MU Greek leaders start assault prevention program

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COLUMBIA, MO. - The University of Missouri Interfraternity Council has budgeted more than $22,000 to create a sexual violence awareness program that relies on peer educators.

Council President Alex Dyer said the focus is on teaching men in the Greek community that sexual violence "is a men's issue more than just a women's issue," the Columbia Daily Tribune (http://bit.ly/1EbeEaG ) reports.

The first group of 18 participants will meet with organizers several times before the end of the year to finalize the curriculum for the new program. After going through training during the spring semester, they will be responsible for helping to teach the next class of men who go through the program. Participants also will help with educational opportunities aimed at the larger male Greek population on campus, said Interfraternity Council vice president of risk management Creighton Hayes.

Hayes said for many of the underclassmen, their experience in college and fraternities is the first time away from their parents' guidance. The program goal is to stress self-awareness and awareness of their peers.

Ultimately, the Interfraternity Council leaders want one person from each fraternity in the program so when a particular fraternity wants to hold a sexual violence educational
program, it can have its peer leader present along with others from different organizations and help make the atmosphere more comfortable for open discussion.

Hayes said this is the largest budgeted program for the Interfraternity Council.

"It's lofty, but it's worth it," he said. "There's not a bigger issue that we're facing right now, and if this is something we can nip in the bud or knock out or at least educate people on, then it's worth it."

The $22,000 will go toward the cost of the peer educator classes and possible programming. Interfraternity Council organizers said this is seed money for the program that will not be used up entirely during the first year.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/state/missouri/article3524672.html#storylink=cpy

Columbia Daily Tribune

MU fraternity leaders organize sexual assault prevention program

By Ashley Jost

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 12:00 am

The University of Missouri Interfraternity Council has budgeted more than $22,000 to create a peer educator program focused on teaching men in the Greek community that sexual violence “is a men’s issue more than just a women’s issue,” council President Alex Dyer said.

The new program is being developed by members of the council’s executive cabinet, Danica Wolf, coordinator of the MU Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, and participants in the program’s inaugural year.

Council leaders sent out applications to its 31 member fraternities and received 18 responses. Dyer said he’s pleased with that response for the first year. Each applicant comes from a
different fraternity, and that’s a goal of the organizers — to ultimately have representation from every fraternity.

Starting next semester, the participants will attend classes based on an existing Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center program as well as attend additional meetings.

“Since this is a program that’s meant to educate and invoke change and to really make a difference, we want to focus on masculinity and what it means to be not only a college male but a first-time fraternity man,” said Creighton Hayes, Interfraternity Council vice president of risk management.

Hayes said for many of the underclassmen, their experience in college and fraternities is the first time away from their parents’ guidance. The program goal is to stress self-awareness and awareness of their peers.

Because the first peer educator classes don’t start until next semester, the program’s 18 participants will meet with organizers and Wolf several times before the end of the year to finalize the curriculum for the new program. They will meet to talk about issues related to sexual violence — date-rape drugs, alcohol, etc. — that they want to explore.

The meetings and the program will be a safe space so that members can discuss issues and experiences openly and confidentially.

After the group goes through training during the spring semester, they will be responsible for helping to teach the next class of men who go through the program. Those members also are expected to participate in educational opportunities for the larger male Greek population on campus, Hayes said.

The reason Interfraternity Council leaders want one person from each fraternity in the program is so when a particular fraternity wants to hold a sexual violence educational program, they can have their peer leader present along with others from different organizations and help make the atmosphere more comfortable for open discussion.

Hayes said this is the largest budgeted program for Interfraternity Council.

“It’s lofty, but it’s worth it,” he said. “There’s not a bigger issue that we’re facing right now, and if this is something we can nip in the bud or knock out or at least educate people on, then it’s worth it.”

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Third MU provost candidate to visit campus next week

By Ashley Jost

Saturday, November 1, 2014 at 12:00 am

The third of four candidates vying for the University of Missouri provost position is scheduled to visit campus next week.

Nancy Brickhouse, professor and deputy provost at the University of Delaware, will field questions from faculty, staff and students at an open forum at 8:45 a.m. Wednesday in the Mark Twain Ballroom of the Memorial Student Union.

Brickhouse has served as the deputy provost for more than two years, acting as the provost’s chief advisor with focuses in academic affairs, international programs and institutional research. She also served as interim provost at the University of Delaware until she resumed her deputy position in August 2013. Before joining the provost’s office, Brickhouse served as the deputy and interim dean for the university’s College of Education and Development. It was at the University of Delaware that Brickhouse gained tenure in 1994.

Before serving at Delaware, she was a visiting lecturer at Purdue University and taught chemistry in an independent school district in Texas.

Brickhouse’s educational background is similar to the first two MU provost candidates with a focus on science. Her bachelor’s degree in chemistry comes from Baylor University, and her master’s in chemistry is from Purdue. Brickhouse got her doctorate in science education at Purdue. Both of her alma maters are large research institutions.

MU Faculty Council Chairman Craig Roberts said Brickhouse’s background in science could be beneficial to the campus as MU focuses on increasing its standing in the Association of American Universities, a prestigious organization for research institutions.

“A lot of upper-level administrators are scientists,” Roberts said. “We have a lack of a humanities-trained person in administration, and that is a concern from faculty. All of the candidates so far come from science backgrounds. But, whether we prefer it or not, it’s necessary if we’re focused on AAU metrics.”
Roberts said it also is beneficial to many faculty members that the candidate is a woman.

Brickhouse is the third MU provost candidate to visit campus. Michele Wheatly, former provost of West Virginia University, and John Wiencek, interim provost and vice president of academic affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University, have visited in the past two weeks.

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said last week there would be four candidates. The final candidate has not been named, nor has a date been set for the candidate to visit campus.
In all, she has more than 32 years of experience in higher education, academics and administration, according to the email. Other titles include director of the University of Delaware's School of Education from 2007 to 2009 and associate director of the School of Education from 2002 to 2006.

Brickhouse earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Baylor University and master's and doctoral degrees from Purdue University's College of Science, where she is a distinguished alumna.

Brickhouse is the third provost candidate to speak in an open forum. Michele Wheatly, former provost of West Virginia University, addressed Title IX, campus diversity and relating to students as a provost in her forum Oct. 23. John Wiencek, interim provost at Virginia Commonwealth University, talked about AAU standings, diversity and Title IX in his forum Oct. 29.

Provost search committee chairwoman Judy Wall said before Wheatly's visit that the provost decision is ultimately up to Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

Brian Foster retired after eight years as MU provost in December 2013. Since then, the university hired a search firm, Isaacson, Miller, to help create a position profile for the provost. Deputy Provost Kenneth Dean has been serving as interim provost.

MU administrators analyze IT functions to find efficiencies

By Ashley Jost

Saturday, November 1, 2014 at 12:00 am Comments (3)

University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin’s push to streamline administrative functions has reached the IT department.
At Loftin’s request, Gary Allen, MU and UM System chief information officer, has embarked on a listening tour of sorts with information technology employees and other stakeholders.

The goal of the listening tour, which is still in progress, is “to look at ways we can better coordinate IT support and services, as well as expenditures, in order to improve services, save money and, if there is a significant opportunity, to become more efficient and effective,” Allen said.

There have been no decisions about how to change IT operations. Allen is just collecting input and ideas.

Allen has visited groups including MU Faculty Council and MU Staff Advisory Council, and the discussions have varied from ideas about being smarter about collective purchasing power for software and equipment to ways to better support IT staff that work for various colleges and departments.

There are IT employees stationed in a central location on campus focused on large-scale issues such as wireless networks and the email system. Additionally, there are employees who work in departments and colleges who are focused on meeting the IT needs of their entities.

At an open forum meeting for staff earlier this month, some employees expressed concerns to Loftin about whether their departments might lose their IT person. Loftin said that is not the plan, and Allen agreed.

“Staff wouldn’t be doing anything differently than they are now,” Allen said. “They will be in the same buildings, supporting the same people. Their jobs wouldn’t change or go away.”

Becky Stafford, chairwoman of MU Staff Advisory Council, said no IT employees have approached her with concerns about the IT listening tour.

Allen said he is “taking inventory” of what IT employees are doing, with the goal of capitalizing on the expertise of staffers.

One change being discussed is for all employees to be housed under the central IT division when it comes to payroll and benefits, rather than the colleges picking up those costs. That change might not apply to all IT employees who work in colleges, Allen said, as some are partially funded by grants and other restricted money.

There also is some discussion about what software programs departments are using to see if an opportunity exists to save money and use collective purchasing power. Allen said there also might be a couple of software programs that accomplish the same goal as five programs, so there could be opportunities to consolidate and save money.

Savings might go toward new software or infrastructure, Allen said.
Website highlights contributions, voting records

COLUMBIA, MO. - A new website showing contributions to Missouri lawmakers and their voting records has gone live.

Developers of the Access Missouri website received a $25,000 grant from a University of Missouri fund that provides money for interdisciplinary, student-centered projects, the Columbia Daily Tribune (http://bit.ly/1Ebf0OI ) reports. The website aggregates voting information from the House and Senate journals and financial information from the Missouri Ethics Commission.

Ryan Famuliner, the news director for the university-owned radio station KBIA-FM, said that while reporters and people who frequent Jefferson City know how to access voting records by thumbing through documents online, that's not practical for the average person. The goal in creating the website was to give voters a one-stop shop for that public information.

Before coming to KBIA-FM, Famuliner worked at MissouriNet, a radio network out of Jefferson City. He recalls being in New Orleans during the Missouri legislative session one year and seeing a car with a Missouri senator's license plates.

"People should be able to track what their legislator is doing," Famuliner said. "You should be able to know: Is your legislator there?"
Right now, viewers can see a timeline that shows all incoming gifts and expenditures made by candidates' or legislators' financial accounts. One of the planned additions is to have a timeline of votes cast by the candidate — the votes currently are in list form — so viewers can compare the timelines, said Matt Kalish, a student member of the team.

For example, if a legislator votes on an issue related to energy companies and then receives a check from a company on either side of that issue, that would be visible on the timelines.

Famuliner said though the site currently shows how many "yes," "no" and "other" votes were cast by the legislator, he hopes to break down the "other" category even further to show when legislators were absent for votes. The site also shows how many times the legislator changed his or her vote, but Famuliner hopes that too will be broken down in the future to show specifically which bills they flipped on.

"This is for someone who wants to know basic information about how to vote," Famuliner said about the site. "It's all public information, which is nice, but it's hard to access typically. So we packed the site with basic information you want to have."

Access Missouri: http://www.accessmissouri.org/
Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/state/missouri/article3525084.html#storylink=cpy

Website made with MU grant shows contributions to lawmakers, voting records

By Ashley Jost

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 12:00 am

It was a string of experiences covering the Missouri legislature that gave Ryan Famuliner, KBIA-FM news director, the idea that he and a team of students and Web developers have made a reality.
AccessMissouri.org, an online database that tracks voting records of members of the Missouri General Assembly and contributions to lawmakers, went live this week.

The website acts as database, aggregating voting information from the House and Senate journals and financial information from the Missouri Ethics Commission. Famuliner said the data are updated automatically through website coding that was set up by developers and students with help from those involved in MU’s Informatics Institute.

Before coming to KBIA-FM, a university-licensed not-for-profit and a National Public Radio member station, Famuliner worked at MissouriNet, a radio network out of Jefferson City. He recalls being in New Orleans during the Missouri legislative session one year and seeing a car with a Missouri senator’s license plates.

“People should be able to track what their legislator is doing,” Famuliner said. “You should be able to know: Is your legislator there?”

Tracking votes — including those that are missed — is a step toward doing that, he said.

Even though Famuliner, other reporters and people who frequent Jefferson City know how to access voting records by thumbing through documents online, that’s not practical for the average person, Famuliner said. The goal in creating the website was to give voters a one-stop shop for that public information.

There still are a slew of updates the team hopes to implement, said Matt Kalish, a student member of the team.

Famuliner said developers have identified some issues, such as certain types of votes being counted as changed votes.

He said his team immediately removed that feature of the site to address the issue, and that he wants to be notified of any other problems viewers find.

Right now, viewers can see a timeline that shows all incoming gifts and expenditures made by candidates’ or legislators’ financial accounts. One of the planned additions, Kalish said, is to have a timeline of votes cast by the candidate — the votes currently are in list form — so viewers can compare the timelines.

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“This is for someone who wants to know basic information about how to vote,” Famuliner said about the site. “It’s all public information, which is nice, but it’s hard to access typically. So we packed the site with basic information you want to have.”

The project is funded by a $25,000 grant from MU’s Interdisciplinary Innovations Fund, which provides money for interdisciplinary, student-centered projects.

MU purchase of radio station license will boost KBIA news operation

By Ashley Jost

Saturday, November 1, 2014 at 12:00 am Comments (7)

Correction appended

After almost three decades, KBIA-FM General Manager Mike Dunn has accomplished a professional goal.

University of Missouri and KBIA officials announced Friday that the university has purchased the license for 90.5 FM, KWWC-FM, from Stephens College.

Acquiring a second station has been a goal for Dunn since he came to MU. He even remembers telling a local reporter just that for an article that ran 27 years ago — and now it’s a reality.

Buying the station license creates an expansion opportunity for the journalism school, Dunn said.

Some journalism students are required to spend a certain amount of time working with the radio station developing news stories. Though there are morning and afternoon shifts for students now, they typically are working on looser deadlines, Dunn said. The station plays classical music from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily, with news segments — both local and national — bookending those times.

With the purchase of the 90.5 FM license, KBIA officials decided to move all of the classical music to that station, opening up 91.3 FM KBIA to become a full-time news outlet during the day. KBIA, a university-licensed not-for-profit and a National Public Radio member station for Mid-Missouri, still will play classical music overnight.
“With this setup, students will have deadlines to meet, and we will have more of what we call ‘holes’ to fill,” Dunn said.

There might be one or two local news segments each hour that students will be responsible for filling, he said.

“This will drive us to become more of a newsroom people can depend on, and with that we will also be updating our website more frequently,” Dunn said.

The license purchase is pending approval from the Federal Communications Commission. Dunn said he is optimistic the change can be made by March. Dunn and other KBIA administrators also are contemplating new call letters for 90.5 FM because Stephens College is retaining ownership of KWWC. Dunn said the hope is for the new call letters to include ‘MU’ in some fashion.

KWWC will continue operating out of Stephens College online only starting next spring.

“The online station will be more convenient for students and will give them a broader audience — friends and family members will be able to listen in from anywhere in the world,” Rebecca Kline, Stephens College director of marketing and communications, said in a news release.

According to a news release, MU is paying Stephens College $50,000 for the station license as well as $50,000 in public service announcements for the college over the next five years.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU purchases radio station from Stephens College
Friday, October 31, 2014 | 8:30 p.m. CDT
BY MARY KALETA

COLUMBIA – Two local radio stations may soon be getting a tuneup.

MU's purchase of station 90.5 FM from Stephens College will allow classical music to be aired full time on the station, bringing classical artists the airwaves.

After nearly two years of negotiations, MU has agreed to pay Stephens $50,000 for the station in addition to $50,000 over the next five
years in public service announcements for the school, according to an MU news release.

The purchase of the station was announced Friday afternoon.

KBIA/91.3 FM director Michael Dunn said there's hope the changes to the stations will be implemented by March, but the agreement is pending approval from the Federal Communications Commission.

Stephens will retain use of the call letters currently used for 90.5 FM, KWWC. MU is still determining the name for the new 90.5 FM, according to the release.

Classical music, from composers such as Jean Sibelius and Dmitri Shostakovich, currently airs Monday through Friday on KBIA from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

That music will now air 24 hours a day on the new station, Nathan Hurst, a spokesman for the MU News Bureau, said.

The change will open up six hours every day on KBIA, making it almost all news, which will give students more opportunities to report.

The new format for KWWC will also give communications students at Stephens the option of creating content as an extracurricular activity. If the agreement is approved by the FCC, Stephens will switch to an online-only broadcast format for KWWC that will continue to feature "cool jazz" and "awesome '80s" programming from the old station, according to the release.

"The online station will be more convenient for students and will give them a broader audience," Rebecca Kline, Stephens director of marketing and communications, said in the release. "Friends and family members will be able to listen in from anywhere in the world."

Supervising editor is Hunter Woodall.
MU acquires radio station from Stephens College

The purchase would allow KBIA to become a nearly all-news station.

**MU officials announced Friday that the university will purchase radio station KWWC-FM from Stephens College.**

MU will spend $50,000 for the purchase and allow Stephens College $50,000 in public service announcements over a five-year period. The sale is still pending approval from the Federal Communications Commission.

According to an MU news release, the purchase will enable MU-owned KBIA-FM, the National Public Radio affiliate for mid-Missouri, to transition from airing classical music from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily to become a nearly all-news station.

“The purchase of KWWC will allow us to expand the educational experience for broadcast students at the MU School of Journalism,” KBIA director Michael Dunn said in the release. “This acquisition also will allow us to improve our classical music service for the residents of Boone County from our current programming of 15 hours most days to 24 hours, seven days a week.”

MU spokesman Nathan Hurst said in an email the new station will be overseen by KBIA management. He said KBIA hopes to add short newscasts to the new station and offer more opportunities for MU journalism students.

“However, the new station will create many more student opportunities (at) KBIA since it will free up more time for news on KBIA, since the classical music that has run during the day will now be moved to 90.5 FM,” he said.

Once the sale is finalized, MU will change KWWC’s call letters and allow Stephens College to retain the call letters for an online-only station. A new set of call letters for the MU-owned station has not been determined at this time.

Stephens College spokeswoman Rebecca Kline said the online-only KWWC will feature “cool jazz and awesome ‘80s” programming and allow more students at the college to create content for the station as an extracurricular activity.
“The online station will become more convenient for students and will give them a broader audience — friends and family members will be able to listen in from anywhere in the world,” she said in the release. “We’re pleased our university neighbors will be able to incorporate 90.5 FM into their academic programming.”

MU ROTC inducts nine into Hall of Fame

By Jacob Bogage

Sunday, November 2, 2014 at 12:00 am

Retired Army Col. David Smith already had purchased his plane tickets to return to Columbia this weekend when the University of Missouri ROTC sent him a letter three weeks ago announcing his induction to the detachment’s hall of fame.

“I was always planning to come back for the ceremony because of my friend Karl Tepee,” he said. “I don’t know what I did to deserve this. It’s humbling.”

Smith and Tepee, a retired Army lieutenant colonel who died in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, served in the same company overseas in the 1970s, Smith said.

“His death was a great motivating factor to me,” said Smith, who at the time was a military attaché and counterterrorism expert with the U.S. Consulate in Pakistan. He’s now an analyst and consultant with the Defense Intelligence Agency.

They were among nine servicemen in the MU ROTC’s third hall of fame class, which was inducted Saturday at Crowder Hall. The MU ROTC Hall of Fame now has 23 members. Lt. Col. Robert Boone, the Hall’s de facto curator, said the detachment likely will honor another five to 10 members per year going forward.

He said his vision was for the hall of fame to eventually establish its own cadet scholarship fund.
“The fact that a young cadet gets to talk to a guy who served in Vietnam, they find out they’re the same guy,” Boone said. “They both served and made sacrifices. It really makes a connection.”

Boone brought the idea of a hall of fame from the Army Ranger School, where he was an instructor, he said. Between activities, he said he would look at the Ranger Hall of Fame, a concept he wanted to bring to his next stop in his military career.

Inductees are selected based on their involvement with the Missouri ROTC branch, their military record and civilian contributions after retirement from the armed services, Boone said.

Four members of the 2014 class, including Tepee, were honored posthumously.

Capt. Joseph Parent and Wells Cunningham, both MU graduates, were killed in action in Vietnam in 1966.

Retired Army Col. Timothy Donovan, a 1952 Missouri alum, died after his retirement from combat service, ending his career as an ROTC professor of military science. He commissioned the first female officers in the MU detachment’s history.

“My father would have been so proud,” said Kathy Donovan Hanson, who accepted the induction on her father’s behalf. “He loved this university.”

Boone said that’s the point of the hall. “That’s what this is really all about, bringing the past back to the present, interacting with the cadets and maybe providing some closure to some people who are proud of what their mom or dad or aunt or uncle did in the military,” he said.

Inductees’ names and photos are displayed on a wall in Crowder Hall’s Hall of Fame Room, and members are encouraged to send the detachment mementos from their service career to display in the exhibit.

The ROTC already displays the uniforms and medals of Maj. Gen. Enoch Crowder, the building’s namesake.

Smith said he and Tepee, even in their military travels all over the world, never felt too far away from the university. Their families typically came back to Columbia at least once a year, Smith said, for homecoming or football games.

“When I look back at the last 45 years since I graduated,” Smith said, “it becomes apparent to me that everything good in my life got its start at the University of Missouri or the ROTC program.”
Company formed from MU research makes 1st product

November 01, 2014 10:42 am

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A company that grew out of research conducted at the University of Missouri is manufacturing its first product from a plant in Columbia.

Nanova Biomaterials Inc. began manufacturing a fluoride dental varnish called StarBright about a month ago after the product received approval from the Food and Drug Administration. It held a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday at its $1.5 million plant in Columbia.

Hao Li, Nanova co-founder of the company and Missouri associate engineering professor, said the company hopes to have the dental varnish on the market in December.

"Getting FDA clearance is very time-consuming, so we are pretty proud" we got "everything done in a year," Li said. "That's pretty fast, I think."

Nanova was in founded in 2007 and Nanova Biomaterials was created in 2013. It uses nanotechnology to produce particles with new properties. For example, the dental varnish contains more fluoride than other products on the market, The Columbia Daily Tribune reports (http://bit.ly/1u0Q4rd ).

The company currently employs 13 people other than two university researchers who are company founders. It hopes to double its workforce by 2016 and create up to 50 jobs in the next five years.

Nanova also is working on a filling material for dental cavities that Li expects will receive FDA approval by next summer or fall.

The company has received $50,000 through the Development Tax Credit Program and it has been approved $11,500 through the Missouri Works Training Program. Nanova also has been authorized to receive $564,000 in benefits through the Missouri Quality Jobs program but it has not yet received those benefits.
Li, a native of China, has attracted investors from that country. The Chinese venture capital firm SummitView Capital has announced plans to invest $7 million in the company and the Chinese government also approved an $8 million loan package that Nanova could use to finance its growth, Li said.


COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New Faurot Field cannon name announced
Saturday, November 1, 2014 | 6:27 p.m. CDT; updated 6:34 p.m. CDT, Saturday, November 1, 2014
BY ELLISE VERHEYEN

COLUMBIA — The votes are in: the new name for the new 75mm howitzer fired after each Missouri touchdown is Mizzouka.

The MU Army ROTC retired the previous cannon, Little Joe, after nearly 60 years of firing blanks from Faurot Field.

The ROTC asked people to submit suggestions for new names on its Facebook page or a specially created Twitter account, @NameTheCannon. There were more than 500 votes, according to an ROTC Facebook post.

Other suggested names included Bengal Bertha, Truman's Little Friend and Bess.

The new name was announced Saturday during the Missouri-Kentucky game as part of Military Appreciation Day.
Lower prices offer short-term boost for some businesses

By Alicia Stice

Saturday, November 1, 2014 at 12:00 am

You likely have noticed it at the gas pump and maybe at the grocery store while picking out items for dinner.

Prices for certain goods — including grain, gasoline and pork products — have been inching down in the United States.

The U.S. Department of Labor Statistics measures inflation using the Consumer Price Index, which looks at how much the cost of goods has changed month to month and year over year. According to this index, the price of energy has dropped sharply. Poultry products, dairy products and baked goods also are less expensive than they were a few months ago.

For some local businesses, this has offered some breathing room and lowered costs.

But even though lower prices at the grocery store or at the gas pump can be a good thing, if the price declines extend to include goods across the board for a sustained period of time, the country enters what economists call a period of deflation. This can make debts more burdensome, choke investment and discourage spending, which puts the brakes on economic growth.

“If you buy a house for $200,000 and take out mortgage for $180,000, and there is a sustained period of deflation, ... asset values decline, but your debts don’t,” said Alex Breitinger, a futures and commodities broker at Paragon Investments whose column Futures File appears in Saturday Business. “Your car loan doesn’t change, your mortgage doesn’t change, but the things you bought all go down in value.”

To be clear, the country is not now in a period of deflation. Overall, prices are up about 1.7 percent this year compared to last, according to the Consumer Price Index. But low-level inflation can be worrisome to economists closely watching the European and Japanese markets, where deflation poses a much more imminent threat.
Many economists consider 2 percent a level of inflation that people can stomach, University of Missouri economics Professor Joseph Haslag said. As long as inflation is at a level people can ignore, it will not affect economic behavior.

Once inflation levels get near zero, Brietinger said, it is not that hard for them to slip below zero. When this happens, it can affect wages and spending habits. Here in Missouri, the minimum wage is adjusted annually to account for inflation. The lower the level of inflation, the less the state’s minimum wage goes up.

People in the United States have been accustomed to incremental price and wage increases, and if that slows or halts, it could have negative effects.

“You’re used to getting a little bump in your wage over time,” Brietinger said. You want inflation to be comfortably above zero “so if there is a blip downward in the economy, we don’t slip into negative numbers.”

On Wednesday, the Federal Reserve System announced that inflation was still lower than it would like.

To help compensate for this, the Fed announced it was keeping interest rates for federal funds between 0 percent and 0.25 percent, where they have hovered for years. These low interest rates are designed to remove incentives for saving money and encourage investment.

The ultimate goal is to spur moderate inflation and encourage economic growth.

“Every time we’ve had people looking for interest rates to start going up, it has been taking much longer than people thought, so that’s the thing we’re waiting on,” Breitinger said.

On a local level, the past year of low inflation has helped give some local businesses a boost by lowering the cost of materials and letting them pass along the savings to consumers.

Beau Aero Martin owns GME Supply, a company that sells industrial safety equipment to customers across the country and the globe. Lower fuel costs have not affected how much Martin has to spend on shipping — he uses UPS — but he does think he might avoid paying more for the products he sells next year.

“I’ve had this business since 2005,” he said. “I have never seen retail prices for products drop. What you can hope for is that they at least remain constant. ... In years past, we’ve seen large increases, as much as 7 to 10 percent, mostly because of things like transportation and the raw commodities for most of the products.”

Martin said the lower energy costs have reduced the price of steel, which goes into many of the products he sells. Because of this, he expects to avoid major price increases next year, which could help him grow his business.
Haslag said the slowing inflation could be a good thing for businesses.

“Holding everything else constant and seeing a reduction in the price of another good usually is going to occur because production cost of that good has gone down or the supply curve has shifted to the right,” he said. “It means that the incomes people receive are going to be able to afford more goods and services.”

Probably the most visible and welcome shift in prices has come in the form of gasoline. MFA Oil spokesman Tom May said the price relief is a welcome change.

MFA Oil has the same margins when prices for gasoline drop because the company is paying a lower rate for the product to begin with. This lets them, and other gas station companies, pass along the savings to consumers, which is good for business, he said.

“The cheaper the prices not only allows” consumers “more money to go do other things, but also allows them more money if they want to buy a soda or a candy bar or anything else” at the gas station, he said. “Lower gas prices are good for everybody because it helps spur income available for other purposes.”

Energy prices are some of the market’s most volatile, but May said he thinks the low prices could stay steady, at least for a while. Because global demand for crude oil has softened, it has made it less likely that we will see a sharp increase in gas prices anytime soon.

“From a pure economic outlook, things look to be pretty stable, and hopefully that will continue at least through the rest of the year and we can keep lower energy costs,” May said.

One worry about dropping prices is that if they decline enough, it can discourage producers from expanding their efforts. For example, if oil companies are being forced to sell their products at a cheaper cost per barrel, they might decide to hold off on drilling new wells, Brietinger said.

But in the meantime, lower fuel prices are a welcome change for more than just people looking to travel. Some sectors of the agricultural industry have seen their prices pushed down.

If natural gas prices stay low, it helps keep pressure on fertilizer costs, which are produced using high amounts of the fuel, said Pat Westhoff, the director of the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri. That can somewhat ease the financial strain of production for crop farmers.

A record year for corn yields pushed prices down. The PED virus that plagued hog farms appears to be subsiding, meaning pork prices also are sliding.
“These much lower prices for corn are going to make it cheaper to feed hogs, and chicken and cattle, as well,” Westhoff said. “Eventually, that will result in less of a” price “increase or an actual decline.”

This can present a win-win for the agriculture industry because farmers could use the lower feed costs as a tool to expand their production, which in turn means grain farmers are selling more of their products. As these production costs drop, consumers could start seeing it first in the price of chicken and later in beef prices, as well, Westhoff said.

“To the extent that livestock farmers can make more money today, they’re going to try to expand their production,” he said. This could eventually lead to more demand for corn, which could lend “a bit of support for corn prices.”

As the Federal Reserve watches the economy closely, the trick is finding a way to keep inflation at a healthy rate without overcorrecting.

In its Wednesday announcement that it was once again keeping its interest rates close to zero, the Federal Reserve also said it was ending its asset purchase program, in which it bought up vast quantities of debt to help maintain low interest rates across the market. Although it has not started selling these debts, a move expected to push interest rates higher, it has stopped adding to the stockpile.

Breitinger said this move indicates the Reserve is trying to avoid overcorrecting and causing inflation.

“What we’ve been watching is that there’s been pretty big swings back and forth in expectations in policy and long-term, we’re seeing kind of overcorrection,” he said. “I think the swings back and forth is the thing I would expect the most. It’s almost like a car on an icy road, and we’re fishtailing back and forth, and that doesn’t necessarily have to be a doomsday scenario. I think the economy has been holding together through the past five years.”

That being said, Breitinger said he does not expect long-term deflation given the Federal Reserve’s work to tamper it. Its efforts likely will stave off deflation, though the ups and downs might continue as the organization keeps up its work to keep inflation at a steady pace, which is good news for a heavily debt-based economy.

“People who have lots of cash are in good shape, people who have cash on hand and are just waiting to buy,” Breitinger said. “People who have debt right now are the people who could get hurt by a period of deflation.”
Editorial: Missouri must put higher education back within reach

Low- and middle-income students in states — like Missouri — that don’t invest significantly in public higher education face steeper costs for college, must borrow more money and may graduate with higher debt. As a result, many of these young people choose not to go to college. That leaves Missouri with a less-educated workforce and makes the state a less attractive location for new businesses and for families who hope for a better future for their children.

A new report from the left-leaning Center for American Progress shows that as state support for higher education has diminished steadily, starting roughly with the Great Recession in 2008, tuition has risen correspondingly.

Increasingly, the middle-class dream of being able to pay for the kids’ college educations has been tossed on the trash heap. There it joins other aspirations such as home ownership, an annual vacation and a comfortable retirement.

The study shows that a student graduating with a bachelor’s degree in 2012 would have borrowed an average of $26,500, up nearly 60 percent from $16,700 in 2004. A median-income family in 2012 would need to spend 33 percent of its income to pay tuition, fees, room and board for one child at a four-year public university. That would have been 23 percent a decade earlier.
Overall student borrowing rose a staggering 98 percent in the decade from 2002 to 2012, from $19.6 billion to $48.5 billion, according to another Center for American Progress report.

This would be bad enough if middle-class incomes were keeping up. But their income fell by an average of 3 percent during the same period. The report also concludes that the burden of student debt has fallen more significantly on lower-income students from African-American and Hispanic families, meaning fewer young people from those communities attend college.

Two-year community colleges remain an option. But the study shows that those institutions have been most affected by cuts in state support for higher education.

Missouri’s spending for higher education decreased by nearly $3.2 million from 2008 to 2012. The state ranks 23rd in the nation in the percentage of its budget spent on higher ed.

The CAP study suggests federal intervention as a way to stop the slide away from college educations for low- and middle-income young people. Ensuring that college remains affordable for the next generation of students could be achieved through a federal grant program or fund that links national and state investments. Such a fund would be used to encourage states to reinvest in higher education by requiring them to match federal grants and to implement reforms that increase the educational value to students.

It’s time to get creative. Real economic development in Missouri won’t be achieved by cutting taxes for the wealthy or passing out tax breaks to businesses. It will require investment in education at all levels to make Missouri’s students competitive on a worldwide stage. Balancing budgets by cutting education funding is slow-motion economic suicide.

Monsanto has eye on election day battles over GMO labeling, cultivation

November 02, 2014 12:15 am  •  By Tim Barker tbarker@post-dispatch.com > 314-340-8350

The folks at Monsanto will be eagerly watching election results in several states Tuesday as the battle rages on over how we treat genetically modified foods.

The Creve Coeur-based agriculture giant, along with several other high-profile leaders of the food industry, is spending millions of dollars in Oregon and Colorado, where voters are deciding if labels should be required on
foods that contain genetically modified organisms, or GMOs. And in Hawaii’s Maui County — where the company has important research facilities — a measure would ban the growing of GMOs.

It’s an election cycle that brings a sense of déjà vu for critics and opponents alike.

Last year, a statewide vote on GMO labeling suffered a narrow defeat in Washington state. The year before that, an effort in California also failed. The industry spent more than $45 million fighting those measures.

To date, only Vermont has a labeling law, and that was done through the Legislature. Set to take effect in 2016, it’s being challenged in the courts. Both Maine and Connecticut have passed labeling laws, but those are contingent upon other states following the same path.

And now Oregon and Colorado are serving as new battlegrounds in a fight that pits consumers’ desire to know what’s in their food versus the industry’s fear of backlash against companies that use GMOs, which have been deemed safe by the federal government.

And the money is flowing again, raising doubts about the prospects of both measures.

“They keep winning on these ballot initiatives by pouring massive amounts of money in,” said Jean Halloran, director of food policy initiatives at Consumers Union, a supporter of GMO labeling.

“They may be able to eke out another win. But I would say it’s a toss-up in Oregon.”

The fear for Monsanto and others is that a labeling victory would encourage similar efforts in other states — leading to a patchwork of local laws attempting to regulate a nationwide food industry.

Monsanto has contributed more than $9 million to the anti-labeling campaigns in the two states. But it certainly isn’t alone. Seed maker DuPont Pioneer has added more than $7 million, along with Pepsi, at $3.5 million, Coca-Cola, with $1.2 million and seed producer Dow AgroSciences, at $1.2 million, according to campaign finance reports filed in Oregon and Colorado.

Total spending in Oregon already has hit $25 million, making it the costliest ballot initiative in that state’s history, according to The Oregonian newspaper. Labeling opponents account for $18 million of that total.

The spending disparity is much greater in Colorado, where supporters of the state’s Proposition 105 have raised just over $900,000, compared with nearly $17 million raised by opponents, according to campaign finance reports.

“I expected they would spend some money. But this is unbelievable,” said Larry Cooper, co-chairman of the Right to Know Colorado campaign.

Not surprisingly, the industry is dominating the radio and television airwaves, while labeling supporters are relying on door-to-door campaigning.
And while Cooper remains optimistic about the proposition’s fate, he doesn’t expect labeling supporters to give up if they lose.

“We’re not going away,” he said. “We have a right to know what’s in our food.”

Such labeling has long been opposed by the industry, which argues that labels would increase food costs for all consumers while also stigmatizing foods for no reason. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, they say, sees no difference between GMO and non-GMO foods.

“The reason we don’t support them is simple. They don’t provide any safety or nutrition information, and these measures will hurt, not help, consumers, taxpayers and businesses,” Monsanto spokeswoman Charla Lord said in an email statement.

Another factor at play is that GMO labeling laws would essentially change the rules that food companies have been operating under for decades, said Nicholas Kalaitzandonakes, director of the Economics and Management Agrobiotechnology Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Mandatory labeling has been reserved for products deemed to carry some sort of health risk — tobacco products, for example. All other labeling has been done on a voluntary basis, he said.

“This goes beyond biotech. It’s important to the food industry as a whole,” Kalaitzandonakes said. “Everybody in the industry is interested in a predictable system with clear rules.”

IN HAWAII

The vote in Maui County is interesting in that it wouldn’t affect the entire state, yet it could have ramifications well beyond the region. Hawaii, with its ideal climate and long growing season, is home to several research farms owned by seed companies. Monsanto has two facilities in the county — one on Maui and another on Molokai.

The state makes an ideal testing ground for corn because of the climate and the fact that there’s little or no chance of contamination from nearby farms, said Michael Aide, chairman of the department of agriculture at Southeast Missouri State University. “It’s a pristine environment in terms of the pollen,” Aide said.

As for what Monsanto would do if GMO cultivation were outlawed in the county, Lord would not speculate.

“But I can tell you that this initiative threatens not only the livelihoods of farmers on the islands, it would also cost Maui County $85 million per year in economic activity — without any legitimate scientific justification,” she said.
Mizzou professor's novel rolls along with derby dominatrix

November 01, 2014 5:00 am • By Dale Singer Special to the Post-Dispatch

At age 45, Sally LaChance — “childless and divorced, veering into the midpoint of my forties” — is subject to fits of self-evaluation that bleed into self-pity. In her day job, LaChance is a ranger at Karst Park in mid-Missouri, about 30 miles from Jefferson City, but by night, she is the voice of the Boonslick Bombers, a roller derby squad.

By her own admission, she has “morphed inside my skin, from a shy girl overshadowed by her younger sister to a reckless wanderer, a hard-boiled bureaucrat, the other woman, the older woman, a lady ranger, a hippie wife, a roller derby dominatrix and a vigilante cause celebre.”

Jared Mayweather, her sometimes boyfriend, is an aspiring filmmaker who does more aspiring than actually making films. He has a long string of unfinished projects and a little daughter whom he’d like to get to know better.

These are the lives central to “The Empire Rolls,” a novel by Trudy Lewis, who directs the creative writing program at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Weaving together the threads of several events — a seriously injured skater, an escalating confrontation between LaChance and park polluters, the possible sale of the Empire Roller Rink and the Bombers — Lewis spins a story of lives adrift.

LaChance is still mourning the death of her sister in an accident several years ago, and the status of her relationship with Mayweather is far from clear. The way she enforces the law when she discovers industrial polluters at Karst quickly escalates into a YouTube sensation that brings her and Mayweather more trouble than they appear able to handle.

Lewis’ evocation of mid-Missouri may be the most memorable part of the book. Meeting her former lover at his office at the Department of Natural Resources, LaChance hears his insightful summation of his job:

“Do you know how many states of this size — and with this degree of ignorance and poverty — have twenty-three state parks? It is a little miracle in the midst of a massive land grab.”

“The Empire Rolls” doesn’t always roll smoothly. The plot takes a bit to get started, there is an odd several-page detour on the dangers of Tasers, and Lewis’ shift between first-person narration for LaChance and third-person for Mayweather can be puzzling and serves no clear purpose.
But anyone who can fill a roller derby team with skaters named Raven Pillage, Britney Spearhead and Annie Warhaul is obviously having a good time, and her enthusiasm shines through on almost every page. The jammers are out of the pack. Let’s roll.

Dale Singer is a reporter for St. Louis Public Radio.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Branson comedian will visit an MU class for sitcom research
Sunday, November 2, 2014 | 5:38 p.m. CST
BY SIDDARTH VODNALA

COLUMBIA — Comedian Yakov Smirnoff thinks jokes and relationships have one thing in common. Both of them have to be set up properly.

"When a joke is not set up properly, the punchline does not have the desired effect," he said. "When people don’t invest in setting up relationships properly, they are bound to fail."

Smirnoff will visit MU on Monday to conduct research for a new sitcom that deals with similar issues. In the proposed sitcom, Smirnoff would play a professor teaching about intimate relationships at a Midwestern college.

Smirnoff, who is currently working on the pilot, said each episode will begin in a classroom setting with his character talking about issues related to close relationships. His character then struggles with the same issues in his personal life.

The purpose of his visit to MU will be to sit in on a class focused on relationships to gain some perspective on what teaching the subject to a large college class entails, Smirnoff said.

He will sit in a class called "Intimate Relationships and Marriage" taught by Jacquelyn Benson.
The idea for the sitcom came from many sources, Smirnoff said, including a Broadway show he did called "As Long As We Both Shall Laugh." He initially considered doing a reality show on the subject but decided he could not sustain enough drama. The studio executives he spoke to also wanted “honey boo boo type stuff” which he was not interested in, he said. He then settled on the idea of a sitcom.

Titled “Happily Ever Laughter” the show will be Smirnoff’s second collaboration with director Jay Sandrich, who directed episodes of hit shows such as "The Cosby Show" and "The Mary Tyler Moore Show." Sandrich previously directed Smirnoff in the television show "Night Court."

Smirnoff was born in the Soviet Union but emigrated to the United States in 1977. He first gained fame as a standup comedian, and was popular in the mid-to-late 1980s when he starred in the syndicated sitcom, "What a Country!"

Smirnoff’s persona when he first started out in comedy was of someone navigating the country with a limited understanding of American culture and values. He has also acted in Hollywood movies including "The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension" with Peter Weller and "The Money Pit" with Tom Hanks.

After the fall of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, he said he lost popularity, and eventually relocated to Branson, Missouri, where he reinvented himself as a comedian dealing with relationships and solving problems within them.

He has been teaching a class called "The Business of Laughter" at Missouri State University in Springfield for roughly five years.

Smirnoff decided to visit MU after he heard about a class on intimate relationships through the college-aged children of a friend. He said he was surprised by the large number of students who took the class.

He said he contacted Christine Proulx, an associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies who taught a similar class to the one his friend’s children attended.
Since August, Proulx has been helping Smirnoff understand the kind of things a professor would talk about in such a class and why students might want to take a class on intimate relationships.

When Smirnoff asked her why there was so much interest in the class, Proulx joked that the homework was more fun than math homework, he said.

"We think about relationships all the time, whether as scientists or not," Proulx said. "I would bet that one of the top five Googled things on the Internet would be about our relationships with other people, particularly a romantic partner."

The subject would be much simpler to deal with from the perspective of humor, Smirnoff said.

Smirnoff said he entertains thousands of people every year at his theater in Branson with similar material. His stage shows help people deal with the problems in their own relationships, he said.

"They take away something from the show, and benefit from it," he said.

Smirnoff said he hopes the proposed sitcom will air sometime next fall.

Supervising editor is Hunter Woodall.

Persimmons have forecasting abilities in folklore

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (AP) — Move over Punxsutawney Phil. Missouri has its own way to predict the weather.

Folklore holds that the shape of the seedling inside a persimmon seed can predict upcoming winter conditions.

University of Missouri Extension horticulture specialist Patrick Byers says there's no research that backs up the folklore. But that didn't stop him from collecting fruit from persimmon trees in Lawrence, Newton, Webster and McDonald counties.
His evaluation of 102 seeds suggests this coming winter in the Ozarks is going to be colder than average, with below average snowfall and a few warm spells.

Persimmons grow on trees and look like orange tomatoes. The Extension Service says Native Americans taught settlers that the fruit should be left on the trees well into October when it becomes ripe enough to eat.