted to buy it were directed to a nearby freezer, where customers also could find pork chitterlings, beef sweetbreads, frog legs and catfish nuggets.

Moser’s meat department carries a wide array of animal parts, including bull testicles and chicken feet. For now, it is the only grocery store in Columbia that carries silver carp, and it is selling pretty well. By last week, Moser’s had sold 73 pounds. “I am so happy,” Morgan
said. “We are ordering more next week.” The new order should be in Thursday, he said, and another carp chili tasting is planned for Saturday from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Moser’s.

Morgan’s team still has much work to do before the grant runs out in July. “After creating a demand in the grocery store,” Morgan said, he plans to approach local restaurants and chefs about trying silver carp out on their customers. A machine that debones carp filets also is in the works.

**COOK THE CARP**

The only way to get over fear of eating carp is to face the fear and eat it. My first experiment in cooking ground carp failed. I made rookie mistake of leaving the fish in the refrigerator too long before cooking it, so it took on a stronger fishy flavor, which transferred to my fish tacos. So my first tip is to use the fish as soon as it is thawed, as you should with any fish. Thaw the frozen fish overnight in the refrigerator, or thaw it in a microwave. Also note that there is a lot of liquid in this fish, unlike ground turkey. So if you are making tacos, cook the liquid out, add spices, but don’t add liquid, or you will get something closer to soup. Also, don’t stir it a lot because it is more delicate than ground beef or turkey.

My later experiments were more successful. Carp makes excellent fish cakes. I used an egg to help bind it together. Because of the water content, carp cakes require a big helping of bread crumbs or panko. I added chorizo spices and fried them in a little peanut oil, and they came out golden and very tasty.

I also made fish balls with basil in a tomato-bell pepper sauce. The flavor was very good, but the texture was unlike a meatball because I cooked the fish balls in the sauce. If you want carp balls that won’t easily fall apart as readily, try browning them first in a little oil, or in the oven, then adding them to the sauce.

Yun Ho, one of the graduate students working on the carp project, told me she liked eating silver carp in dumplings. I do, too. I made Chinese-style dumplings with garlic, ginger, green onion, cabbage, soy sauce and sesame oil. This was my favorite of the preparations.

I plan to eat more carp. Turns out, it is not so scary after all. Carpe diem! And seize the carp while you’re at it!