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New UM president revives debate over business vs. academic credentials

By Dale Singer, Beacon staff

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When Timothy Wolfe officially arrives in Columbia this week to take his place as president of the University of Missouri system, it won't be his first association with the Mizzou campus, and he will hardly be a stranger to the city, where he grew up and was a star high school quarterback.

But, like his predecessor, Gary Forsee, Wolfe will take over the four-campus system with no prior experience working in higher education. While starting at the top in a field like academia may seem strange, those involved in the presidential search say Wolfe has just the attributes the system needs. And those who are familiar with how such searches have been going in recent years say he represents a growing trend.

"It varies by state," said Jan Greenwood, whose search firm, Greenwood/Asher & Associates, was hired to help the University of Missouri find a president last year. "It's not one size fits all. But as you look at it state by state, this is how it plays out more often than not.

"People who come in from outside higher education do best when they have a pre-existing relationship with the university or the state. If you look at those who were not successful, almost to a person, it was in situations where the person went into the state and did not have that pre-existing relationship."

Warren Erdman of Kansas City, who was president of the university's Board of Curators last year as the search process went forward, said that the qualities that Wolfe brings to lead the system are different from those that would be needed if he were going to be the chancellor in charge of a campus.

"We want innovation and academic performance driven at the campus level," Erdman said. "So when you think of it like that, you start thinking of a system president as someone who will be a good listener, who will respect the autonomy of the campuses, who will work with the chancellors to help them achieve their goals and be the collective university's representative before the legislature.

"So really, a candidate from either an academic background or a business background can achieve those things. It's more important that the person have respect for the campuses, and knowledge and a

commitment to the state and loyalty to Missouri, to help the campuses and chancellors achieve their objectives."

And, Wolfe himself adds, having grown up with two parents who were university professors is a big plus when it comes to having a strong sense of what academic life is all about.

"I don't see my lack of academic experience as a drawback at all," he said in an email message, "partially because of our great campus leadership and partially because I am the product of two higher education professors.

"I spent many evenings around the dinner table growing up learning and listening to issues and concerns that impact faculty, and many of those still resonate with me today."

Second businessman in a row

When the university conducted its previous presidential search, which led to Forsee taking over the top job in February 2008, curators found a businessman who had been born in Kansas City, graduated from the university's Rolla campus, then had a career of more than 30 years in the telephone industry.

During that period, he was active with his alma mater and was the co-chair of a group known as the Missouri 100, which advised the UM system president. When Elson Floyd announced in December 2006 he would be leaving that post and the hunt for his successor began, Forsee's career was at a turning point: He resigned under pressure from his job as head of Sprint in the wake of weak earnings and a rough transition to the merger with Nextel.

He soon surfaced as one of the leading candidates for the UM job and got the job after the university's top choice, businessman Terry Sutter, turned them down.

Forsee resigned early last year to help care for his wife, Sherry, who was stricken with cancer, forcing the university to begin another search. Forsee declined to answer questions for this article but pointed to comments he made in a Columbia Missourian story marking his first year in office.

Asked then about how his business background had helped him handle the demands of the university -- and worries that his lack of academic experience made him a questionable choice for the job -- Forsee responded:

"Some people may think that the agenda now is how do we turn this into business. Well, that is not the case at all. It's all about supporting our faculty, staff and students. That's our strength as an institution. It's all about enhancing our mission of teaching, research service and economic development. Our people are what make the university strong."

To achieve those goals, he added, a background in business comes in very handy.

"My job is how can I support the institution and certainly use principles, practices and processes that aren't just used in corporations," Forsee said. "They're used in any situation as tools to make things better."

New search, similar parameters

That outlook guided the search for Forsee's successor, according to Erdman, whose year as head of the Board of Curators was capped by the introduction of Wolfe in December. Wolfe too was a businessman between jobs; he lost his position with Novell when the company was taken over last year.

Erdman said that right up until the field was winnowed down to a few finalists, candidates with backgrounds in business and in academia were in the running.

To make their final choice, he told the Beacon, the curators hewed very closely to a list of criteria that was drawn up after a series of listening sessions held throughout the state, asking the university's various constituencies what qualities they thought were vital for the next president.

"In the end," he told the Beacon, "I really don't think that was the determining factor. I believe the determining factor had more to do with the candidate who met the criteria best -- someone who was familiar with Missouri, with Missouri culture, with Missouri political realities, with the Missouri legislative process, someone who was part of the University of Missouri family and someone who had all of the management experience on top of it."

In terms of desired personal qualities, Erdman listed listening, leadership, open-mindedness, respect for the academy and an understanding of the way academia works. Those attributes could be found in someone from either background, he said, as evidenced by their final choice of Wolfe.

And he emphasized the difference between the role of the head of the university system and the role of the chancellors who lead each of the four campuses.

"I would point out that the university is blessed with a number of leaders with an academic background," Erdman said. "The chancellors, the provosts, the deans, the senior vice president of academic affairs at the system level; the university is very rich in the depth of its bench with people who have spent their career in academia."

"Part of the criteria for the president was to find someone who would respect the autonomy of the academic leadership at each of the campuses. One thing we didn't want was someone who would come in and attempt to undo the academic leadership that we have on each of the campuses. We wanted someone who would respect and really support and enable that academic leadership."

"We were really looking for someone who would be an enabler and a supporter and bring skills to the table to support the campuses, as opposed to someone who might try to push down a single approach from the system to the campus."

View from Columbia and nationwide

Someone who can address those issues from a dual perspective -- from the president's office in Columbia and as the head of a nationwide organization of public universities -- is C. Peter Magrath. He

served as president of the University of Missouri from 1985 to 1991, when he became head of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges.

Magrath, who also has been president of the University of Minnesota and headed several other campuses, including two stints at the University of Binghamton in New York, said the person who heads a university needs to be "a damn good multitasker" ready to work 24/7.

"Most of us don't come out of the womb with the resume you need," he told the Beacon. "You acquire it over time. The university president is a different breed of cat. You have to be comfortable working with governors, faculty, business types; successful presidents have to function in all sorts of worlds.

"My view is that you have to be an ultimate CEO. The ultimate CEO at the University of Missouri doesn't have a football team and doesn't have a faculty, but he's got four campuses that report to him. I don't think that person has to be an academic, but that person is the CEO of a major, very good, complex university system. He's going to have to understand the culture, even though he may not be directly involved with the St. Louis campus or Kansas City or Rolla or Columbia."

Like Erdman, Magrath stressed the need for cooperation and collaboration between the system president and the academic leaders at the campus level. He cited what he called a "disastrous choice" at the University of West Virginia, who he said was "nontraditional, and he was a total bust," partly because he did not understand how to work with the academics around him.

"I think a person coming out business can be a very successful and effective president," he said. "However, they are not going to be effective unless they have someone who comes from inside the woodwork and knows the culture.

"The only way you can survive is to have entrepreneurial deals that generate income. You have to have president types that have a business mentality. And this is not a job for political virgins. I'm an educational politician, and I make no apology for it. If you can't work with the political interests in the state -- the governor, the legislature, the government NGOs -- you can't be successful."

A need for diversity

Greenwood -- who said she has been the head of two campuses herself as well as a tenured professor and a licensed psychologist -- was not involved in the search for Forsee but did help select Wolfe. She said that she noticed in the listening sessions held across Missouri that the system's first president with a business background helped pave the way for the second.

"In those sessions," she said, "it was very clear that (Forsee) was viewed as highly successful and he opened the door for other people from business to come in and be accepted."

That receptiveness, Greenwood said, is particularly crucial because as the leaders of colleges and universities approach retirement age, there is a shortage of traditional candidates available to take their place.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

A year in review: The UM System

By Zach Murdock

February 15, 2012 | 6:00 a.m. CST

New UM System president Timothy Wolfe takes over Wednesday.

COLUMBIA – The past year has been one of change for the University of Missouri System, including the resignation of then-President Gary Forsee, a major athletic conference shakeup and deep cuts in state support proposed for higher education.

As Timothy Wolfe takes office Wednesday as the 23rd president of the four-campus system, here is a review of the system's recent history:

Early 2011

The year's big changes start on Jan. 7, 2011, when then-system president Gary Forsee announced he was stepping down from the position to be with his wife, Sherry, to focus on her recovery from cancer.

That day, the UM System Board of Curators announced that the system would immediately begin its search for a new president but that system general counsel Steve Owens would serve as an interim president until a permanent successor was hired.

Later in January, Gov. Jay Nixon moved to appoint two new members to the board to replace outgoing curators Bo Fraser and John Carnahan. The appointments included current curator Donald Cupps and curator-no-more Craig Van Matre.

Then at the board's regularly scheduled meetings Jan. 26-27, it took several actions, including granting permission to hire a search firm to aid the hunt for a new president and discussing how to cover a \$72 million budget gap created by cuts in state support.

At that meeting, curators voted to approve a 5.5 percent average tuition increase to the four UM schools, with increases to required and supplemental fees to help bridge that gap. The

increases broke a two-year freeze on in-state undergraduate tuition that was part of an agreement to keep funding stable and tuition costs down.

In February, the system announced it would hold seven forums throughout the state to hear out Missouri residents' priorities for qualities they'd like to see in the next UM System president.

Spring and Summer 2011

In March, curators voted to approve a list of qualifications for the next system president and said they would like to see a president who emulates some of Forsee's strengths. Some of the strengths mentioned included his business background, political presence in Jefferson City and communication with university stakeholders.

In May, Van Matre ran into his first appointment roadblock when his confirmation to the Board of Curators was blocked in the state Senate. Nixon withdrew Van Matre's name from the confirmation process — and consequently, the Board of Curators — to preserve the ability to reappoint the Columbia attorney and try to have him confirmed again.

At the beginning of June Nixon did just that, adding Van Matre back to the board as a recess appointment pending Senate approval in the next legislative session.

Also in June, the governor withheld additional funds from public colleges and universities to help fund the state's disaster relief efforts after flooding and the tornado in Joplin.

Although most colleges saw a 7 percent decrease in state support after the announcement, Nixon cut 8 percent to the UM System and Missouri Western State University for raising tuition above what he thought was appropriate.

At the board's meetings in Columbia on June 16-17, curators discussed ways to cope with the governor's additional cuts and voted to close the current retirement plan and create a new hybrid, defined benefits and defined contributions plan.

In August, as students headed back to campus, speculation began about the futures of Texas A&M and Missouri in the Big 12 Conference. But as speculation turned to reality, it was the Board of Curators that would take center stage.

Fall and Winter 2011

In September, Nixon withdrew Van Matre's appointment from the Senate again after the Senate decided not to take up any confirmations during a special session of the Missouri General Assembly. After the session was over, Van Matre was recess-appointed for a second time.

At the beginning of October, curators met at a special meeting in St. Louis to review a final draft of the system's new hybrid retirement plan. But they also met in closed session for four hours before announcing they had granted MU Chancellor Brady Deaton the power to "explore options" relating to MU's athletic conference alignment.

Two weeks later, the board met for three long days in Kansas City, where it voted to approve a hybrid retirement plan, gave Deaton the power to make any conference realignment decisions without further board approval and announced that the board would be narrowing the search for a new president to a list of finalists. That included a 10-hour, closed-door session of the presidential search committee.

Then **on Nov. 6**, after months of discussion and debate, Deaton and SEC Commissioner Mike Slive celebrated the conclusion of the conference realignment shake-up with MU's official move to the Southeastern Conference.

Throughout November, curators spent hours privately discussing the highly secretive presidential search and candidates without hinting publicly at specifics regarding candidates or when the search would end.

To begin December, the pace of the presidential search surged as the curators held their sixth closed-door meeting in six weeks. Just two days later, the board announced that a list of presidential search finalists had been sent to an advisory committee made up of faculty, staff and students from the system campuses.

That advisory committee met Dec. 6 — just days before the board's final full meeting of the year — and interviewed one candidate. Curators heard the committee's recommendation at their meeting in Kansas City and said they had made a decision. At the meeting, curators also discussed initial proposals for tuition and fee increases for the 2012-13 school year.

On Dec. 13, the announcement finally came that Timothy M. Wolfe, a Rock Bridge High School and MU alum would become the system's next president. Wolfe, 53, spent 20 years as an executive at IBM and most recently served as president of Novell Americas, a software company in Waltham, Mass.

So far in 2012

This January, in his State of the State address, the governor outlined cuts of 15.1 percent to state support for higher education throughout the state to help balance the state's budget.

At its Feb. 2-3 full board meeting, the system responded by proposing tuition and fee increases. But the board was missing two curators after the resignation of Judith Haggard and the final withdrawal of Van Matre, whose confirmation was blocked by the threat of a filibuster.

At the meeting, curators voted to approve increases to information technology fees, special course fees and e-learning fees but did not vote on tuition increases.

Last week, Nixon announced that he wants to add \$40 million in one-time state support for higher education to soften his proposed cuts. The money is expected to come to the state as part of a \$196 million lawsuit settlement with state attorneys general filed against the nation's five largest mortgage companies for fraudulent foreclosure practices.

What's next?

On Wednesday, this story begins a new chapter as new president Tim Wolfe takes over with the UM System at a crossroads.

There's still uncertainty surrounding the exact amount of higher education funding available for next year's budget, and UM System spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said there are still no specifics on what the one-time infusion of settlement money could mean for tuition hikes on the UM campuses.

Curators will meet again this month to discuss and vote on any tuition increases. But in the meantime, Wolfe has met with students at UM campuses in Rolla, St. Louis and Kansas. His meet-and-greet at MU is Monday.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MSA delivers 6,000 letters opposing budget cuts to lawmakers

By Lauren Page

February 14, 2012 | 8:10 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA – Four members of the Missouri Students Association traveled to Jefferson City on Tuesday to deliver 6,000 letters opposing a higher education budget cut.

Last week, MSA set up a tent in the MU Student Center and asked fellow students to sign letters to Gov. Jay Nixon, district representatives and senators to protest Nixon's proposed 15.1 percent cut to higher education in the State of the State address in January.

The petition campaign came after the University of Missouri System Board of Curators' meeting Feb. 2-3 that addressed the looming issue of these higher education cuts within the UM System.

Of the letters, 2,000 were addressed to Nixon and 4,000 were addressed to other legislators.

Steven Dickherber, MSA executive chief of staff, said Zach Toombs, MSA director of student communications, proposed the idea of a petition. Toombs quickly gained the support of MSA president Xavier Billingsley and the Associated Students of the University of Missouri. The student group represents all UM campuses in state government issues.

While delivering the letters, a member of this group and members of MSA had the opportunity to attend the Missouri House Higher Education meeting and testify.

"The legislators were incredibly responsive," said MSA Academic Affairs Chairman Ben Levin. "No one came out and said they supported Nixon's higher education funding proposition."

He also said the legislators seemed committed to fighting back against the cuts.

Levin said he doesn't believe Nixon's plan to designate \$40 million of the \$200 million mortgage settlement is a solution to the problem.

"This is the worst cut we've had in decades," he said, noting the \$40 million is a "one-time thing," so it won't be beneficial in the long-run.

"For the first time in years the students are having a strong voice in the legislature in regard to higher education funding," Toombs said.

Overall, the letters of petition were a success, Levin said.

"Two-thousand hand-signed letters does have an impact," he said. "Four-thousand letters for state legislators will turn some heads."

But according to Levin, the MSA campaign isn't finished.

"We plan on being loud about this until Nixon signs in his budget," Levin said.

Going forward, Toombs said MSA hopes to reach out and get alumni and parents involved with the help of Mizzou Advocacy and the Mizzou Alumni Association.

In the last week, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and Missouri University of Science and Technology launched similar letter-writing campaigns under the same "more for less" slogan and Twitter hashtag, Toombs said.

"At this point, we've gotten the message out," Toombs said. "And we've gotten legislators' attention."



MU must take the wheel on student busing

BY RICHARD DIXON

Tuesday, February 14, 2012

University of Missouri administrators are to be lauded for hiring an outside consultant to assess possible changes in providing transportation for students housed off campus. They also are to be chastised for the fact it has taken so long to recognize a problem exists.

Only after Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid began to send signals that the city transit system was no longer willing to provide this service at current compensation levels and floated several proposals to increase revenue through a per-student fee or by collecting revenue from various student housing complexes did the university act. It has been apparent for some time the "service" provided by the city is woefully inadequate. Dangerously overcrowded buses are the norm during peak times. Recent casual observation revealed three buses operating during the 8:30 and 9 a.m. runs with riders standing near the windshield, in violation of transit rules requiring riders remain behind the driver's position. An imposition on the riders, it also is a significant safety hazard. Driver turnover in the student shuttle service also is a significant problem faced by the city, and new and poorly trained drivers are not uncommon.

The city has not devoted itself to providing top-notch service because it has no stake in performing well. It is the university, because of its aggressive recruitment and enlarged enrollment that exceeds its housing capability, and the private housing developments that profit from this arrangement. The city has been made the scapegoat.

More important, the city has committed much of its vehicular capacity to a transient population while neglecting its primary mission to provide a workable transit system to its core constituency: full-time Columbia residents.

As Columbia grows, with a commuter infrastructure wholly unprepared to handle growth, a professionally managed and user-friendly transit system is likely the only solution to forestall morning and evening gridlock. Ingress and egress from outer-ring residential areas to the tens of thousands of MU jobs and downtown businesses would have to be substantially upgraded to handle the coming increase in population.

Time is not on the city's side.

The university should accept responsibility for the situation it has created. Jackie Jones, MU vice chancellor for administrative services, believes the university has adequate parking to handle the commuting students if a transit solution cannot be achieved. Such shortsighted thinking places an even

greater burden on inadequate infrastructure and thousands of young and relatively inexperienced drivers on streets such as Rock Quarry Road.

The better solution is to establish a fleet of buses owned and maintained by the university for the express purpose of serving the students it has recruited. Ownership allows for active management to ensure a quality service. It also opens up possibilities to partner with technical colleges, such as Linn State University, to establish a satellite campus on MU property and give budding mechanics practical hands-on training. Graduate students in transportation management could assume some management roles as interns. A core staff of full-time professional drivers would be required, but with a well-constructed training program, student jobs as part-time drivers could be created.

Eventually, such an on-site transportation system could be expanded to serve other valuable uses. According to statistics from Columbia Regional Economic Development Inc., MU and the adjoining University Hospital employ nearly 13,000 people, many living outside the city in communities such as Boonville and Centralia. Establishing a commuter alternative for these employees would enhance worker productivity and job satisfaction while reducing campus congestion. It would free space now used for parking to devote to other uses. Students' peak class attendance periods, between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., might allow for extensive dual-use application. The university has entire departments well versed in statistical analyses of this type, so it would cost little to test whether such a proposal has merit.

Finally, with the success of the MU athletic teams and the surge of devoted fans to such events, fleet buses could be used as shuttles to alleviate game-day congestion. It would be in the best interest of the university to use talented individuals already on staff as it seeks a workable solution.

First local dogs receive ‘amazing’ stem-cell therapy

By ERIC ADLER

Just before 10 a.m. Tuesday, Jake — a hobbling, 12-year-old yellow Labrador retriever — went into surgery at the Stanley Veterinary Clinic in Overland Park with crippling arthritis, no longer able to run without pain or even walk down stairs.

He had already been on months of medications that seemed to turn the normally happy dog sad. And hip and joint replacements costing tens of thousands of dollars were not feasible, said owners Mike and Elizabeth LeBlanc of Leawood.

Still, their 8-year-old daughter, Mia, had just one request at Christmas. “All I want is for Jake to feel better,” she wrote.

So, on Tuesday morning, Jake became one of the first canines in the Kansas City area to undergo a somewhat new and controversial procedure in which stem cells were harvested from the fat of his own body and then injected into his joints. The expectation is that within a few weeks the cells will regenerate missing cartilage and turn his arthritic joints healthy again.

“It’s amazing,” said veterinarian Les E. Pelfrey, who conducted the procedure. “A few weeks later, these guys are running up and down.”

The stem-cell procedure, which has gained notice in recent years with anecdotal stories of success on YouTube and cable television, remains controversial not only for its quick adoption in veterinary clinics nationwide, but also because some researchers say it remains scientifically unproven and expensive, at \$1,800 or more per treatment.

“Let me tell you one thing,” said James L. Cook, a professor of orthopedics at the University of Missouri’s College of Veterinary Medicine. “I don’t want to write off stem cells. Stem cells may hold the key for truly restorative medicine.”

In horses, stems cells have been shown to help rejuvenate damaged tendons and other problems. They are being tested for cardiac problems.

“But in the joints for dogs with arthritis? No way,” Cook said. “I would never recommend anyone get this done.”

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Stem cells essentially are the equivalent of young and impressionable cells whose genetic gears have yet to determine their fate. Because they are so young, they theoretically can turn into any kind of cell, from cartilage to neurons. In humans, stem cells have long been held out as possible therapy for diseases such as Parkinson's.

The problem, Cook said, is that although a few studies have shown that the injection of stem cells into arthritic canine joints does reduce pain, compared with "control" dogs not injected with stems cells, no studies have convincingly shown that stems cells are any better at helping dogs than the current, and less expensive, standard of care. That typically involves a combination of weight loss, pain medications and, when necessary, injections of hyaluronic acid, a slippery substance that often goes missing in arthritis.

Those injections, given a couple of times a year, cost less than \$100 each.

Moreover, even if the stem cells work, no one knows at this point how long the improvement will persist, although some vets have noted benefits lasting a year or more.

"We know for sure that it (stem cell injections) does have some palliative effects. It can make symptoms better," Cook said. "And we do know for sure that it does not regenerate cartilage in arthritic joints. The palliative effects are not as good, or no better, than hyaluronic acid injections."

That is far from the case being made by companies now promoting stem-cell therapy in dogs, or owners who believe in it.

A number of stem-cell companies have emerged in recent years. Chief among them are Vet-Stem, based in Poway, Calif., and MediVet America, a division of MediVet, based in Sydney, Australia, which notes that it is currently conducting studies on canines, stem cells and cartilage regeneration.

Both use largely similar technologies and methods. At the vet's office, the dog undergoes a quick procedure in which a bolus of fat about the size of a golf ball is taken from above the shoulder.

The fat is processed and treated with chemicals to extract millions of stem cells. Some of those cells are then injected into a dog's damaged joints; the rest enter the body through an intravenous line into the bloodstream.

One prime difference between the Vet-Stem and MediVet systems is that Vet-Stem costs about \$3,000 or more.

Vet-Stem requires the veterinarian to ship the fat sample to California, where it is processed and sent back for injection. Several dogs in the Kansas City area have been injected with stem cells from Vet-Stem.

The MediVet system costs pet owners about \$1,800. It provides veterinarians with a kit to process the stem cells in their own offices over about four hours. Dogs are injected with stem cells on the same day the fat is removed. The pet typically goes home the next day.

In Topeka, the University Bird and Small Animal Clinic has used the MediVet kit and system with what it says are positive results on about 40 dogs since November 2010. A veterinarian there, Larry Snyder, helped train Pelfrey in Overland Park.

Snyder came to the clinic two weeks ago to perform the procedure on another hobbled yellow Labrador retriever, Milo, owned by dentist Jon Finley and his wife, Sharon, in Leawood.

“Dr. Pelfrey and Mrs. Finley didn’t tell me how much this procedure was going to cost,” Jon Finley said, “and I’d rather you not tell me. No matter what, he’s walking better, standing upright, feeling better. I can’t help but think he’s going to get better and better.”

Jake’s owner said that, whatever the outcome, she knows that the procedure is not a cure.

“I’m hoping this gives him a better quality of life,” Elizabeth LeBlanc said. “I got him when he was just 6 weeks old. He was such a blessing. It will be worth it, even if I can give him one more great summer.”