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MU graduation rate reaches all-time high

By Janese Silvey

Record numbers of students aren't just enrolling at the University of Missouri; they're staying and graduating, too.

MU's six-year graduation rate is 70.7 percent, the highest in the school's 173-year history. Numbers were released yesterday and account for summer graduates, said Ann Korschgen, vice provost of enrollment management.

The graduation rate is up nearly 2 percent over last year. And it's a significant improvement from the 1980s, when about half of freshmen classes made it to graduation day, Korschgen said.

"It's so much better than it ever was in the past," she said. "Students are coming here and succeeding."

The rate also meets a target UM System administrators set two years ago. The system's accountability chart — a scorecard former UM President Gary Forsee developed to track progress — set a goal for MU's graduation rate of 70 percent.

"It's exciting," said Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies. "It's not an accident, and there's not just one factor that's contributing to the improved success rates of our students."

Credit goes to multiple units on campus, he said, naming the Student Success Center, the Summer Welcome orientation program, Freshmen Interest Groups, which join like-minded students together in residential halls, and a recent push for academic success among Greek organizations.

"I think there are many, many, many things that our campus has been doing and continues to do to improve as it relates to student success and improving persistence to graduation," Spain said.

Students are taking seriously their commitment to education, too. Use of the Learning Center, which provides tutoring at the Student Success Center, has increased by 39 percent over the past five years, and the center has doubled the number of tutors available to students who need help, he said. This year, tutoring will be expanded to Sunday hours, and the space that formerly housed a McDonald's restaurant on campus will be converted into tutoring space.

Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor of student services, said she has seen the university move toward a more focused approach on student success over the past decade or so of her 27 years at MU. She thinks the longevity of administrators in key roles contributes to the success.

"The stability in the leadership really makes a difference," Scroggs said. "We're willing to try things and stay long enough to see if they work."

MU started classes yesterday with a record enrollment that includes increases in the number of black, Hispanic and other minority students. Nearly 200 more international students also are on campus, bringing the total to 2,041.

First-day numbers also show a slight drop in MU's retention rate. This year, 83.8 percent of last year's freshmen returned for a second year, down from 85.1 percent of the 2010 freshmen class who came back for their sophomore year. Spain said reasons vary, but some freshmen drop out when local scholarships expire or for other financial reasons. He said he is interested in helping MU develop an early-alert system to identify students who might be struggling or thinking about leaving.

"We want to provide a safety net," he said. "We do a lot of things to support students as they work their way through the Mizzou journey, but we want to reduce as many gaps that exist between the current safety nets as possible."

AP Associated Press

CBS NEWS ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

**COLUMBIA DAILY
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Microsoft looks for new apps at Missouri j-school

COLUMBIA, Mo. --

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) Journalism students, professors and researchers at the University of Missouri are teaming up with Microsoft in an effort to develop apps for the soon-to-be-released, tablet-friendly Windows 8 operating system.

The Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism is opening a Microsoft Application Development Lab on its Columbia campus. The company's operating system upgrade goes on sale Oct. 26 and is designed to work better with touch screens and on tablet computers.

The company has provided an initial grant of \$100,000 to equip and furnish the lab, institute director Randy Picht said. Microsoft also will provide a \$20,000 annual supplement toward the salary of a full-time programmer who will oversee the lab.

Besides Windows-based laptop computers, tablets and mobile phones, the lab includes Xbox 360 gaming systems with Kinect.

Those devices will be used in an experiment involving injury rehabilitation by female athletes who have suffered knee injuries. That experiment involves the university's medical school and College of Engineering.

The journalism school has received support and equipment from Apple computers for years. The new Microsoft partnership complements those deals, Picht said.

"We want to have the latest technology for students to be exposed to, and to experiment with," he said.

Apple is "still very eager to do things with us, and so are we," he said. "It's not an either-or."
The school plans to host a Sept. 6 kickoff celebration at the new lab.



Microsoft, RJI announce deal for new lab

By Janese Silvey

The Reynolds Journalism Institute on the University of Missouri campus is opening a new lab where faculty and students can experiment with Microsoft products, including the soon-to-be-released Windows 8 operating system.

The Microsoft Application Lab is equipped with Windows-based laptops and tablets, and the company will keep the lab up to date as new devices come on the market. Microsoft and RJI have entered into a three-year contract, with the software company initially paying roughly \$100,000 to furnish and equip the lab, said Mike McKean, director of RJI's Futures Lab.

"We're really excited to welcome Microsoft Corp. into our Futures Lab, where students, faculty and others get first-hand experience with the latest mobile and other technologies," Randy Picht, executive director of RJI, said in a statement. "This new space is going to be an excellent place to launch the projects and experiments that are going to help improve the quality and economic vitality of American journalism."

In the lab, faculty, students and staff will experiment with the devices and help develop new applications for the Windows 8 platform when the product is released in late October. Students also will be allowed to check out the tablets and laptops, McKean said.

Microsoft is pitching in \$20,000 a year for at least three years to help pay for a full-time programmer to oversee the lab and help develop applications. Mizzou Advantage is paying \$15,000 a year to contribute to that salary, McKean said.

The lab also is equipped with an Xbox 360 gaming system with Kinect. McKean envisions using the motion-based technology to make reporting more interactive.

RJI and the Missouri School of Journalism have had partnerships with Apple computers for years, and that relationship will continue, McKean said.

"Apple is aware we're doing it," he said. "We want to work with the best tech companies, and now we've added another."

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Advocates, employees of UM Press celebrate its past

By Christine Cauthen

August 21, 2012 | 9:13 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Before Julianna Schroeder read aloud from a 1996 book about early German immigrants to Missouri, a man shouted at her.

"Which press was brave enough to make a series about the folklore of one state?" he asked over much applause.

Dozens of employees, professors, writers and residents held a rally celebrating the University of Missouri Press on Tuesday at Jesse Wrench Auditorium in Memorial Union South.

Attendees read from books published by the press, including "The Collected Works of Langston Hughes" and "The Autobiography of Harry S. Truman."

Jane Lago, a member of the Coalition to Save the University of Missouri Press, distributed a pamphlet demanding that the goals of the new press remain the same as the old and handed out a list of about 40 authors who now wish to have the publishing rights to their books returned to them.

Afterward, she spoke of the commitment of the press' employees.

"They all worked long hours with low pay because they believed in the books and the authors," she said.

William Least Heat-Moon, an MU alum and author who said he has never worked for or published with the press, indicted administrators involved in closing the press, calling them shameful, embarrassing and degrading. He described the proposed new model for the press as "bogus."

"We must not allow that change to happen," he said.

On May 24, University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe announced a plan that would close the UM Press. Later, it was announced that the press would return to MU with a mostly digital publishing platform; some hard copies would still be published. Under the plan, all employees of the press would lose their jobs. They would have the option to apply for new positions in the restructured press.

Least Heat-Moon encouraged students and faculty in attendance to raise awareness on campus.

The MU Faculty Council is expected to discuss the press situation at its meeting Thursday and possibly hold a related vote. Least Heat-Moon asked the three council members present to raise their hands and encouraged them to hold their ground.

"We should not go silent," he said.

Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.



Open Column

Restore press before more damage is done

Editor, the Tribune: I am a University of Missouri Press author, having published two books on the Cold War with this great institution. I've valued my relationship with the UM Press and have been very proud of working with the professionals who crafted this fine operation.

Long lists of scholars have appealed to President Tim Wolfe to be reasonable and reverse his decision to destroy the press. One writer has correctly called this "cultural vandalism."

As a Truman specialist, I can say that no other press is going to pick up this irreplaceable focus on Missouri's native son.

This "new model" press that Wolfe and his staff are pushing is a foolish scheme. Without a skilled staff, without a skilled editor, without the prestige the press has developed over the years, the "new model" has become a national joke.

As one wit has noted, this is "putting lipstick on a pig," and in a communication with Wolfe's own staff, a UNC Press editor rightly called Wolfe's plan "a crazy idea."

The Missouri Faculty Council has voted unanimously that this ruthless action be stopped. Wolfe has earned a blistering critique from the American Association of University Professors national office for this irresponsible act. And David Robinson, president of the Missouri Conference AAUP, has written that this decision is a "public embarrassment" and that faculty members are alarmed at the damage to the university's reputation.

Don't let arrogance stand in the way of reason, President Wolfe. Fix this blunder before any more damage is done.

Restore the press.

John McNay
151 Highridge Court
Fairfield, Ohio



Woman punched on Rollins Street

University of Missouri police say no arrests have been made in connection with the Sunday night assault of a woman walking on Rollins Street.

Around 11:30 p.m., the woman was walking westbound on Rollins near College Avenue, an MUPD news release said. Three men walking eastbound on Rollins made a derogatory comment to the woman, and one punched her in the face before they ran off, police said. The suspect who hit her was described as a black male between 17 and 22 years old, wearing dark pants and a dark shirt, the release said. The other two were described similarly. MUPD could not be reached this morning to confirm whether any items were stolen from the woman.

Anyone with information about the assault is asked to call Detective Sam Easley at 884-3721 or CrimeStoppers at 875-8477 or submit a tip online at 875tips.com.



The Tribune's View

Tiger Town USA

A new town logo?

By Henry J. Waters III

Tom Atkins has been at it again, hustling around town with an idea for enhancing the community.

Lately he has been floating the idea of labeling our beloved burg "Tiger Town USA." He reports everyone thinks it's a "great idea."

The moment seems right, and I must admit Tom's logo has a ring to it. As the Tigers and their fans are on the brink of intermingling with denizens of the Southeastern Conference, the time is right for establishing Tiger Town USA. All local hands are tentatively on board, including university minions who say the slogan will not conflict with any registered trademark they have reserved.

Tom has lawyers working on a copyright. The Columbia City Council can contribute by passing a resolution declaring "Tiger Town USA" our official slogan.

Tom wants some sort of sanction in time to hang a banner from Boone Hospital Center's Broadway overpass on Sept. 8, the day of our first SEC football game. For good measure, why not make two banners and hang one from the Stephens College overpass a few blocks to the west?

"Tiger Town USA" is not a revolutionary idea, but it strikes a chord. The breadth of quick initial acceptance is surprising, even amazing, for a new name suggestion. That it is not gimmicky makes it work.

Let's move while the moment is nigh and get busy with those banners. Then all of us can begin sporting the new logo and promotion can begin in Athens, Ga., and beyond.

Even though Atkins launched the idea, Tiger Town USA is not a logo rigged up and put forth by a small cohort. It quickly has caught on widely like a good plague. Let us succumb.

HJW III

theman eater

Freshman enrollment largest in MU's history

The sphere of MU's influence is expanding both in its student body and its geographic reach due to this year's freshman class.

As of the first day of classes, 6,560 freshmen were enrolled at MU, a record high and a 6.4 percent increase from 2011. Total enrollment saw a 2.8 percent increase and total out-of-state enrollment grew by 11.6 percent, according to the Division of Enrollment Management.

Record-breaking freshman classes have become the norm, and MU's entrance into the Southeastern Conference for athletics has opened up a new region of the country from which to attract students.

But though freshman class sizes can increase by hundreds, available on-campus housing for students cannot be built at the same rate.

"It takes us, from concept to opening a brand new residence hall ... three years, at least," Director of Residential Life Frankie Minor said.

The newly announced Virginia Avenue South residence hall will hold 330 beds but is not a cure to all issues that come with housing students, Minor said.

His department also has to deal with returning and transfer students who want on-campus housing. Those students, combined with freshmen who missed the priority deadline, can number far more than the additional beds the new hall would provide.

As of Aug. 15, 5,836 freshmen had contracts with the Department of Residential Life, and every one of them had a living space. However, some adjustments had to be made, such as converting study rooms in Hudson and Gillett halls, which were student rooms before renovations, back to their original purpose.

Some students have also been assigned to share a room with student staff members who normally have their own rooms. The arrangements are temporary, Minor said.

"What's going to happen is we begin to identify no-shows or we get cancellations ... then we'll start moving those students out of those temporary spaces," he said.

Residential Life has had to institute a cap to the amount of contracts it offers, a limit which has decreased by half since it was introduced.

Though there has been some dissatisfaction from returning students, housing freshmen remains Residential Life's top priority because they have to get accustomed to a new environment, Minor said.

"(As a returning student) you know your way around, you know where all the buildings are on campus, you've kind of got it down now," he said. "So that's why we focus on the freshmen, because they're just much more vulnerable."

Though Residential Life can't directly affect enrollment, the department is in constant contact with the MU offices that can, especially the Office of Enrollment Management.

"There's a group that meets every week ... and talks about enrollment (and) shares pieces of information," Minor said. "So we're constantly sharing data back and forth, doing our best to say, 'Here's what I think the freshman class is going to be based on my set of data. How does that compare with your set of data?'"

MU is still working to expand its student body, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Ann Korschgen said in an email.

She said MU recently had a record-high graduation rate and that MU provides students with good experiences and educational opportunities.

Korschgen also said Residential Life was able to work well with the Office of Enrollment Management.

"They're totally open to working with us," Korschgen said. "I can't think of any domain in which we're at cross purposes."

Overall, Residential Life is embracing a booming student population, Minor said.

"Personally, I am supportive of making a Mizzou educational experience available to as many students as the institution can reasonably manage given its resources," he said in an email.

theman eater

FastCAT route debuts in Columbia

FastCAT, the new Columbia city transit plan made its debut Aug. 13. The plan, which will run through MU and the downtown area, is designed to transport students in high-traffic areas of the city.

FastCAT was designed earlier this summer with the help of Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid.

The plan grew to fruition in May when McDavid visited similar bus route systems in Iowa, Illinois and Missouri. He noticed the success rates of these programs and insisted on providing a speedy service, said John Glascock, general manager of the Columbia Public Works Department.

“The route was designed to pick up students at student housing,” he said.

A report released by the Public Works Committee on Aug. 6 reported FastCAT’s annual costs at \$425,000.

The FastCAT fee for individuals is \$100 per semester. For student housing and apartment complexes, students are encouraged to buy tickets in groups of 20 for a fee of \$62.50 per semester.

“It’s a reasonable cost (for) the service,” Glascock said.

For the first two weeks of the new program, the cost to ride is free. This execution is part of an effort to see how efficient the system is and understand its ridership rates.

The bus has 11 scheduled stops, five of which run through MU to provide services for Greektown and other largely populated areas.

The bus runs from 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Wednesday. The service runs from 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 a.m. Thursday and Friday. The bus runs from 9:50 a.m. to 2:30 a.m. Saturday and from noon to 10 p.m. Sunday.