New profile outlines traits, expectations for MU chancellor

By Thomas Oide

COLUMBIA — Wanted: a chancellor who will build programs that boost enrollment and ensure that MU "directly addresses social, economic, and racial disparities on campus to improve life for all students."

These were included in a position profile released in a Monday email from Interim UM System President Mike Middleton.

According to the profile, the next chancellor will also be expected to:

- Define and articulate the historic missions of MU. "The new Chancellor of MU must embody the hope of the state to achieve excellence."
- Enhance scholarly enterprise, build sponsored research and ensure status in the Association of American Universities through expansion of research and scholarship. Many of the programs within MU can "build synergistically."
- Create a distinct identity that fits within the University of Missouri System. The next chancellor must be able to enhance the appeal of MU while showing how MU aids the campuses in St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla and the UM System overall.
- Continue to support MU Health Care's growth. The next chancellor must be prepared to work closely with MU Health Care, which includes the schools of medicine, health professions and nursing to "ensure excellence and balanced prosperity."
- Deepen MU's understanding of community and strengthen its commitment to diversity and inclusion. The chancellor must bring an understanding and commitment to the "power of diversity to strengthen ... an august institution of higher education." The chancellor will work to build a more "inclusive learning community for all."
- Build a culture of philanthropy Missouri will need for its future. In the face of steep budget cuts, the chancellor must be able to lead MU's fundraising efforts and get alumni more involved.
- Develop a plan that incorporates both financial and human capital to meet the needs and future aspirations of MU. Budget allocation systems should encourage cross-school collaboration in large research, and the chancellor must be able to effectively manage capital and resources to ensure sustainable operations.

In reference to building programs to increase enrollment, the profile states that MU should "develop and sustain nationally competitive programs, ... transformative opportunities for undergraduate research, and widespread experiential education linking the classroom to employment and internship opportunities and strong career placement."

In addition, the profile outlines several desirable traits and qualifications for the new chancellor:
An ability to craft a "compelling vision for public higher education."

A transparent leadership style that is "attentive to the ideals of shared governance and respectful of the viewpoints and contributions of all members of the MU community."

A record of supporting excellence in research and academic excellence.

A strong record of executive leadership in an academic environment.

The MU Chancellor Search webpage includes the whole job profile as well as a link to nominate candidates.

"We are committed to creating a robust candidate pool so the best individual is selected for MU’s next leader," Middleton said in the email announcement.

The search committee for the new chancellor has 22 members and is being led by MU College of Engineering Dean Elizabeth Loboa and University of Missouri-Kansas City Chancellor Leo Morton. The committee has met privately with some groups and held a forum on Jan. 26 open to the campus community to get input on what is wanted in a new chancellor.

The person will succeed R. Bowen Loftin, who stepped down in November 2015. Hank Foley has served as interim chancellor since then and has expressed interest in dropping the interim from his title.

Clips continued
Higher ed budget efforts continue

Public colleges, universities are likely to seek tuition increases

By Rudi Keller
Columbia Daily Tribune

Looming behind the dismal budget numbers for Missouri higher education are tuition increases, some of which have already been enacted and others that are on the way.

The House Budget Committee will hear a presentation Tuesday on Gov. Eric Greitens’ budget for college and university spending. The proposal cuts $115.2 million from general revenue funding for the Department of Higher Education, most of which will be taken from institutional support.

Lawmakers appropriated $996.9 million for higher education programs in the current budget year. The budget proposal eliminated funding for higher education initiatives that include a medical education campus in Springfield for as many as 64 students, a pharmacy program run by the University of Missouri-Kansas City on the Missouri Southern State University campus in Joplin and programs for autism, technology and cybersecurity. Lawmakers appropriated $28 million to the initiatives in this year’s budget, although much of the money was unspent because of restrictions imposed by former Gov. Jay Nixon and by Greitens after he took office Jan. 9.

New initiatives slated to receive that funding have not been launched, Commissioner of Higher Education Zora Mulligan said Monday. Making up the shortfall in base funding for each school will be a challenge, she said. Schools “responses are going to have to be both broad and deep,” she said. “They would impact every category of service that the institutions provide.”

Greitens and Deputy Commissioner Lacey Wade will go over the budget proposal with the 55-member committee. Unlike past years, lawmakers will not take testimony from institution presidents as they consider budget decisions.

The state faces a fiscal crunch because revenue, while growing, is not meeting expectations.

Since Greitens announced $67.8 million in cuts to institution funding in the current year on Jan. 10, three of the state’s 10 four-year universities have approved tuition or fee increases and the others are considering how much to add to student costs. Missouri State University and Lincoln University governing boards have approved 0.7 percent increases—the maximum allowed by law for the current fiscal year—and Truman State University imposed a new $50-per-student fee.

“I think all schools are talking to their boards and doing a lot of financial planning regardless of what happens tomorrow or the next month or so,” said Paul Wagner, executive director of the Council on Public Higher Education. “Once the House Budget Committee releases bill substitutes and is done with its work, we will have a pretty good idea of what the final parameters will be.”

Under the state tuition cap law, four-year universities and Missouri State Technical College are limited to increasing tuition by the rate of inflation unless Mulligan grants a waiver. Over the eight years Gov. Jay Nixon was in office, in-state undergraduate tuition on the University of Missouri’s Columbia increased by 12.5 percent, with four years of no increase at all.

“We’re certainly all looking at tuition waivers,” Wagner said. “We kind of need to start down that path, and we can always jump off that path later.”

The limit on tuition increases for the year beginning July 1 is 2.1 percent without a waiver. Under state law, applications for waivers are due at various dates, but Mulligan expects most to come in just before a May 1 deadline. Waivers have been granted in only one year since the tuition cap was enacted in 2007, when state funding was cut 7 percent. Mulligan said she isn’t ready to estimate the size of tuition increases that could be enacted.

Because of the number of steps before lawmakers complete the budget, the amount could change, she said. But the process for considering waivers is already underway. Greitens’ cuts decreased state funding for the UM System by $31.4 million in the year ending June 30, and his budget proposal for next year, if enacted, will provide the smallest amount of state support in five years. The university is absorbing the cut in this year’s support by spending reserves, spokeswoman Kelly Wiehmann said Monday. The budget for the coming year, she said, will be balanced with a combination of spending cuts and increased revenue.

The Board of Curators will act on tuition at its April meeting, when it will also discuss the university budget for the coming year, Wiehmann said. Final budget plans will be voted on in June, she said.

“Our leaders are working on both short- and long-term plans to sustain the financial stability of the university,” Wiehmann said.

To cut expenses, the Department of Higher Education is reviewing academic programs at all state colleges and universities to identify which produce few graduates or are not meeting institutional goals. A report is due in December.

“We have the ability to recommend to the institution they close a program,” Mulligan said. “We will be making recommendations to institutions, not issuing dictates.”

Cuts will be the only way to match spending with revenue, Wagner said.

“Whatever tuition increases schools do, it is not going to come close to covering the decrease in funding,” he said.

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Suppose your big boss got caught having an affair with a subordinate, or you own shares in a company whose CEO faked his résumé. Should you worry?

Conventional wisdom might say no. The indiscretions didn’t hurt customers or cost the company any money. In theory, once the misbehaving individual is punished, the firm can return to business as usual.

That’s not what a recent study of executive foibles finds. **Adam Yore, an assistant professor of finance at the University of Missouri, and two other scholars studied 219 instances where an executive or director was publicly accused of a personal indiscretion.** When the misdeed is revealed, the company’s share price falls an average of 1.6 percent, for an average loss of $110 million in market value.

If the chief executive is the offender, the loss is 4.4 percent, or $226 million. An untrustworthy CEO, it seems, is seen as an indicator of deeper problems in corporate culture.
Savvis, which was based in Town and Country, saw its shares fall 6 percent on the day in 2005 when it suspended CEO Rob McCormick over allegations that he used a company credit card to pay a $241,000 strip-club bill. In 2012, Yahoo shares fell 2 percent after CEO Scott Thompson was accused of claiming a degree he didn’t earn.

Sometimes, the damage isn’t so obvious. Boeing’s stock barely budged in 2005 when CEO Harry Stonecipher was fired over an affair with a female vice president.

Such scandals damage a company in various ways, Yore and the other researchers found. “They seem to portend more negative events in the future,” he said. “It’s not just a one-time, knee-jerk market reaction.”

Long-term measures of profitability were lower after an executive’s personal peccadilloes came to light. The same companies were more likely to have business-related problems, like a fraud case or an earnings restatement.

The scholars also found fewer announcements of joint ventures and major new customers after a personal scandal.

That makes sense when you consider how much of business is based on trust. “Companies that had a relationship with the firm in question will start to reconsider the relationship,” Yore explained. “These events, while nonprofessional in nature, do signify something about the executives and the value they place on their own reputations.”

For underlings, the scandals provide a great source of water-cooler gossip, but they also should cause some career-related soul searching. Do I want to stake my future on a tarnished firm, or should I look elsewhere?

“You can imagine yourself as a lower-level manager or line employee who sees this going on,” Yore said. “Someone like Stonecipher, who was really preaching about ethics at the time, you ask yourself which I should believe, what he says or what he does?”

The researchers found that the effect of a personal scandal is muted in industries where fraud and other infractions are common. The cost is greatest in sectors where most firms have strong reputations.

Yore said the team started out trying to answer a simple question: If an executive lies to his wife (about, say, an affair or strip-club visit), is he willing to lie to shareholders? They then considered a logical extension: Will he also lie to business partners?

The answer to both questions, not surprisingly, is yes. The next time you read about a scandal involving an executive, don’t assume that there’s any kind of line between the personal and the professional. If you invest in, buy from or work for his company, it’s your business, too.
Bad CEO behavior can cost shareholders

Generated by a News Bureau press release: Executive Indiscretions Can Hurt the Bottom Line

By Chris Tomlinson, Houston Chronicle, Published 6:30 am, Tuesday, February 21, 2017

Shareholders frequently find it difficult to measure how much a chief executive officer adds to the bottom line, but one thing is for sure: a scandalous CEO can easily shave 1.6 percent off of shareholder value.

Researchers at the University of Missouri studied what happened to 325 companies after the CEO was caught in some kind of trouble, whether it was substance abuse, violence, sexual indiscretions and dishonesty. They found that leadership, and character, really do matter.

In addition to the lower share value, firms that have experienced a leadership scandal saw significant declines in the number of new major customers and joint venture partnerships, said Adam Yore, an assistant professor of finance in the Trulaske College of Business.

"The basic premise of our study is, 'If you cheat on your wife, would you lie to your shareholders or business partners?" Yore said. "Our research certainly suggests shareholders and potential business partners perceive that someone who is duplicitous in his or her private life could be more willing to mislead professionally."

The most interesting revelation is that family-managed firms are far more likely to experience a CEO scandal. These companies are apparently less likely to enforce strict discipline since office relationships are not strictly transactional.

Prioritizing tradition over discipline is always a risk for multi-generational, family-run businesses.

A lack of discipline was what led to a listeria outbreak at family-owned Blue Bell Creameries in 2015 that allegedly caused three deaths.

Documents revealed that Kruse and his managers repeatedly ignored warnings that their plants had listeria, and managers failed to follow hygiene procedures.
If Blue Bell were a public company, CEO Paul Kruse would have lost his job when the scandal broke. But he remained on the job until he announced Saturday that he is retiring as president and CEO and will step down as chairman of the board. The company named Ricky Dickson as the new CEO, and Greg Bridges as executive vice president of plant operations.

Jim Kruse, son of former Blue Bell President Howard Kruse, will serve as chairman of the board.

Fans of Blue Bell should welcome the end of a Kruse family member acting as both CEO and board chairman, which should lead to greater oversight.

Everywhere you look, people talk about the importance of leadership. But a necessary ingredient of great leadership is a strong character, because people will only follow those whom they trust. Trust is earned with integrity and loyalty, which is often reflected in a CEO's personal behavior.

Too many people, though, confuse charisma for character. Just because someone can attract others to them, that doesn't make them good leaders. Sometimes it's just narcissism, which explains why some of the flashiest CEOs flame out in personal scandals.

The bottom line is that while charisma, experience and skill are all important, they are worth nothing unless the leader has good character. And if they don't, it can cost the whole enterprise.

This News Bureau press release also was picked up by Business News Daily, a news site with 1.3 million unique monthly visitors and an active social media presence. The story, Sneaky CEO? Leader Indiscretions Can Hurt the Bottom Line, is linked here.

MISSOURIAN

MU's Thompson Center seeks participants for national autism study

This story was generated from an MU News Bureau press release: University of Missouri Thompson Center Recruiting Children, Adults with Autism for Landmark Genetic Study

By Lauren Lombardo

COLUMBIA— The Thompson Center is looking for people of all ages affected by autism as well as biological family members to participate in the nation's largest autism study.
The Thompson Center is an MU research facility that studies autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. It has partnered with the Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research for Knowledge (SPARK) project to further research autism and its causes.

More than 3.5 million Americans live with autism spectrum disorder, according to Autism Society. Yet, the cause of autism is still unknown.

The SPARK project is open to people of all ages with a professional diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder living in the U.S. Parents and siblings of a person with autism spectrum disorder are encouraged to participate as well in order to further research.

Through DNA analysis of both people with autism and family members of that person, researchers may be able to identify genetic differences related to autism.

Participants can register on the SPARK website and must provide consent to share their information with researchers. The participant is then sent a saliva kit that they return to have analyzed by DNA researchers.

It is thought that hundreds of genes play a role in the cause of autism, according to SPARK.

Along with the approximately 50 identified genes, it is estimated that there is an additional 300 more involved in the role of autism. By studying a person's genetics, researchers may find more information about the causes of autism.

The Thompson Center, along with 22 additional clinical sites, was chosen to assist with recruitment for the study. The center has already recruited 2,500 people with autism and their family members.

Amanda Shocklee, a research specialist at the Thompson Center, said they have been reaching out in several ways to increase participant enrollment.

"We send out emails and letters to our patients, as well as attend community events all around not only Missouri, but nationally as well," Shocklee said.

Shocklee urges more of a Midwest presence in the research study.

Shocklee said the Thompson Center has two more years to recruit as many families as possible.

"You don't have to be a family from the Thompson Center. Anyone can do it right from their home," Shocklee said.
Not Taking Medications as Prescribed Causes Problems, Interventions Can Help

Generated from News Bureau press release: Interventions Improve Medication Adherence, Decrease Risk of Hospitalizations

Listen to the story: http://mms.tveyses.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=8c9d2e71-7e98-41a0-ad55-40923e183f13

MU Health Law Expert Discusses Complexity of Repealing the ACA

Generated from News Bureau press release: Popular Provisions of Affordable Care Act in Danger if ‘Fundamental Bargain’ is Broken, MU Expert Says

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyses.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a1d0adee-90d5-46c3-bafe-8b2fdff3c6d9
MU law professor, Christina Wells, resigns from MU Faculty Athletics Representative

By Alejandra Arredondo

COLUMBIA — MU Faculty Athletics Representative Christina Wells has resigned from her position effective at the end of the semester, Interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley said in a news release Monday afternoon.

Wells, who has held the post for a year and a half, is also a professor at MU's School of Law. In the release, Foley said Wells' resignation will allow her to "devote herself more fully to her teaching and scholarship."

Foley said he wants to find a replacement for Wells before she steps down in May "so that there can be a period of overlap."

"We hope to have our new FAR selected by mid-March," he said in the release.

The National Collegiate Athletic Association requires its member institutions to have faculty athletics representatives, according to guidelines for the post that Foley attached to the news release. The person's role is to "ensure academic integrity, sound governance, commitment to rules compliance, attention to equity and student-athlete welfare," the guidelines said.

Wells' responsibilities during her 18 months on the job have included "oversight and institutional control" of all operations regarding the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, its staff, coaches and student athletes, according to the guidelines.

Her position also requires her to supervise and participate in all investigations regarding "possible NCAA or SEC rules violations."

There is an ongoing investigation by MU's Athletics Department of alleged NCAA academic rules violations. That investigation was prompted by allegations of academic fraud in November from Yolanda Kumar, a former tutor who worked for the Athletics Department's Total Person Program. Kumar said in a Facebook post and subsequent interviews that she took online tests for student athletes, according to previous Missourian reporting.

Despite the job description for Wells' post, MU in January hired Mike Glazier, an Overland Park, Kansas, attorney with expertise in NCAA compliance matters, to lead the investigation into Kumar's accusations.

The MU Chancellor's Office referred a Missourian call to MU News Bureau Director Christian Basi, who declined comment and referred a reporter to the Athletics Department. Calls to that department and to Wells had not been returned Monday night.
Foley said he would accept faculty nominations and self-nominations for the job until March 6. Faculty athletics representatives must be tenured professors. As compensation for their work, they receive relief from teaching one course per semester and/or a stipend, according to Foley's release.

MUPD Identifies Assault Suspect

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a7859057-5f99-4c77-b6d1-160a4b44069d

Missouri's new first lady balances teaching, politics

By Meg Hilling

COLUMBIA - Missouri's new first lady, Dr. Sheena Chestnut Greitens, said she is committed to keeping politics separate from her job teaching at the University of Missouri, even though her husband, Gov. Eric Greitens recently decided to cut higher education budgets.

Sheena Greitens is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Missouri.

Sitting down with KOMU 8 News and the Columbia Missourian for an exclusive interview, she pulled back the curtain of privacy around her.

The new role:

Many may have wondered who exactly is the self-defined mother first, teacher second, and first lady third, and how she juggles it all.

"One day at a time," Greitens said. "I mean, we really, my husband and I really see ourselves as a pretty normal two-parent, two working-parent family, with small kids. And we both love what we do, it's really important to us to do our jobs, to do them well."

For her, the "do" is teaching MU classes on American Wars in Asia and dictatorship and democracy, in addition to carrying out research on East Asia, her area of expertise.

Her role as an educator at a public university has taken on special interest this month following the release of the governor's proposed budget for the fiscal year 2018. It outlines a cut of around $159 million to the state's higher education funding.

"You know, I don't speak for the governor's office. So when it comes to the budget cuts, you know certainly I can see both sides of it. But I won't comment further," Greitens said.

But while hesitant to comment on the state budget, Greitens is quite vocal in sharing what role in the state she will be taking on during the course of the next four years. She plans to advocate for improvements to the state's foster care and adoptive services.

"We have about 12 or 13,000 children in the state of Missouri who the state is legally responsible for and so it's really important that we do a good job with those kids," Greitens said. "And something that, as a mother, as a teacher and now in this new role, I really care about, and so I'm excited to find out from people what we can do to support that system and make it work better."

Her work:

For now, her plans for advocacy remain undeveloped. With numerous academic projects of her own in the works, her hands are full.
The most notable of these projects is the launch of MU's Institute for Korean Studies with co-director Dr. Harrison Kim earlier this month. The program looks to establish a central hub for those in the MU academic community to come together to study and explore the Korean Peninsula.

Kim and Greitens have worked on the creation of the institute since 2015.

Kim said, "Working with her is efficient, but at the same time makes you think, it's a constant challenge. She asks big questions, but also pays a lot of attention to detail. She's the whole package."

The beginning:

So why the heavy interest in East Asia? According to Greitens, it all began with her sister who was adopted from South Korea when Greitens was in third grade. Greitens said the experience fueled her initial curiosity and eventually lead in her into teaching about the region.

"I was really curious what her life would have been like and just started asking more questions, especially about Korea," Greitens said.

When college came, Greitens found herself with the opportunity to study in South Korea. During the program, her group made a trip to the demilitarized zone, the DMZ, which has separated North and South Korea since an armistice agreement was signed during the Korean War in 1953. It was here, standing at the border lined with Korean and U.S. troops, that the focus of her life work started to become clear.

"I realized if a conflict broke out, that the people on the North Korean side of the DMZ would be shooting at young men and women who were about my age. Many of them are in their early 20's. So I was just really interested in how North Korea had survived when communism in Eastern Europe had crumbled," Greitens said. "I started taking a lot of classes on Korea and on East Asia, learned Chinese and a little bit of Korean and, you know, just decided that I wanted to really do research and try to understand what was going on in East Asia and what that means for the U.S. today."

Move to Mizzou:

In 2011, shortly after her marriage to the then future-governor, Greitens moved to Missouri. According to Greitens, it was during this time that the political science department at MU was looking for a faculty member who worked on democracy and dictatorship in areas such as East Asia.

"I was hired in fall of 2012 and had to finish my Ph.D, and I did a post doc here before I came. But I started here in January of 2015," Greitens said.

When asked whether her role as the first lady of Missourian has been polarizing in any way, be it among her colleagues or students, here's what she had to say.
"I don't think so. I think it's it's been an actually a good experience and a good combination," she said. "One of the things that we have been very careful about from the beginning is to make sure that we keep the roles separate where it's appropriate to do so. And so I make sure that when I'm on campus, my time is really a hundred percent devoted to my role as a professor and a teacher, to my students to my research work, to my obligations to the university."

**The classroom:**

According to Calvin Sears, a junior political science major in her American Wars in Asia class, Greitens is quite good at teaching.

"She really engages with us and I really like the way that she teaches, her style of teaching," Sears said. "At the the beginning of class, she, we, kind of do a little review of the previous classes' lecture and then we dive into the lecture itself."

Junior broadcast major Casey Edwards said she finds the quality of Greitens lectures most enjoyable.

"She's not like any other poli-sci professor I've had probably because she's the first female poli-sci professor I've ever had, and you can tell she knows like everything she's talking about and she is definitely an expert in her field," Edwards said.

According to Sears and Edwards, Greitens has only acknowledged her role outside of the class once.

"Just in the beginning, saying that she doesn't want to get politics, current politics, involved in the class, and just wants to focus on the class itself," Sears said.

Greitens said that was on purpose.

"When I'm on campus, I'm not here as the first lady, I'm here as their professor, and that my role is to teach and do research and that I don't speak for governors office here," she said. "My focus when I'm here is 100% on teaching and research."

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**Preparing for dark times: Total solar eclipse arrives 6 months from today**
By Valerie Schremp

If you haven’t already, you might want to mark your calendars for six months from today, and make a special notation for oh, say, early afternoon, depending on your location. You’re in for one of the darker, stranger experiences of your life on this planet.

A total solar eclipse — the first one in the continental United States since 1979, and the first one for most of the St. Louis area since 1442 — arrives on Monday, Aug. 21.

You may or may not have heard about the eclipse already — but folks at the Bloomsdale bank in Herculaneum and their City Hall have. They’re selling viewer glasses for $1. Southern Illinois University Carbondale will celebrate with a weekend of events to culminate in a public viewing at Saluki Stadium. Scientists are working with NASA to send up weather balloons to collect data. Emergency responders are drafting traffic plans to figure out how to deal with thousands of sungazers congregating in one area at the same time.

Even Ozzy Osbourne, the Prince of Darkness, is in on the eclipse action: He’s performing at a “Moonstock” music festival in Carterville, Ill.

And an unlikely yet enthusiastic mix of librarians, astronomers, optometrists, city administrators and others meet monthly in St. Louis to talk plans and how to get others — such as school districts, police departments and bosses who like productive employees — to make plans, too.

“They told us it wasn’t if people came, it was when they were coming,” said Barb Lowry of her first meeting with the St. Louis Eclipse Task force in 2015. She’s the director of sports and event marketing for the city of Festus. “I remember coming back, and telling our city administrator, ‘I don’t want to sound like Chicken Little and say the sky is falling, but I want my hard hat.’ We’ve been busy ever since.” Festus is planning a weekend festival leading up to the eclipse.

Here’s why the eclipse matters here: Everyone in the continental U.S. will see at least a partial eclipse, but only those within a path that’s about 70 miles wide will see a total eclipse. The moon will move directly in front of the sun, covering it for a short time — up to 2 minutes and 40 seconds in places such as De Soto and 2 minutes, 38 seconds in Carbondale.

Only the south and west half of the St. Louis area will experience the total eclipse, which means Chesterfield will get about 1 minute, 20 seconds of totality, and Clayton up to 30 seconds. Downtown and the St. Louis Science Center — where the task force regularly meets — will get none.

The path of the total eclipse will move in a northwest to southeast direction across the country, from Oregon to South Carolina. In Missouri, that means the path runs from St. Joseph to Cape Girardeau. In Illinois, it cuts across a southwest chunk of the state, with cities such as Waterloo and Chester in its path.

“It is going to be actually really dark, like the night of a full moon,” explains Don Ficken, an amateur astronomer who is the head of the task force. “It will be like a hole in the sky. The edge
is called the corona. Temperatures will drop about 10 to 15 degrees, you will have animals going back to their homes, thinking it’s night.

“When totality happens, it will get like dead quiet. It’s going to be like a 4-D movie. It’s almost a sensory overload, when it comes down to it.”

Bob Baer traveled with a student to Indonesia to see a total solar eclipse in March 2016, partly to prepare as the co-chair of the eclipse steering committee at SIUC.

“It was 23 hours of plane rides, but it was absolutely worth it. And this is coming from someone who doesn’t like to fly. I’ve heard people say it’s life-changing, and I completely understand now. It’s beautiful.”

Experts caution it’s never a good idea to look directly at the sun — hence, the optometrists on the task force — and you will need special eclipse viewing glasses to see the partial eclipse. But in totality, it is safe to see with the naked eye.

Cities, tourist sites and schools are jumping on the bandwagon. Parkway and Rockwood schools will be in session that day and are planning eclipse lessons. They have bought 24,000 pairs of viewing glasses for students and faculty. Dunklin School District in Jefferson County plans a day off. **And while it’s the first day of classes at the University of Missouri-Columbia, professors will be allowed to make up the day later if they want to let students out to view the eclipse.**

Campsites at Missouri State Parks within the path are still available, and the department is marketing a special Katy Trail bicycle ride, which also follows the eclipse path. Nearly all the state parks in Illinois along the path are booked, except for more than 8,000 sites available at the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta, which has plenty of parking and wide, open space, says DNR spokesman Ed Cross.

Cities that see the tourist potential have jumped aboard, with St. Louis and Perryville partnering to offer special eclipse packages (hotel and coach included) and marketing to tourists worldwide. Trish Erzfeld, the Perry County tourism director, speaks regularly with Kate Russo of Belfast, Ireland, an expert on eclipse planning.

A Perryville Solarfest leading up to the eclipse will include science-themed vendors, a mobile planetarium and special accommodations for planes at its airport. Erzfeld compares the eclipse to a giant lottery jackpot that generates excitement as the drawing nears. “I think as the media catches on and more people talk about it, it’s just going to grow and grow and grow,” she says.

Jo Schaper is the head of the eclipse committee for the city of St. Clair, which is hosting a four-day “Get Your Eclipse on Route 66” festival, which will feature everything from a car show to solar ambassadors trained to talk to visitors about the world above. The path of totality passes over Route 66 in St. Clair, directly above the town’s VFW hall, she said.
Schaper and her husband are amateur astronomers, and she remembers how her parents woke her in the middle of the night when she was little to watch a lunar eclipse. “It’s fascinating,” she says. “I always wanted to see one of these, and I never knew it would come right to me.”

And if you miss this eclipse? Another one’s coming on April 8, 2024. It will hit southeast Missouri and Southern Illinois but miss St. Louis.

And, never fear, another one will pass over St. Louis. It will even hit most of the local northern parts the 2017 eclipse misses.

That date? June 3, 2505.

Columbia health services work to draw in patients from around the state

By Daniel Litwin


COLUMBIA - The mayor's medical tourism task force has finalized its recommendations on how to make Columbia a medical hub in Mid-Missouri.

The city council held a work session Monday to hear the recommendations, which have been in the works since August.

The task force, one of mayor Brian Treece's first initiatives in office, focuses on educating Mid-Missouri on Columbia's medical services and specialists.

"Columbia is a bit of a well-kept secret. We've got a wealth of providers here on the hospital and physician side," said Guy Collier, a health care lawyer in Washington D.C. and chair of the medical task force.
Collier was chosen to head the task force due to his impartiality and knowledge in the healthcare field.

"I don't represent the parties here. The thought was I could be sort of a Switzerland and bring parties into the room together and chair the task force for the mayor," Collier said.

The task force's first recommendation is to change the name of the initiative.

"We realized this really wasn't so much medical tourism trying to get people from other countries to come here, so much as a medical destination service initiative" Collier said.

The reason behind the name change was to keep the initiative's focus local.

"We have some services that are national in scope, but what we're really most concerned about is getting people in this 25 county area of central Missouri to come here and stay here instead of going to St. Louis or Kansas City or Chicago for their care," Collier said.

The task force is also trying to stand apart from other initiatives by selling the entire city of Columbia as a place to come for medical care on behalf of all the medical providers. Most medical tourism initiatives focus on single medical providers, such as the Mayo Clinic.

The providers in Columbia's initiative include University Hospital and its separate facilities, Boone Hospital Center, Harry S. Truman Veteran's Hospital and single specialty practice groups with "cutting-edge technology."

"I think our strength lies in our diversity," said Gene Austin, another member of the task force and part of the Columbia Orthopedic Group.

The task force is also pairing up with hotels in the region, such as Hampton Inn and Suites and Holiday Inn Express.

"When people come to Columbia to access health care, they're going to need to stay," Collier said. "We thought connecting the transportation and hospitality providers with the health care providers would let us have a seamless experience when people come to Columbia."

At the work session meeting, response to the recommendations was positive. The mayor and the rest of the city council were particularly interested in implementing a web portal for the initiative.

"It would be a central repository of information on our providers: hospitality providers, transportation providers and of course health care providers," Collier said.

The next step is to have the Columbia Convention and Visitors Bureau lay out an implementation plan to the city council, which they will complete in the next couple of months.
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