MU strategic communications professor wins prestigious SEC faculty award

COLUMBIA — When MU strategic communications professor Glen Cameron heard from former student Nathan Hurst that he had received the Southeastern Conference's Faculty Achievement Award for MU, he was surprised he had won such a highly competitive honor.

“There are so many outstanding researchers and teachers just on our campus, and to be a part of the SEC university system they’re developing to recognize educators was just terrific,” said Cameron, who is the Maxine Wilson Gregory Chair for Journalism Research at the Missouri School of Journalism.

The awards are organized by the SECU, the academic initiative of the Southeastern Conference. Its purpose is to promote achievement in research and teaching at the 14 universities in the conference.

A committee of SEC provosts picks one winner from each of the conference's campuses. Those who win Faculty Achievement Awards get a $5,000 honorarium and become nominees for SEC Professor of the Year award, a prize that carries a $15,000 honorarium.

“It would be exciting to receive the award, but I’m not holding my breath,” Cameron said. “There are people selected by each campus that are undoubtedly outstanding individuals, so I’m just glad to be recognized by MU campus.”

Cameron plans to spend his $5,000 prize on family, spreading the wealth around to his two sons and three grandchildren.

A release from the MU News Bureau, where Hurst works, said Cameron earned the award due to his years of research, software design and authoring more than 300 books, book chapters, articles and convention papers.

“I do a lot of collaborative work on campus with over 30 different departments, and receiving this award just keeps the word out there that there are people who are anxious to team up, go after grants and develop new approaches to help communication and its science,” Cameron said.

Cameron, who specializes in crisis communication, started teaching at MU in 1998. He believes this kind of recognition will open the door to new opportunities at the Journalism School.
Cameron's best-known work is the textbook “Public Relations: Strategies and Tactics,” which he co-wrote with Dennis Wilcox, professor emeritus of public relations and past director of the School of Journalism & Mass Communications at San Jose State University. Cameron also developed Public PR Research Software that was highly used in marketing and public relations in the 1990s.

Although Cameron has won a bevy of prestigious awards, he said he doesn't like to dwell on them. “It’s important to just be doing the work you want to do, have a passion for it and not really worry about getting awards.”

The 13 other Faculty Achievement Award winners are:

- Seth Panitch, professor of theater and director of the master of fine arts and undergraduate acting programs at the University of Alabama.
- Rodolfo Nayga Jr., professor and Tyson Endowed Chair in Food Policy Economics at the University of Arkansas.
- Hanqin Tian, the Solon and Martha Dixon Endowed Professor and director of the International Center for Climate and Global Change Research at Auburn University.
- Jose Principe, Distinguished Professor of Electrical Engineering, Bell South Professor and the founder and director of the Computational NeuroEngineering Laboratory at the University of Florida.
- Milton Masciadri, professor of double bass in the Hugh Hodgson School of Music at the University of Georgia.
- W. Brent Seales, professor and chairman of the Department of Computer Science and director of the Center for Visualization and Virtual Environments (Vis Center) at the University of Kentucky.
- Isiah Warner, Boyd Professor, Phillip W. West Professor of Chemistry and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professor at Louisiana State University.
- Joey Granger, Billy S. Guyton Distinguished Professor, Physiology and Medicine Director and Cardiovascular-Renal Research Center Dean for School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.
- T. Brent Funderburk, William L. Giles Distinguished Professor at Mississippi State University.
- Claudia Benitez-Nelson, College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor in the Marine Program at the University of South Carolina.
- Susan Riechert, Distinguished Service Professor and professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Tennessee.
- Rafael Lara-Alecio, Regents Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at Texas A&M University.
- Sankaran Mahadevan, John R. Murray Sr. Professor of Engineering, Civil and Environmental Engineering and Mechanical Engineering at Vanderbilt University.

The SEC Professor of the Year receives an additional $15,000 honorarium and will be recognized at the SEC awards dinner in May in Destin, Florida, and the SEC Symposium in Atlanta, according to the SECU website.
Scientists offer new insight on rare genetic condition

Gray matter is located on the surface of the cerebral cortex and also includes deep brain structures such as the thalamus and basal ganglia. White matter is located beneath the gray matter of the cerebral cortex and comprises long neural connections. All children are screened for a host of conditions at birth, such as Phenylketonuria (PKU), a genetic disorder that is passed by mutated genes from both parents to their offspring. PKU is rare, only affecting one in every 10,000 children in the U.S.; therefore, it is seldom studied. Currently the primary way to manage the disease is through a restricted diet. Now, researchers at the University of Missouri, are using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to learn more about the effects of this disorder on the brain and to assist scientists in developing therapeutic drugs that help treat and control the disease.

PKU is a condition in which the body cannot metabolize an amino acid called phenylalanine into tyrosine, a precursor for dopamine and other important neurotransmitters. Without treatment, phenylalanine builds up and can cause severe health problems such as muscular control problems, seizures, behavior problems and intellectual disabilities. Once identified, patients with PKU are placed on a restricted diet that limits the amount of phenylalanine they consume lessening the impact of the disorder. Phenylalanine is found in many foods, especially those high in protein, such as eggs, milk, nuts and meats.

"A majority of the studies surrounding early-treated PKU examine the effects seen in the white matter of the brain" said Shawn Christ, associate professor of psychological sciences, in the MU college of Arts and Science and director of the MU Brain Imaging Center. "Yet, only a handful of studies investigating the effects of PKU on gray matter have been conducted. We decided to add to the body of knowledge on this understudied aspect in those affected by PKU."

Gray matter is located on the surface of the cerebral cortex and also includes deep brain structures such as the thalamus and basal ganglia. White matter is located beneath the gray matter of the cerebral cortex and comprises long neural pathways which are responsible for transferring information between gray matter regions where the processing of information occurs.
Past attempts to examine the potential effects of PKU on gray matter have been very few and have been limited by technology at the time. In their most recent study, Christ and colleagues combined the most recent advancements in MRI imaging with the most sensitive detailed analysis techniques including manual hand segmentation of the MRI data. Christ's team spent nearly two years mapping the gray matter of over 40 individuals with and without PKU and found evidence of gray matter abnormalities in individuals with early-treated PKU to be most severe in the posterior regions of the brain.

"To minimize these effects, it is important for someone with PKU to maintain dietary treatment throughout their lifetime, but especially during early childhood to help prevent irreversible brain damage," Christ said. "However, even if you keep phenylalanine low, these individuals are still at risk for difficulties due to the lower-than-normal levels of dopamine associated with the inability to produce tyrosine. We think that our research has the potential to contribute to better understanding the mechanisms underlying the abnormalities in brain and behavior associated with this disorder; thus, it may inform the development of new and exciting treatments for PKU."

Later this month, Christ and other delegates from the National PKU Alliance will be meeting with the leaders from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, a National Institutes of Health organization, to highlight the need for additional funding support for research on PKU and its health impact.

The study, "Morphometric Analysis of Gray matter Integrity in Individuals with Early-Treated Phenylketonuria" recently was published in Molecular Genetics and Metabolism and was funded by the National PKU Alliance.

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**Red Bull and Reuters team up: Why?**

Red Bull Media House announces it will shoot editorial content for Reuters.

Reuters and the media arm of the parent of Red Bull energy drinks are teaming up to bring action sports to the news service's media subscribers and the public, further blurring the line between brand-created content and journalism.

As part of the deal, Red Bull Media House will provide action sports and lifestyle photos, videos and articles. The items are available to any media company that subscribes to the Reuters
service, but any person who publishes online can sign up for a free account and get limited access for footage to include in their posts.

"The media world is changing," said Robert Schack, global head of sports and strategic partnerships at Reuters.

Reuters has carried items from other media organizations before, and has created sponsored content on behalf of brands like SAP Software Solutions. However, this is the first time that a brand's media arm will create content for the journalism institution. The content will live alongside Reuters editorial content, but the creator will be clearly labeled as Red Bull Media House.

Schack explained that as the appetite for sports increases globally and demand increases from Reuters customers, it is looking for new avenues to have more news coverage in those areas.

"(Red Bull Media House) will be in places we won't be, and that's just our own news budget and demand," Schack said.

Unfortunately, given dwindling newsroom resources, Schack said Reuters simply can't send reporters to these events. He said since the content creator is labeled, it is up to other media companies to decide whether they want to use the material. A Red Bull Media House spokesperson said via email there were no financial terms involved in the deal, saying it was simply a distribution partnership.

While news organizations are stretched for resources, companies and sports organizations have stepped in and are increasingly becoming media companies themselves. They see an opportunity to create compelling content that people want to watch, a way to get coverage for their own events, and a great way to expose their brand to the public.

Though it is linked to energy drink Red Bull, Red Bull Media House has made waves on its own as an action sports and lifestyle media company. In addition to its robust social media presence, it makes content for RedBull.com, Red Bull TV and magazine *The Red Bulletin*, as well as various short video clips and longer documentaries. Though it covers its own events, it also covers events sponsored by other brands, even its competitors.

Most people remember its coverage of the Red Bull Stratos jump, where Felix Baumgartner free fell from more than 23 miles above the Earth. Its stream of the event is the largest digital live event on record, with 8 million concurrent live streams on YouTube, as well as 3.2 million tweets, 1 million likes on Facebook and 22,000 photos on Instagram.

"(The content) is labeled Red Bull Media House, but when I see the pictures, it's not unlike what I would have seen inside *Sports Illustrated* years ago," said Brian Steffens, director of communications at the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute at the University of Missouri.
Steffens added that many media companies are stressed financially, and staying afloat is considered a success. Expanding to new coverage is considered a luxury. It's much cheaper to work with an outside agency than to start your own division.

"It's all about transparency, fairness and accuracy," Steffens said. "If they can hit those core elements of what journalism about, then it isn't a bad thing."

Bob Thompson, director of the Bleier Center for Television and Popular Culture at Syracuse University's Newhouse School, is still skeptical. Though he acknowledges that sports coverage is often seen as somewhere between hard news and entertainment, he said there are topics within the sports world that do cross over to more serious reporting. He pointed to the domestic abuse scandals within the NFL.

"I think these kind of relationships make me really uncomfortable," Thompson said. "You simply say it's just sports, but (this is) like putting product placement in reality television."

While he did comment on the high quality of Red Bull Media Houses work, he was worried that issues may arise. For example, if an athlete sponsored by Red Bull was involved in a scandal, it may mean that the person may not be questioned about the controversial activities in Red Bull Media House coverage or Reuters itself may not cover the news item because of the partnership.

"It might be an interesting piece, it might be well produced, but I think there are some journalistic issues there that are of interest," he said.

A Red Bull Media House spokesperson said it would cover news topics regardless if it conflicted with the parent company's goals.

"We cover stories according to its editorial relevance, just as any other media company does; however, we always act with integrity, regardless of the nature of our relationship," the spokesperson said.

Reuters echoed the sentiment.

"Under the Thomson Reuters Trust Principles, Reuters has an imperative to produce independent, unbiased news content," a Reuters spokesperson said via email. "We believe our partnership with Red Bull will in no way affect our commitment."