Loftin: Higher education is worth the investment

R. Bowen Loftin

Choices define who we are, affecting our career goals, dreams and even how we handle challenges in life. Last week, I had the opportunity to talk with ninth- and 10th-grade students at Parkview and Hillcrest high schools in Springfield about how going to college can provide them with nearly limitless choices and help fulfill their dreams.

Growing up in a poor family in a small Texas town, my parents and I knew my choices would be limited if I didn't attend college. Going to college opened up choices for me that led me to do research at NASA and, eventually, to my current job as chancellor of the University of Missouri.

In recent years, major news outlets have reported on trends in higher education, including increasing student debt or declining job placement rates, with examples that focus on the extreme instead of the typical. Additionally, studies have shown that Missourians don't feel like they are getting a good return on their investment in higher education. I passionately disagree with this stance.

Studies consistently show that college graduates earn about $1.6 million more in their lifetimes than those without a college degree. Moreover, college graduates tend to pass on their lifetime prosperity to the next generation.

Take, for example, Shawn Askinosie, who graduated from MU. As owner of Askinosie Chocolate in Springfield, Askinosie mentors high school students through his "Chocolate University," teaching the students business practices and how he uses his success to battle malnutrition in remote areas of the world. He credits his college education with providing him the foundation for and the freedom of choice to make his dream of helping people a reality.

Myths also persist that college is unattainable due to its cost, but many options exist for college-bound students. For example, Mizzou gives more than $40 million in institutional financial aid to students every year. University of Missouri officials also have worked very closely with our state legislature and governor to keep tuition rates low, and we have been successful. Missouri's college tuition rates continue to be some of the lowest in the country. Also, compared to other states across the nation, Missouri has recorded one of the smallest increases in tuition for the past several years.
As an added incentive for Missouri students to attend college, a state-wide program, the Missouri College Advising Corps (MCAC), places recent college graduates in high schools. These advisers — who are currently in Parkview and Hillcrest high schools — help students navigate financial aid and college application processes. A third adviser will join Central High School next year. These extraordinary young people change the attitudes of many students from "I can't go to college" to "I'm going to college!"

I greatly appreciated the opportunity to visit with students and community leaders in Springfield. I encourage you to urge our young people to consider higher education. It elevates us all and gives the next generation more choices to better their own lives and the lives of those around them.

R. Bowen Loftin is University of Missouri chancellor.

MU chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, new AD Mack Rhoades address Kelvin Sampson’s hiring at Houston

BY TOD PALMER
03/11/2015 2:15 PM

If there’s a smudge — or even the hint of one — on new Missouri athletic director Mack Rhoades’ resume during his five years at Houston, it might be the hiring of Kelvin Sampson last spring as Houston’s basketball coach.

Rhoades signed Sampson, the former Oklahoma and Indiana coach, to a five-year deal in April less than a year after his five-year show-cause penalty from the NCAA expired.

Sampson, who was an assistant coach for the Rockets at the time he was hired, made several hundred impermissible calls to recruits with the Sooners and Hoosiers.

The rule has since been changed, but the NCAA also accused Sampson of lying to investigators about those calls in handing down its harsh punishment.
Missouri chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said he discussed Rhoades’ decision to hire Sampson at length during the interview process.

“I was satisfied that he did his due diligence,” Loftin said. “He actually looked carefully and talked to all the right people and to the coach himself about expectations.”

Sampson worked for the Spurs after he was fired at Indiana before serving as an NBA assistant with the Bucks and Rockets.

“Mack satisfied me, after a really in-depth discussion about what he went through as a process, that he asked all the right questions — not only of the coach himself, but those around the coach — to make sure his hire was a good hire,” Loftin said.

Sampson’s coaching acumen has never been a question. He is 510-290, including a 12-18 record with the Cougars ahead of the American Athletic Conference tournament, in 26 seasons at Montana Tech, Washington State, Oklahoma, Indiana and Houston.

At Oklahoma, Sampson’s teams won at least 20 games in 10 seasons and reached the NCAA tourney 11 times, including a Final Four appearance in 2002.

He was 43-15 in two seasons at Indiana before his dismissal late in the 2008 season, but Rhoades was satisfied that Sampson had learned from his mistakes and deserved a second chance.

“I got to a great comfort level where he was a great fit and a great hire for the University of Houston ...,” Rhoades said. “He’s going to be great for the University of Houston and he’ll do everything right there.”

Rhoades said he met with Sampson on “maybe three or four” occasions during the hiring process.

“He was very forthcoming,” Rhoades said. “I talked to his former bosses, the ADs at two of the institutions he had been at. We talked to people in the NCAA, people that used to be in the NCAA, people in the Big 12, people in the Big Ten. We certainly did our due diligence.”
That was enough to satisfy Loftin, who talked extensively about integrity as a key criteria in Rhoades’ hiring.

“This man (Sampson) made mistakes obviously in the past,” Loftin said. “He was sanctioned for that very heavily by the NCAA. That’s no longer the case. ... This man, this AD (Rhoades), did his job, did his homework, did all the things you’ve got to do to be able to ascertain if this person’s a good match for the job and has learned from his past mistakes.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New Missouri athletics director Mack Rhoades an invested, demanding leader

Wednesday, March 11, 2015 | 9:23 p.m. CDT; updated 11:45 p.m. CDT, Wednesday, March 11, 2015

COLUMBIA — Mack Rhoades wasn't supposed to be an athletics director. He thought he would be a professional shortstop. As a 17-year-old, he was regarded as one of the best high school infielders in Arizona.

Then Rhoades busted his ankle playing basketball one day in the offseason. Those major league dreams went out the window.

"I thought I was gonna go play baseball for a nationally ranked institution or possibly play pro ball, and all of sudden that's taken from you and you've got to readjust," he said. "At that age it was difficult, and I think all things happen for a reason, and it led me to the right place, and that's athletic administration."

That rough entry into the world of sports management shaped a career in the field, his wife, Amy Rhoades, said.

"This is very heartfelt for him to be in this business still because he loves sports so much," she said. "That's why he connects with student-athletes so much and cares for them and wants the best for them."

Mack Rhoades, 49, was introduced as Missouri's athletics director on Tuesday. He'll leave the same position at the University of Houston and begin in late April.
"I remember there was a moment in time when I said, 'I want to be at a place someday that is the best, that is a national leader in our industry,'" he said. "And the University of Missouri and this athletics program is just that."

Missouri's new athletics director is genuine and honest, his wife said. MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said Rhoades values honesty and transparency.

And he has a sense of humor.

"As you can tell, hopefully I can recruit a little bit," he said when he introduced Amy Rhoades at the MU Student Center.

That straight-shooting attitude led her husband up the ladder of college athletics, she said.

Loftin described a man who pushes for excellence and exudes effort. He tackles ambitious projects and leads with gruff honesty.

"He's kinda the guy who doesn't hold any punches," Amy Rhoades said. "He knows what he wants. He has always known what he wants."

At Houston, Mack Rhoades oversaw the development of a $128-million football stadium and $25-million basketball facility, replaced football and basketball coaches months after winning seasons and moved the Cougars to a burgeoning and competitive conference.

At Missouri, he'll lead a department that boasts a nationally renowned football team, a top-ranked wrestling squad and a softball program that is a consistent contender.

"This is not a fixer-upper," he said.

But the department has also struggled with athlete disciplinary problems and NCAA compliance in recent years. Seven members of the men's basketball team were suspended over this season. Dorial Green-Beckham, a top-tier NFL draft prospect, began his career at Missouri but was dismissed a year ago after allegedly pushing a woman down a flight of stairs. The incident was not prosecuted.

"The one thing we will never compromise is integrity and compliance," Rhoades said. "It's hard to win, but we're gonna win and we're gonna do it the right way."
He said he considers himself demanding and energetic. He described an obsession with improvement and pushing his department.

"I think the bar can always be raised in every aspect," he said. "I'm certainly a person that will demand excellence, which will demand greatness in everything we do. I have this insatiable appetite that we're always going to get better."

And he says there's "not gonna be any surprises. You're gonna know how I feel and how I think about the program and the job that you're doing.

"I want things fast-paced," he continued. "I want us to get things done and get them done in a hurry but not to where you're making mistakes. I think the coaches that certainly have worked with me would say I lead by serving people and by example."

He said he plans to meet with every member of the athletics staff to get to know them personally and learn about the department.

"He's real," Amy Rhoades said. "He's just always going to be honest with you and care. He's very caring right away when you're talking to him."

Loftin said he valued that honesty and commitment in an athletics director. Mack Rhoades called Missouri a "destination job." His wife hopes they retire in Columbia one day.

"We attach ourselves to people pretty good," she said.

For Mack Rhoades, relationships in athletics administration revolve around student-athletes, kids just as young and just as vulnerable as he once was — a shortstop with a busted ankle and uncertain future.

"I want them to know that I care about them as people," he said. "I think when you have people and they know that you care about them, they go that extra mile."

Rhoades finds 'destination place' at Missouri
“Amy comes walking into our home office and asks, ‘Mack, have you done the taxes?’”

In case you were wondering along with his wife, Mack Rhoades has not done his taxes. But cut him some slack. He’ll get to it.

He’s had kind of a busy week.

Rhoades was introduced as Missouri’s new athletic director on Tuesday. After spending five and half years at the University of Houston, he will take over for Mike Alden, who had been at the helm of Mizzou Athletics for 17 years.

Rhoades was known at Houston for his ability to raise funds and to hire championship-caliber coaches. In his five-plus years, Houston constructed the $120 million TDECU Stadium as well as a $25 million basketball practice facility. Rhoades was also responsible for hiring basketball coach Kelvin Sampson and football coach Tom Watson, both of whom have championships to their names.

Rhoades’ message was plain and simple: He wants to take Missouri to the next level.

“(Winning) is extremely important,” Rhoades said. “That’s part of the reason why we do this. We want to build championship programs. Not just winning teams, but championship programs that are good every year.”

But he also acknowledged that it will be difficult to improve an athletic department that has already had so much recent success.

“Gosh darnit, did you have to be that good?” he asked Alden with a smile. “This is not a fixer-upper. The job that Mike has done here in 17 years, it has been tremendous. The challenge is, how do you take something where Mike has set the bar so high and continue to push it?”
At the beginning of his press conference, Rhoades asked Alden and his wife, Rockie, to stand up. He led a round of applause to celebrate Alden's accomplishments in the position he'll take over in late April.

"It was important for me that Mike is here so that this group of people here could give him a round of applause and thank him for this university," Rhoades said.

While Alden himself did not take the microphone on Tuesday, he offered similarly flattering words of his successor in a statement.

"He's terrific," Alden said. "He's got a high motor and he's got great integrity. You have to outwork your competition, particularly in this league, and he has all those characteristics."

Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said that while consulting Alden about potential replacements, he gave Rhoades the highest remarks of all candidates.

But the sentiment and celebration of Rhoades' arrival will be short-lived. When he gets going full-time in the coming weeks, he wants to hit the ground running.

"I'm not a real patient person; I want to get moving," Rhoades said. "I want us to get things done and I want us to get things done in a hurry."

Rhoades said that he doesn't have anything he feels needs immediate addressing, and that he hasn’t yet had time to fully evaluate the details of how things work. He plans on making multiple trips to Missouri even prior to his late-April start date to get a head start on meeting with coaches and each member of his staff.

But Rhoades said he won't be looking to clear house for the sake of having a handpicked staff, as is often the way things go with a changing of the guard.

"The challenge for me is to not just go put my hands on everything," Rhoades said. "We're not going to change just to change. If we're going to change, it's to get better."

Rhoades cautioned that, despite his aggressive passion for winning, his first priority will be staying within NCAA rules and doing things "the right way."
“The one thing we will never compromise is integrity and compliance,” Rhoades said. “It’s hard to win, but we’re going to win and we’re going to do it the right way. I have zero tolerance for any misconduct in terms of rules. You can do both — you can win and you can do it the right way. This program has done it.”

The 49-year-old Rhoades concluded by saying he hopes this Missouri “destination job” is the final stop in his career that has already included stops at Texas-El Paso, Akron and, most recently, Houston.

“It was going to take something special for us to leave (Houston), truly,” he said. “This place is special. Amy and I and the three girls are moving here to Columbia, Missouri with the idea that this is the last job.”

THE TRIBUNE'S VIEW

The new AD

By HENRY J. WATERS III

Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 2:00 pm Comments (1)

Mack Rhoades has been hired by Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin as the new University of Missouri athletic director. Loftin wasted little time and seems to have found the aggressive sort of guy he wanted.

Rhoades made a good record at the University of Houston raising money for new facilities and seeking new coaches to improve team performance.

I hope he and Loftin are not overly discouraged by the status of MU basketball.

Under first-year Coach Kim Anderson, the Tigers’ record is dismal, but the coach remains a fan favorite. We have discovered Anderson wants to conduct his program the right way, an insistence that ran counter this year to the instincts of some of his players. He came on the scene late and inherited a skeleton crew, but his team hung in there and he has been able to recruit several promising young players. He has a winning record in NCAA Division II. He is an alumnus of Norm Stewart basketball and loves Missouri. He has character and quality. He deserves several years to build his program.
Hard to imagine bright fellows like Loftin and Rhoades would fail to see this, but here’s an added pitch for a bit of patience at a time when impatience seems to be the mode of the day.

MU police name man found in creek

By THE TRIBUNE’S STAFF

Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri police have identified the man found in the Hinkson Creek bottoms Tuesday morning.

MUPD Capt. Brian Weimer in a news release said the body is that of Cyle Christopher Crowley, 27, of Columbia. Crowley was not an MU student, Weimer said. An autopsy was conducted Wednesday morning, and toxicology tests are pending.

Weimer said no foul play was suspected “at this time.”

Police were sent to the Hinkson Creek bottoms, southeast of Providence Road and Mick Deaver Memorial Drive, at 9:53 a.m. Tuesday to investigate the death of an unidentified man. Fire and medical personnel pronounced the man dead at the scene.

Police described the man as white, in his late teens to early 20s, with a slender build, about 6 feet tall and with a large birthmark on his left calf.

Anyone with information is asked to call Sgt. Shawn Spalding at 573-882-5928 or 573-864-8571.

Weimer said the department sent out an informational email to students and staff Tuesday afternoon “with the hope that someone can assist us.”
Body found in Hinkson Creek identified

by Meghan Lane

COLUMBIA -- University of Missouri Police have identified the body of a man found dead in the Hinkson Creek bottoms east of Providence Road Tuesday morning.

MUPD investigators identified the deceased individual as Cyle Christopher Crowley, 27.

Police said Crowley was a Columbia resident but wasn’t a University of Missouri student.

An autopsy was conducted at 10 a.m., Wednesday and a toxicology examination will be conducted in the future.

The said there is no indication of foul play.

MUPD identify body found in Hinkson Creek

COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri Police Department on Wednesday identified a body found at Hinkson Creek.

Authorities found the body of Cyle Christopher Crowley, 27, around 9:53 a.m. Tuesday. Crowley was not an MU student.

An autopsy was conducted Wednesday morning. MUPD Captain B. Weimer said a toxicology examination will be conducted, and there is no indication of foul play.
Man found in Hinkson Creek bottoms identified


COLUMBIA, Mo. - University of Missouri Police have identified a man found dead in Columbia Tuesday morning.

Officers found the body of a 27-year-old Cyle Christopher Crowley shortly before 10:00 Tuesday morning in the Hinkson Creek bottoms east of Providence Road in Columbia.

Someone noticed Crowley's body while walking near the creek, and found him lying in a tributary.

Crowley was not an MU student.

An autopsy was performed Wednesday morning, and a toxicology exam is expected in the future.

Officers said there is no indication of foul play at this time.

Anyone with information is asked to call Sgt. Shawn Spalding at 573-882-5928 or 573-864-8571.

KMIZ-TV (ABC) – Columbia, Mo.

MU Reaction to Oklahoma University Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity Chapter Racist Slurs
Watch the video:
http://mediacenter.tveys.com/downloadgateway.aspx?UserID=172801&MDID=4637703&MDSeed=4008&Type=Media

KOMU-TV (NBC) – Columbia, Mo.

MU Reaction to Oklahoma University SAE Fraternity Chapter Racist Slurs

Watch the video:

the maneater

‘Intergroup dialogue course’ among students’ requests to improve race relations

By Quinn Malloy
March 11, 2015

The U.S. Department of Justice’s March 4 report revealed callousness and racial biases on the part of the Ferguson Police Department in emails discussing African-American citizens of its community. The report cited insensitive comments and caricatures made by Ferguson officials, including an email which depicted President Barack Obama as a chimpanzee.
“Honestly, it’s just blow after blow after blow,” said senior LeChae Mottley, president of the Legion of Black Collegians. “I’m not surprised by the results of the investigation. It’s not shocking anymore; it’s more hurtful.”

While the Justice Department’s findings troubled her personally, Mottley said she is more focused on what she can do for students at MU.

“There’s only so much we can do from here that can positively affect Ferguson,” she said. “If I can do things as an individual to help Ferguson, I will. But as a leader of the black student government here, I need to make sure that students feel comfortable here.”

Following a December listening session related to the events in Ferguson, MU administrators called on student leaders from various organizations to discuss a plan of action for addressing race relations on campus and changing the campus climate. Students suggested stronger dialogue on race, and administrators said they will re-evaluate existing diversity programs. Faculty Council has since formed a committee on race relations.

The administration relied on public forums to discuss with the student body the ideas and issues surrounding race relations in the aftermath of the events in Ferguson. The administration hosted one forum in December, during which administrators like Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin were criticized for being too “reactive” in its response to students’ concerns. Loftin issued a statement the following day, vowing to continue discussions about the issue and hold more forums.

But there has not been another forum since. A forum was scheduled for Feb. 16 but was postponed when the university closed due to snow. Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs said the February forum was canceled a week later after administrators ran into difficulty finding a new venue for the event. The administration will hold forums on March 17 and sometime in April, she said.

While no public forum took place in February, Scroggs has been a key player in administrative action on race relations issues. She said students and student leaders alike have come to her office regularly to discuss issues they are facing.
Scroggs said she met with Mottley on March 7 and with the Association of Black Graduate and Professional Students representatives on March 10. She said events in Ferguson have served as the catalyst for more serious discussions among campus leaders.

One of the most pressing requests students made, Mottley said, was for the creation of an “intergroup dialogue course.” Having students discuss issues surrounding race relations in smaller groups might allow for more productive, educational conversation, she added.

“You don’t get to have difficult discussions in diversity lecture courses,” Mottley said. “Difficult discussions usually lead to actual learning.”

A re-evaluation of how MU recruits under-represented students was also requested by this group of students, Mottley said.

Administrators are also reassessing how diversity is presented during Summer Welcome and remodeled the diversity training program for its leaders, Scroggs said.

“I think that the Ferguson issue really brings (race relations) to the fore and it forces us to talk about it in a much broader context with a lot more people engaged in the conversation,” Scroggs said. “That’s what happens on a college campus; this is a place where ideas and issues are discussed all the time. That’s not a bad thing.”

MU Chief Diversity Officer Noor Azizan-Gardner has also been a leading voice in the administration’s approach to race relations on campus. Azizan-Gardner said she agrees that events in Ferguson and students’ reactions to those events have forced administrators to take a closer look at what race relations are at MU.

Azizan-Gardner will meet with associate professor of journalism Berkley Hudson, who is heading Faculty Council’s race relations committee, and Faculty Council Chairman Craig Roberts during the week of March 9 to discuss the role the new committee is expected to play, she said.

“The university is a microcosm of the state and the nation,” Azizan-Gardner said. “Race relations has always been a fact of life for our country since its inception. The events in
Ferguson, New York and California have intensified this continuing need for us to continue our work with race relations."

Scroggs said while she believes public dialogue is an effective way to tackle difficult community issues, she acknowledged there are shortcomings.

“When you have these big public dialogues, most of the people there are interested in what’s being discussed,” she said. “You feel some days like you’re preaching to the choir. How do you get to the people that really need the message the most?”

Many members of the MU community are trying to answer that question, Azizan-Gardner said.

“Forums and discussions are just the beginning,” she said. “Many on this campus are discussing ways to create opportunities and spaces for more interactions in many different contexts — the classroom, labs, residence halls, the Greek system, extracurricular activities, study abroad, service learning and many more.”

The Chancellor’s Diversity Initiative, led by Azizan-Gardner, is focused on integrating diversity and inclusion throughout campus and reflecting diversity in MU’s curriculum, recruitment and scholarly products, she said.

She said the Chancellor’s Committee on Diversity Enhancement is revamping its Difficult Dialogues Program with more interactive theater and a renewed push for facilitatory workshops. The committee has developed a tip sheet on its website to help spark and guide discussions about race relations on campus.

“I encourage every faculty, staff and student on campus to reach out to someone who is not like them,” Azizan-Gardner said. “Start the conversation so that we can break down stereotypes and barriers. It starts always with building friendships. Say ‘hello’ to someone who looks different from you. Find out about each other. Learn to see the world from different lenses and perspectives.”

**MSA budget enters committees**

By George Roberson
March 10, 2015

One Mizzou's funding was cut in the first draft of the Missouri Students Association budget, which arrived in committee March 3.

The budget, which was put together by MSA Vice President Brenda Smith-Lezama and Budget Chairman Bill Vega, will reach full Senate on March 18 after it passes through Budget Committee. The majority of the increases related to salaries while there were cuts to services and activities across the board.

One Mizzou's $1,000 budget from fiscal year 2015 was removed in the new budgetary year. Smith-Lezama said this was because the program lost its focus and outlived its usefulness.

One Mizzou was founded in February 2011 after two racially charged incidents. The student-led diversity initiative hosted a One Mizzou week in November 2012, during which Maya Angelou spoke at Missouri Theatre. The initiative was later criticized for failing to live up to its expectations and largely fizzling out due to what MSA President Payton Head called “a lack of vision” in a Nov. 18, 2014 Maneater article.

Smith-Lezama said the cut to One Mizzou was thought about early on in the process.

"One Mizzou was intended to be something that would change the atmosphere here on campus. However, we believe that it really hasn't fulfilled its potential," she said. “Especially after the events ... relating to Mike Brown and the protests and the open forum that we had, we realized that the student body does not believe in One Mizzou. The student body no longer believes it's beneficial, so ... it's not something that we need to keep around. I've spoken to Chancellor (R. Bowen) Loftin, Dr. (Cathy) Scroggs, Noor (Azizan-Gardner), Young (Kwon) from Four Front, and we've all reached the same conclusion: We're going to pull back on (One Mizzou)."

Overall allocations were $35,892 less in this proposal than in the budget that passed last year, with many departments and auxiliaries taking cuts.

"We always asked (the departments and auxiliaries), 'If you had to cut something, what would you cut?'" Smith-Lezama said. "That made it easier when it came to reallocating funds."
She said one of the first things to go was funding for banquets and parties. She also said meetings between her and Vega and the different departments went well.

Smith-Lezama and Vega said they worked closer than the executive and legislative branches had in previous years.

"We worked very closely together," Vega said. "I know on one Sunday, we spent five hours together cranking it out right at the end."


**HOW PETALS AND LEAVES DETACH FROM PLANTS**

When parts of a plant, such as dead leaves, flowers, or ripe fruit detach, the process is called abscission. A new study sheds light on the process that governs how and when plants shed their parts.

Knowing how the process works will help increase understanding of both plant development and responses to environmental signals—such as drought and pest infection—while allowing scientists to control the process for flower, fruit, and vegetable industries.

The earliest steps of abscission involve changes in a special layer of cells, called the abscission zone, located at the base of the flower. As a flower matures, cells in this layer begin to separate from one another along the entire zone, creating a clean rift between the base of the flower and the petals. As the rift enlarges, the petals fall off and are sent tumbling to the ground.
“Scientists have long wondered how a plant regulates this cell separation process, in particular the molecular mechanism that both triggers and powers the process,” says lead author O. Rahul Patharkar, a postdoctoral fellow in the Division of Biological Sciences at the University of Missouri.

“We know that when a plant is close to dropping its petals, many genes are activated. A lot of this gene activity, or transcription, is exponentially increased in a relatively short time, ultimately leading to abscission.”

One gene that gets a boost in its activity is called HAESA, a gene required for floral abscission to occur. Previous studies have shown that activity of this gene increases by a magnitude of 27-fold from the time the flower bud opens to when it drops its petals, a period of about 2 days.

‘POSITIVE FEEDBACK LOOP’

Patharkar’s new research identified two important connections in the mechanisms that explain this rapid increase in HAESA gene expression.

The research team found that plants that overexpress a certain regulator protein do not activate HAESA and do not drop their flower petals. The findings suggest that the protein found is a negative regulator of HAESA, meaning it prevents expression of the gene.

Additionally, the protein also acts as a molecular “switch” responsible for turning the process on and off and it is this “positive feedback loop” that is important in the abscission process.

“A good analogy for the positive feedback loop is that it’s the turbocharger for the process of abscission,” Patharkar says. “Basically, it amplifies the power of abscission causing the plant to drop its leaves or flowers.”

“The study puts together a number of different genes and proteins into a new model that helps explain how plants precisely control floral organ abscission,” says John C. Walker, professor of biological sciences and corresponding author of the publication.
“Eventually, the findings will provide researchers with new methods of controlling the process that could help the fruit and flower industries that want their products to stay in place until ready for harvest."

The study appears in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, with support from the National Science Foundation. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agency.

**MU law school opens new intellectual property center**

*Wednesday, March 11, 2015 at 2:00 pm*

*The University of Missouri is launching a new Center for Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship this week with a conference, “IP and the University: Issues for Academics, Entrepreneurs and Lawyers.”*

The conference is scheduled for 9:15 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday in Hulston Hall on the MU campus. The event is free.

Registration is not required for panel presentations but is required for other program events. To register, contact Laura Coleman at colemanl@missouri.edu or 573-882-5969.

The new center at MU intersects business, finance and technology disciplines, giving students a better idea of the “changing legal marketplace,” according to a news release.

Panel discussion topics range from copyright law to “the state of the patent system.”
Commercial turkeys in Arkansas test positive for bird flu

Previous positive tests for the H5N2 strain have also been found among flocks in California, Minnesota and Missouri.

By Brooks Hays  |  March 11, 2015 at 4:28 PM

HARRISON, Ark., March 11 (UPI) -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has confirmed a flock of 40,000 turkeys has tested positive for a highly contagious strain of bird flu. The news arrives just days after the same strain was confirmed in a nearby Missouri flock.

Both flocks belong to farms contracted to supply turkeys to Butterball, one of the nation's largest turkey processors. The test for the flock in Northwest Arkansas came back positive on Tuesday, and was reported by the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission and the USDA on Wednesday.

The turkeys have been quarantined, but the positive tests have already raised fears that the disease could spread through an area -- including Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia and Mississippi -- responsible for the bulk of the nation's poultry production.

"It seems to be spreading fast," Ron Plain, an economist and expert on the livestock industry at the University of Missouri, told Bloomberg. "A lot of our foreign customers will stop purchases from impacted states."

"Usually, the poultry industry can work around that by re-sourcing from a different state," Plain added. "If it continues to spread into more states, it gets to be more of a challenge to be able to shift product around. I would expect you will see a decline in exports."

Previous positive tests for the H5N2 strain have also been found among flocks in California and Minnesota, the top turkey producer. Mexico has halted imports from those states, and the European Union has begun blocking certain shipments as well.
More than 20 trading partners called off shipments from Minnesota processors after positive tests earlier this winter. Those birds were quickly quarantined and culled.

Worth Sparkman, a spokesman for Tyson Foods Inc., which is headquartered in Arkansas, confirmed that none of their birds had been diagnosed with the disease.

"There are always biosecurity measures in place on poultry farms and we've been even more diligent since AI has been in the US this winter," Sparkman told trade publication Meat and Poultry.

Health officials say the bird flu strain is little risk to humans.

(Bloomberg) -- The U.S. government confirmed a case of bird flu in Arkansas as the disease spreads into the southeast of the country, the heart of the domestic poultry industry.

The H5N2 strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza was confirmed in a commercial turkey flock in Boone County, Arkansas, a unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture said in a statement Wednesday.

The disease has spread this month after appearing in a migratory route along the Mississippi River. Previously, the outbreak that started in mid-December was contained in western states. Butterball LLC, the largest U.S. turkey, said Wednesday that the virus has affected farms that supply the company. Cargill Inc. said that Missouri’s agriculture agency indicated preliminary positive tests in two flocks, including a company contract site.

China has halted all U.S. poultry imports since January. Mexico, the top importer of U.S. chicken and turkey, expanded bans this week to restrict shipments from other states with cases in commercial flocks: California,
Missouri and Minnesota, the top turkey producer. The European Union, Guatemala, Jordan and more than a dozen other countries have also restricted some U.S. shipments.

“It seems to be spreading fast,” Ron Plain, a livestock economist at the University of Missouri in Columbia, said in a telephone interview. “A lot of our foreign customers will stop purchases from impacted states.”

Butterball Farms

The Arkansas and Jasper County, Missouri, turkey operations affected by the virus are contract farms that supply to Garner, North Carolina-based Butterball, Stephanie Llorente, a company spokeswoman, said in an e-mail. Cargill said in an e-mail that Missouri’s preliminary positive results for the H5N2 virus included a company contract farm close to Fortuna, Missouri.

“Our first concern is always the health and safety of the people who enjoy our products, as well as the care and well-being of our turkeys,” Llorente said.

Springdale, Arkansas, is the home of Tyson Foods Inc., the largest U.S. chicken producer. The company’s shares fell the most since June after Reuters earlier reported the suspected case in the state. No flocks grown for the company have been diagnosed with avian influenza, spokesman Worth Sparkman said in an e-mail.

Pilgrim’s Pride

Shares of Pilgrim’s Pride Corp., the second-biggest U.S. chicken producer, tumbled as much as 9 percent.

Closely held Butterball is the top turkey producer. Pilgrim’s Pride is based in Greeley, Colorado.

Cargill, one of the world’s biggest agriculture companies, said flu tests at almost 80 farms within a 12-mile (19-kilometer) radius of the operation cited by the state of Missouri state were negative.

Closely held Cargill, based in Minneapolis, said no company flock in Arkansas tested positive.
“This is a big problem, especially for our turkey industry,” James Sumner, the president of the Stone Mountain, Georgia-based USA Poultry & Egg Export Council, said Tuesday in a telephone interview. “We were in Mexico this week meeting with government officials and trying to prevail upon them to treat this as we treat it.”

This outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza is the first in U.S. commercial poultry since 2004. The disease is highly contagious among birds. None of the viruses have been identified in humans, and are not expected to pose a public health risk, USDA’s Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service said in a statement on its website on March 10.

‘Heightened Measures’

“We’re encouraging everybody in the industry to take heightened biosecurity measures,” Sumner said. “At the same time, we recognize that if it’s in the flyways and in the migratory birds, it’s going to show up in these other states. It’s just a matter of time. We’re telling everybody to take extreme care in trying to prevent any contamination.”

The flu hasn’t been detected on any commercial broiler farm in the Mississippi flyway, Tom Super, a spokesman for the National Chicken Council, said in an e-mail.

Anti-Semitic Incidents Raise Alarm In Missouri And Kansas

By CODY NEWILL

Almost a year ago, the Jewish Community Center and Village Shalom in Overland Park, Kan., were the sites of an anti-Semitic shooting.

Nearly a year ago, three people were shot and killed outside the Jewish Community Center and Village Shalom in Overland Park, Kan. The only suspect, former Ku Klux Klan member Frazier Glenn Cross, was known by authorities to harbor anti-Semitic beliefs.
And just a week ago, Missouri Auditor Tom Schweich committed suicide. He was reportedly furious over a political "whisper campaign" in which the chair of the state Republican party incorrectly said Schweich was Jewish.

Both these events raise the question: is anti-Semitism on the rise in Kansas and Missouri?

Karen Aroesty of the Anti-Defamation League responds to reports of anti-Semitic incidents in Missouri and Illinois. Her office dealt with two cases in 2013 and 11 cases in 2014.

"Clearly the JCC shooting [was a big incident], but we had a series of incidents that were all kind of different," Aroesty said in conversation with Central Standard's Gina Kaufmann. "I'm not sure exactly what the jump in numbers means, but I think more people are aware, more people are reporting issues and more folks are sensitive to the issues."

Aroesty says that, while there are some clear cases of malicious anti-Semitism, most are simply misunderstandings borne out of ignorance.

"We had a school situation where a school faculty member was a Vietnam veteran and put a bumper sticker in his room that said, 'I'll forgive Jane Fonda when the Jews forgive Hitler,'" Aroesty said. "What we did was talk to him and say, 'Can you understand why folks in the Jewish community particularly right now consider that problematic?' and the bumper sticker disappeared."

Congregation Kol Ami rabbi Doug Alpert agreed with Aroesty that most occurrences of anti-Semitism are simply mistakes. But Alpert is deeply troubled by recent events.

"At first, my inclination was to separate the two, but they're not that far apart," Alpert said. "The notion that being a Jew would be a liability to running for political office in Missouri still feeds a sense of demonizing the 'other.'"

Jeanne Snodgrass is director of the University of Missouri’s Hillel House, a place where Jewish students can come to connect with other Jewish students. She says her own experiences as a Jewish woman have been similar to what Aroesty has seen.

"For some people, [my Jewish heritage] was almost exciting or exotic, and sometimes the questions I’d get asked were things that should’ve been offensive," Snodgrass said. "But I think they came not from a bad place, but a place of wanting to know about the culture."

Still, even innocent mistakes and curiosity can cross a line. Mizzou student Thalia Sass says small slips of the tongue can still unintentionally hurt.

"A lot of the Jewish students here experience microaggressions," Sass said. "You hear a lot of expressions like, 'They tried to Jew me down on the price,' or odd questions about the Israel-Palestinian conflict."

Aroesty says when dealing with anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist remarks, calm confidence is often the best way to let someone know they are being offensive without escalating the situation.
"The most effective kind of conversation is where you can say to someone, 'What you just said is offensive to me and here’s why,'" Aroesty said. "Then you can get the other person to the point where they get it. They might not agree with it, but they’ll understand."

A Growing Number of Births Happen Outside Hospitals

A growing number of births in the United States are happening outside of hospitals, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services reported two percent of births in Missouri took place in homes, birth centers, and in family practices in 2013. The number of out-of-hospital births has been on the rise since 2006 in Missouri because it’s becoming an attractive alternative for some families.

Isabel Peterson didn’t expect she would be having a home birth.

“I used to tell my friends that my two biggest fears in life were childbirth and prison,” Peterson said.

But after marrying her husband Dwight and getting pregnant, Peterson says she didn’t want to be scared anymore, so she began researching her options.

The couple decided to have their baby at home with the guidance of a midwife from Columbia Area Midwives, a collective of Certified Professional Midwives (CPM) with independent practices.

Other expecting parents are making similar decisions. The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services reported 1,504 out-of-hospital births in 2013. The recent increase in out-of-hospital births in Missouri mirrors national trends. According to the National Vital Statistics Reports’ data on births in 2013, 1.4 percent of deliveries took place outside of hospitals and the largest number of home births occurred since they began reporting on place of delivery in 2013.
CPM Kim James said clients seek out her practice because it’s similar to that of an OB/GYN, but said she has the ability to spend more time with her clients each visit.

“I set aside an hour for all the other things that are going on as a mother prepares to become a mother again, or for the first time, and all of the psychological aspects and the practical kinds of preparations for having a new baby in her life,” James said.

James said the relationship she builds with clients during the visits helps them relax and have a natural birth.

But even in the traditional setting of the hospital, University of Missouri School of Medicine Assistant Professor and OB/GYN Courtney Barnes said patients are seeking personalized care.

“It’s actually been great to talk to patients and figure out what they want and we have made some huge changes in our hospital because they understand that some of the traditional hospital practices are not good for mother/infant bonding,” Barnes said.

But Barnes said she agrees with the official recommendations of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which state that hospitals and birth centers are the safest places to give birth.

“But even in the traditional setting of the hospital, University of Missouri School of Medicine Assistant Professor and OB/GYN Courtney Barnes said patients are seeking personalized care.”

“Most of us think of labor as this beautiful, wonderful, low-risk, natural thing, [but] there can be pretty significant complications, and being in a hospital allows us to take care of those complications,” Barnes said.

Beyond the medical risks, there are financial obstacles for expecting mothers seeking nontraditional birthing options. Peterson said her insurance doesn’t cover home birth. But she and her husband are willing and able to cover the cost because of the confidence it brings her as she prepares to give birth.

“People rely so heavily on their doctor to make decisions for them and I feel so much more confident that I’m making the decisions,” Peterson said.

As Peterson nears the end of her pregnancy, she feels fully prepared after working with her midwife and taking a childbirth class with her husband.

“Getting all the fear out of the way and now feeling as prepared as we do, it just makes these next couple weeks happy for us, so, we just can’t wait to meet our baby,” she said.

For now, Peterson said it’s just a waiting game until they welcome their child.
Defense lawyer: Not enough info in Branson murder case

Steve Pokin, News-Leader 8:13 p.m. CDT March 11, 2015

Three weeks after a 6-year-old girl was strangled in Branson, few details have been released regarding the circumstances of her death and the attorney for the man charged wants the case dismissed, arguing that not enough information has been disclosed to adequately defend her client.

Lindsey N. Phoenix, an assistant public defender, argues that the key charging document — called a probable cause statement — does not meet the minimum legal threshold regarding specific facts.

A probable cause document is a sworn statement, usually made by a police officer; it describes the key findings of an investigation.

The motion to dismiss the case is scheduled to be heard Thursday morning by Associate Circuit Judge Eric D. Eighmy.

John P. Roberts, 55, has been charged with first-degree murder in connection with the Feb. 21 death of Jasmine Miller. Charging documents state that he lured the girl into his room at the Windsor Inn, 3520 W. 76 Country Boulevard, and that her body was found under his bed in his room.

Phoenix this month filed her motion to throw out the case. According to court records, she argues:

"The statement of probable cause contains nothing more than legal conclusions and fails to state facts sufficient to support a finding of probable cause."

Her motion further contends that the prosecution has provided so little information that it denies Roberts due process under the law and fails to adequately inform him of the "nature and substance" of the charges and, in effect, prevents him from preparing a defense and presenting witnesses.

Phoenix did not respond to a request for comment for this story. Jeff Merrell, Taney County prosecuting attorney, also did not respond. He has not responded to requests from the News-Leader for information and comment for two weeks.

Phoenix had the case transferred from Associate Circuit Judge Tony Roberts to Judge Eighmy. In effect, Eighmy will review the decision made earlier by the other judge.

Branson police officer E. James Morrow wrote the probable cause statement. Morrow states that he believes Roberts committed first-degree murder based on:

"John Paul Roberts committed the Class A Felony of First Degree Murder by knowingly causing the death of victim J.M. by strangulation. John Paul Roberts lured J.M. into his room #155 with snacks and once in the room caused her death by strangulation (several words are whited out.) The body of J.M. was discovered under the bed in room #155 which had a sole inhabitant, John Paul Roberts."
The statement is "bare bones" but meets the minimum the legal threshold of what's required to charge someone, in the opinions of a former Greene County prosecutor and a University of Missouri law school professor.

Neither person is connected to the case. The News-Leader asked for their opinion and sent them a copy of the probable cause statement.

"That is one of the sparsest P.C. statements that I have ever seen, but it is probably sufficient," said former prosecutor Darrell Moore. "It is probably bare-bones passable."

Moore was a prosecutor for 26 years and headed the Greene County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office for 12 years, an elected position.

The threshold for a probable cause statement is that a reasonable person would read the document and believe that the accused committed the crime, including all the elements of the crime — as defined by law.

"It is not 'beyond a reasonable doubt,' " which is the legal threshold for conviction at trial, Moore said.

The legal definition of first-degree murder in Missouri is brief:

"A person commits the crime of murder in the first degree if he knowingly causes the death of another person after deliberation upon the matter."

Moore said the probable cause statement covers the "deliberation" element by alleging that Roberts lured the girl into his room with snacks.

What the statement lacks, Moore said, is how the officer learned that alleged fact.

Ben Trachtenberg, an associate professor at the University of Missouri School of Law, said the document is sparse but appears to cover what's required.

He also said the statement could have explained how the police officer concluded the girl was lured into the room with snacks.

"Maybe the wrappers were there in the room," he said.

Why are all of the kids on my study abroad trip white?

By: Elise Schmelzer, University of Missouri March 11, 2015 9:53 am
Alex Montoya’s parents didn’t take his plan to study abroad seriously until a week before he got on a plane to Florence, Italy. In fact, he says, they had often joked about it, asking if they could come along.

When reality sank in, however, his mom “freaked out,” that her son would be living so far away, he says with a laugh.

But their disbelief, explains the West Texas A&M University senior, was understandable. Both are Mexican immigrants who couldn’t understand why he’d want to leave the U.S. “It’s hard enough for them to grasp college and on top of that a study abroad experience — it’s just way over their heads,” he says.

“All students need global skills, not just some.”

As a first-generation Hispanic student with little financial family support, Montoya is not the traditional study abroad participant.

Although only a tenth of U.S. students decide to study abroad, that slice is overwhelmingly white, according to the Institute of International Education (IIE), a non-profit whose work includes helping U.S.-based colleges and universities connect with campuses worldwide.

During the 2012/13 academic year, white students made up more than three quarters of those abroad, according to IIE’s annual Open Doors Report. And black and Hispanic students are the most underrepresented in study abroad programs, the report found: Each group accounts for about 15% of the general college population, but black students represent 5% and Hispanic students 8% of students abroad.

The reasons are complex, says Daniel Obst, IIE’s deputy vice president of international partnerships, and include cost, the perception that study abroad is for wealthy white students and the lack of familial familiarity with available opportunities.

And at stake is more than just a chance to see a different country. “International education has become one of the most important components of a 21st-century education,” Obst says. “All students need global skills, not just some.”

The White House agrees. In December, the Obama administration hosted the White House Travel Bloggers summit, which discussed, among other things, how to get more students — especially minorities — to go abroad.
“It is crucial for our country’s next generation of leaders to travel, live, work, intern or volunteer abroad in order to gain the skills needed to understand and operate within the global political and economic landscape of the 21st century,” Evan Ryan, assistant secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), said at the summit. “It is in America’s national interest … to build and sustain a globally minded and internationally literate workforce.”

Footing the bill

One of the main deterrents for any student is the sticker price on study abroad programs, says Obst. Thousands of dollars in program costs, airplane tickets and visas — in addition to regular tuition — is required, which adds up to amounts especially intimidating to students working their way through school or already knee deep in student loans.

At New York University, living in Berlin for a semester is estimated to cost at least $8,000 plus tuition, according to the university’s study abroad website. Students at the University of Colorado-Boulder who want to spend a semester in Tokyo are recommended to budget about $19,000 while their peers who stay on campus can expect to pay less than $15,000, according to that study abroad program’s website.

Students of color often struggle more than their white peers to pay for study abroad, agrees Gretchen Cook-Anderson, co-chair of the Under-representation in Education Abroad subcommittee at NAFSA — a non-profit for professionals in international education — and director of diversity recruiting and advising at IES Abroad, a provider that sends more than 5,700 students abroad every year.

“It’s not so much that they haven’t wanted to over the years, but some have just had some serious financial barriers,” she says.

Montoya, for instance, says he had to work three jobs as well as apply for an array of scholarships to finance the program in Florence.

Kalyn Norwood, a junior at the University of Southern California who is African American and currently studying in London, says going abroad took years of extra jobs and saving. One of three minority students in a group of 11, she says many of the white students tend to have greater financial freedom thanks to parental support, a difference she notices when it comes to things like dinner out or, when traveling, staying in hotels vs. hostels.
Targeted scholarships and funding support can help change the demographics. Meghann Curtis, deputy assistant secretary at the ECA, points, for example, to the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, funded by the federal Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and administered by IIE.

Since 2001, Curtis wrote in an e-mail, the program has given grants to more than 17,000 students with limited financial resources — 54% of whom were from minority groups. Almost three-quarters of recipients said they wouldn’t have been able to go abroad without the scholarship, according to program data.

Some universities and colleges help with financial aid as well. Over the past two years, for instance, the University of Texas in Austin has invested close to $1 million to campus programs like First Abroad, which provides scholarships and emotional support for first-generation students who want to study overseas, Heather Thompson, director of study abroad at the university, said in an e-mail.

Selling an experience for all students

In the 1940s and '50s, study abroad trips were mainly restricted to white, upper-class women, Cook-Anderson says. Year-long trips to France were the norm — a kind of finishing school before getting married. “That’s what you did if you were the country club crowd,” she says.

Today, she notes, the marketing of these programs is still struggling to adjust to a more diverse college population.

“The higher education community does not do a good job right now marketing to students who may not already be thinking about studying abroad,” agrees Obst, who notes many brochures and websites feature white women. “You have to be very mindful of what images you use.”

Indeed, educating students of color about the various programs can be as important as financial aid, says Andrew Gordon, founder and president of Diversity Abroad, an organization dedicated to outreach and funding.

Every year, Diversity Abroad staffers visit about 100 community colleges, historically black universities and Hispanic-serving institutions nationwide on its Go Global Tour, and offers financial and emotional support.

“While money is important, that’s not the silver bullet,” Gordon says. “One of the biggest challenges is taking the desire that students have (to go abroad), and helping them find the programs and
opportunities that are really applicable to them as students and professionals. We have to better articulate that when done right, study abroad is an investment and not just an expense.”

The goals, he adds, is to help nontraditional students see that, “‘Yes, students like me can go abroad.’”

Perhaps of greater importance is word of mouth and peer mentoring, and some campuses have made a point of facilitating such discussions. David Wright, associate director of the Global Education Office at the University of New Mexico, says the office holds information sessions with student groups that cater to minority students, and invites students who have already gone abroad to talk to their peers, answer questions and be a real-life example of what’s possible, he says.

“We learned that it’s not just about money,” adds Thompson at the University of Texas in Austin, “it’s about advising and mentorship, graduating on time, making sure you can take the classes required for your major, and providing support that is crucial to helping get students from being interested in studying abroad to actually studying abroad.”

A different kind of immersion

One of the biggest challenges facing students of color: Their parents. Some may be unfamiliar with study abroad programs, while some immigrant parents may question the need for their offspring to go abroad after the challenges they themselves overcame to become U.S. citizens.

Many students of color and their families have worked for years to assimilate, Cook-Anderson says. Leaving that hard-earned acceptance to go somewhere new and start over just doesn’t make sense for some parents, she says.

“For many, especially those whose parents immigrated to the U.S. in the past 40 or 60 years, the family’s focus was on integrating into American culture,” she says. “The idea was: ‘This is the land of opportunity here in the U.S. This is where we should be focusing our attention and our time.’”

And it’s not just the parents who can find the concept foreign. Gordon notes that for some students of color, studying domestically is already immersion in a new culture. Some are “different just being on their home campus,” he says.

Other students may have parents who are unfamiliar with such programs, and don’t see the need for their children to take a semester at a campus even further away from home.
“In certain communities, like the African-American or Latino communities, even if parents went to college the chance that they studied abroad is the exception and not the rule,” says Gordon.

Norwood’s parents went to college, but she’s the first in her family to study overseas.

“Many of the others students have either already been (to London) or had heard about studying abroad while growing up,” she says, “whereas it didn’t necessarily cross our minds while I was growing up.”

For all these reasons, says Obst, it’s important to teach students about study abroad opportunities before they come to college — even as early as kindergarten.

In fact, he believes, every student should come into college with the expectation to study abroad, and even goes as far as to posit that such programs are a fundamental component of a 21st-century education. “Students need global skills,” Obst says. “We know this because employers are asking for it.”

Elise Schmelzer is a student at the University of Missouri and a spring 2015 USA TODAY collegiate correspondent.