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The Current

1966

Celebrating 50 Years as

2016

UMSL'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWS

VOL. 50

ISSUE 1508

SEPTEMBER 19, 2016

Chancellor George Highlights Budget and Presents Awards At Annual Address

BRIAN SHERRILL
STAFF WRITER

Chancellor Thomas George gave the State of the University Address the afternoon of September 14 in the J.C. Penney Auditorium, followed by an awards ceremony, music, food, and drinks.

The Chancellor's main topics of the speech were the University of Missouri-St. Louis' budget, enrollment, awards, and achievements.

Topics that fell short of being mentioned included the tuition increase, the reduction of graduate assistant positions and tuition waivers, the increase in student fees, and the cancellation of programs throughout campus such as Gallery Visio. Chancellor George told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in April 2016 about these cuts when asked about plans to fix the hole in the budget.

Total enrollment is at 16,100 this semester. In fall 2015, enrollment was at 16,743.

Chancellor George said, "The reason why we have dipped a little down was because we have about 600 seniors that haven't come back. There are several reasons for that. One is due to running out of financial aid, and we're



Chancellor Tom George on stage at the State of the University, September 14

DANIEL STRAWHUN/THE CURRENT

looking for ways to fix that. Another is we had record graduations in the past two years. This has always been a goal of ours, to get students graduated. And enrollments are important, specifically in a cash flow basis, but ultimately what is important is graduations."

"We thrive off of having big graduation and retention numbers to get performance-based funding from the state," George said. "And the best thing is we are finally becoming people's first choice rather than their second."

The Chancellor continued by giving credit to the programs that reflect UMSL's productiveness. UMSL's international business program was ranked 17th among all universities nationally by U.S. News and World Report, and has made the top 20 for the past 14 years. UMSL's online master's program in education was ranked first among Missouri universities for master's in education. The university's cybersecurity program was named a Center of Academic Excellence in "Cyber Defense Education" by the National Security Agency and Department of Homeland Security.

George said that students are also looking forward to the new Optometry Center, opening to its first patient September 19 and the Science Learning Building having its open house on November 10. The Anheuser-Busch Hall business building is expected to be complete during the 2017 summer semester. Benton Hall is also due for renovations starting in January.

UMSL's awards and rankings show

that it is still valiantly trudging forward through rough patches from the past, such as the effects caused by the Ferguson protests, which the Chancellor called "the Ferguson effect," last year's Mizzou turmoil, and the \$15 million budget shortfall that caused the elimination of approximately 80 positions.

George also told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, "We wanted to minimize the effect on the quality of instruction and emphasize our ability to educate and graduate students."

"What's amazing about this is we are such a young school, and we do it all. We outreach into the community, we have the absolute best in teaching, we feed economic development into the region, and on top of that we have some of the very best faculty, really in the world for that matter, in order to get our rankings," George said.

The speech then concluded in order to recognize the faculty and staff members during the Chancellor's Award for Excellence ceremony.

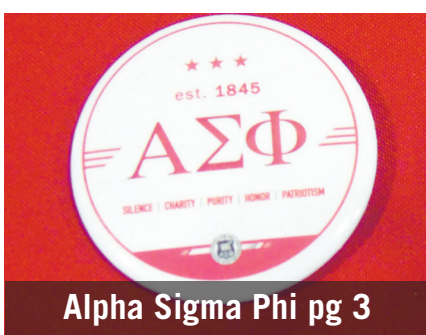
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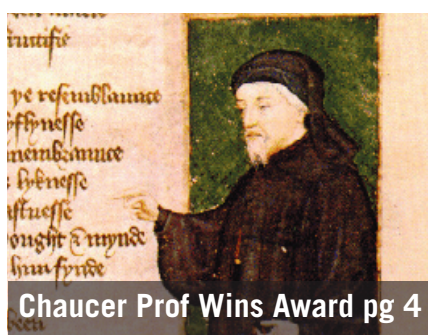
Chancellor Tom George and Dr. Frank Grady

DANIEL STRAWHUN/THE CURRENT

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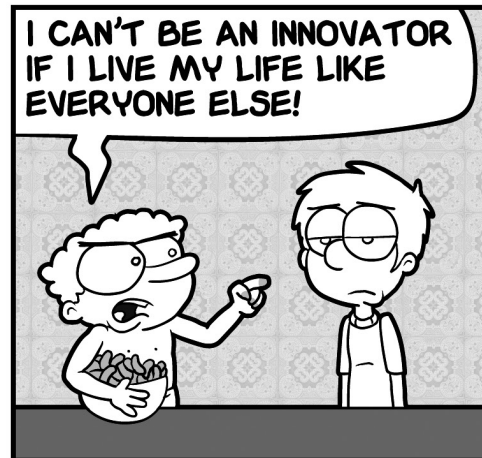
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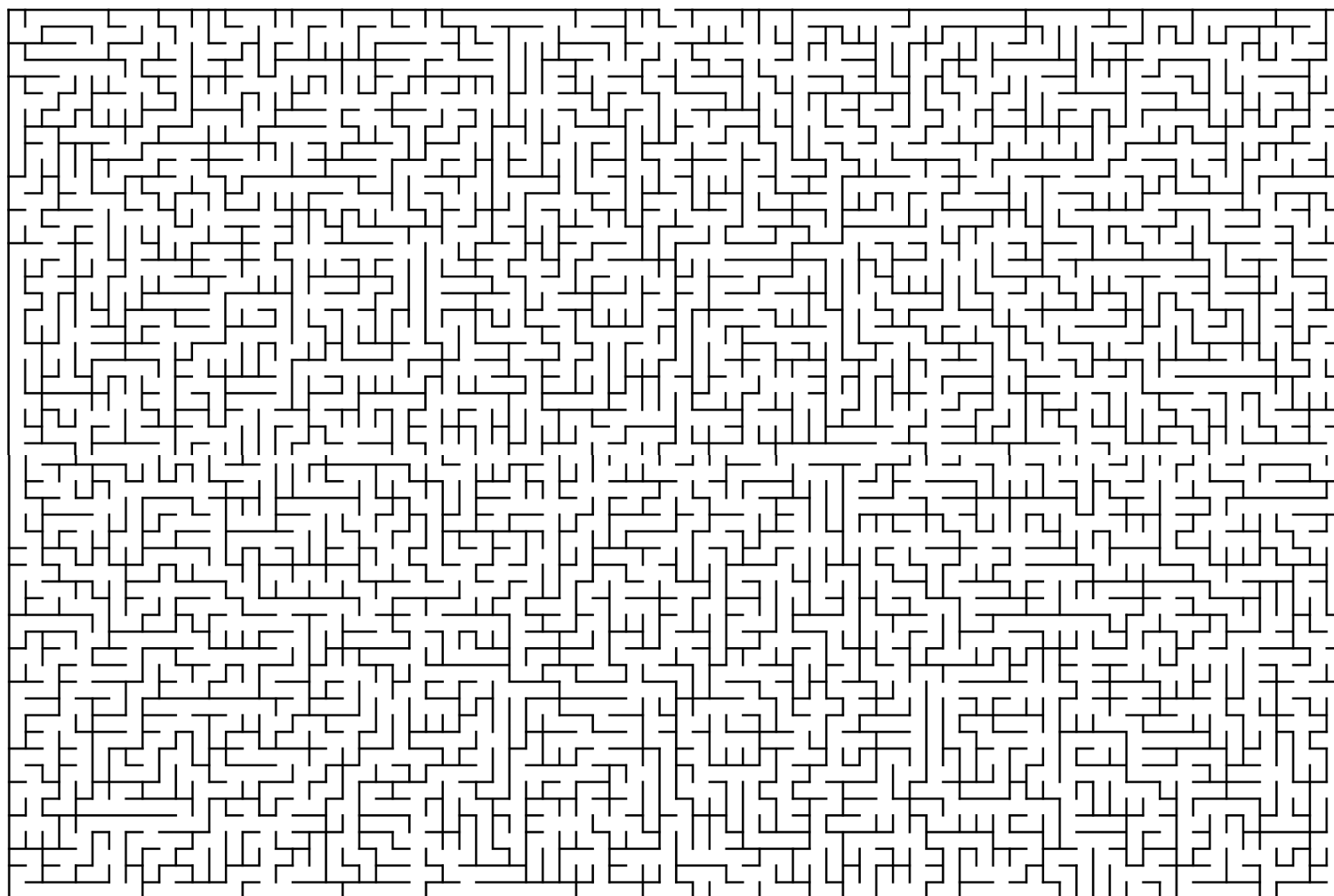


ON THE QUAD BY MIKE DILIBERTO

THUR. SEPT. 22 | **MAJOR MINOR JAM** | 1pm - 3pm
 Join upper-class students as they share their experiences in their majors and help YOU find yours in a speed dating approach. Snacks, prizes, and fun! | MSC 3rd Floor Rotunda

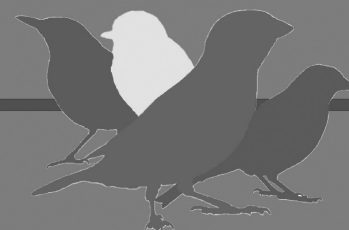
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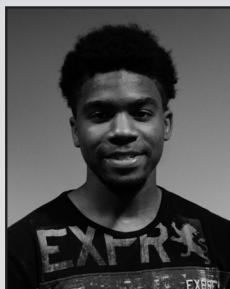


THE UNDERCURRENT By Daniel Strawhun

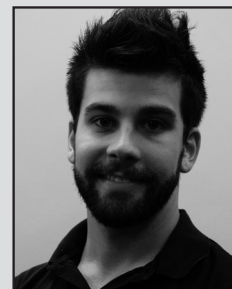
WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CLASS THIS SEMESTER?



ASHANTI KENNEDY,
 Sophomore, Accounting
 "Accounting 2400"



JACOB ARTIS,
 Sophomore,
 Information Systems
 "INF SYS 2800"



PARKER STEWART,
 Junior, Marketing,
 Logistics, and Operations
 Management
 "Minds, Brains, and
 Machines"

MON 88
 64

TUE 86
 64

WED 88
 66

THU 90
 68

FRI 88
 66

SAT 82
 63

SUN 75
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Alpha Sigma Phi Fraternity Expands To UMSL

LORI DRESNER
NEWS EDITOR

“Better the world through better men,” is the philosophy of the University of Missouri-St. Louis’ newest fraternity, Alpha Sigma Phi. The fraternity is expanding to UMSL this semester and is currently in the recruitment stage of forming a new chapter on campus.

The Coordinator of Expansion and Growth for Alpha Sigma Phi, Jared Usher, has been on campus recruiting members since the first day of school. He has since met one-on-one with over 70 interested students. Out of those, Usher has recruited 20 members of the new chapter, along with one transfer from Missouri Valley College who is rejoining the fraternity with UMSL’s chapter.

Since Alpha Sigma Phi is brand new to campus, recruited members will be Founding Fathers of UMSL’s chapter. Usher’s target during the expansion process is to recruit a total of 35 to 40 men for the chapter.

Usher said, “Our whole thing is ‘to better the world through better men’ and to challenge the status quo because I’m sure people have seen movies like ‘Neighbors’ and stuff like that... but that’s not who we are... With us, we’re about being fraternity gentlemen and defining what it means to be a fraternity man and doing Greek Life right.”

The petition for Alpha Sigma Phi to come to UMSL was voted on during the term of former Interfraternity



From left to right: Josh Ayers, Parker Bunch, Jared Usher, Yaniv Dudaie, and Peter Burnham.

LORI DRESNER/THE CURRENT

Council (IFC) President Drew Haugen, senior, nursing, who served from fall 2015 to spring 2016. Once the petition was accepted, Haugen helped coordinate the recruitment team that would come to campus.

Haugen said, “I think that UMSL’s on campus activities have been improving through my four years here. I think that Fraternity and Sorority Life is an important part of that. Fraternities offer young men opportunities to grow as individuals. Alpha Sigma Phi offers men that could not find a fit in the three previous fraternities a group that they can make into whatever they want it to be. I am excited for the growth and look forward to more in the future.”

Colleen Pace, UMSL’s Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life and Student Organizations, said, “We started working with the headquarters

a little over a year ago to coordinate the expansion and colonization process. This included a couple of campus visits and working with the Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) and member fraternities to ensure a smooth transition.”

Alpha Sigma Phi’s expansion process will continue through September 30. From October 2 to October 6, a second staff member from the Alpha Sigma Phi Chapter Development team will be on campus for the provisional chapter’s initial development visit. The purpose of their visit will be to elect officers and train the provisional chapter on operations. During the visit, the chapter will engage in workshops pertaining to risk management, recruitment, and accountability. The first official provisional chapter meeting will

also take place.

Initiation ceremonies will be held from November 5 to 7. The men recruited will officially become Brothers of Alpha Sigma Phi.

Students interested in joining Alpha Sigma Phi can contact Usher at jusher@alphasigmaphi.org or stop by his table with the red Alpha Sigma Phi banner in the MSC to learn more. Usher will be on the MSC Bridge the week of September 19 and near the information desk on the second floor of the MSC the week of September 26.

“I’m very excited to join,” said Yaniv Dudaie, junior, finance, logistics, and international business, who recently became a Founding Father of the Alpha Sigma Phi chapter at UMSL. “I feel like there’s a huge window of opportunity for us to bring change and really become a leader on campus.”

Alpha Sigma Phi becomes the fourth fraternity on UMSL’s campus. The three other chapters have been on campus for nearly 50 years. Sigma Pi was founded in 1968, Sigma Tau Gamma was founded in 1968, and Pi Kappa Alpha was founded in 1969. A Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity chapter also existed on campus from 1976 until about 1996, but it closed due to lower membership numbers.

Founded in 1845, Alpha Sigma Phi is the nation’s 10th oldest men’s fraternity. It currently has 142 chapters and provisional chapters, 6,000 undergraduate members, and 52,000 living alumni.

UMSL State of the University



Chancellor Tom George on stage

DANIEL STRAWHUN/THE CURRENT

Continued from Page 1

The ceremony began by celebrating the university’s Employee of the Month winners, new full-time faculty members, and the Service of Twenty-Five Years award recipients.

Amber G. Candela, an assistant professor in Educator Preparation, Innovation and Research, won the Gerald and Deanne Gitner Excellence in Teaching Award. The most prestigious awards, the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence, were given out last.

The categories and recipients were: Research and Creativity went to Dr. Robert Paul, Professor and Director of the Missouri Institute of Mental Health; Teaching went to Dr. Frank Grady, Professor and Chair of the Department of English; Campus Service went to Dr. Sally Barr Ebest, professor for the

Department of English; Non-Tenure Track Faculty Member went to Lynn M. Staley, associate teaching professor for the Department of English; Part-Time Faculty Member went to Benjamin Peet, adjunct instructor for the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science; Student Support went to Shanta L. Kyles, academic advisor for the Bachelors in Social Work program; Office/Technical went to Sherry M. Hieken, administrative consultant; Service/Maintenance went to Mary E. Birdsong, custodian.

Dr. Grady, the recipient of the Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, said about receiving his award, “This award requires solicitation from your past students. And that in itself is very moving.”

CAMPUS CRIME REPORT

SARAH HAYES
A&E EDITOR



The following is a series of daily crime reports issued by the University of Missouri-St. Louis Police Department since September 8.

Reports for September 13 and beyond have not yet been made available on the online Daily Incident/Fire Log that the UMSL PD is required to keep updated under the Clery Act.

The Clery Act is a federal law that requires UMSL to actively log any incidents on campus within two business days in a way that is accessible to the public.

As reported in previous crime reports, any school that violate any part of the Clery Act can face anything from a fine up to \$35,000 to the loss of federal aid and eligibility in student aid programs.

With some exceptions, a college must update their daily incident log within two days of a report being filed.

September 9: UMSL PD responded to a 1:33 a.m. report of a suspicious person at Mansion Hill. The person was determined to be a non-student resident searching for their keys.

At 11:08 p.m., a faculty member

at Express Scripts Hall filed a report regarding a fraudulent memo.

September 10: A student contacted UMSL PD at 1:18 a.m. regarding an intoxicated student at University Meadows.

At 8:54 p.m., a transit passenger was transported from the UMSL North MetroLink station to the hospital due to diabetes-related complications requiring medical treatment.

September 11: At 10:33 p.m., UMSL PD and Residential Life and Housing responded to a dispute between students at Oak Hall.

September 12: At 12:30 p.m., a student in Oak Hall damaged items in a dorm room and was transported to the hospital by a parent for treatment of minor injuries.

At 5:39 p.m., UMSL PD assisted the St. Louis County Police Department with an assault that occurred on Lauderdale Drive at University Place.

During the day, a student reported a fall at the Social Sciences and Business Building on September 8 that resulted in a fractured toe.



Dr. Frank Grady, head of the UMSL English department

AUGUST JENNEWAIN/UMSL DAILY

Grady: From Admiration To Excellence in Performance

VICTORIA MODENESI
SOCIAL MEDIA DIRECTOR

Dr. Frank Grady is the current chair for the Department of English and the recipient of the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching for 2016. The award celebrates and honors teachers who have demonstrated outstanding teaching abilities for at least seven years at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. The award has vigorous criteria, including up to six letters of support from students, alumni, colleagues, administrators, and community leaders.

As a faculty member at UMSL for more than 20 years, Grady's letters of support were from various sources. He said that some of the alumni who submitted the nominations studied with him 10 to 15 years ago and that, "it's both gratifying and humbling to think that they remember and continue to value those experiences."

But who is behind the award?

Grady explained that he has been inspired by his teachers and mentors throughout his academic career. Grady, who completed his undergraduate degree at Harvard University and his Ph.D. at the University of California at Berkeley, said, "I've benefitted from having studied with passionate, energetic, challenging instructors from high school ... to college ... to graduate school ... Once you get to the other side of the desk, not embarrassing one's mentors turns out to be a strong motivation."

Grady also explained, "working in the company of successful instructors, the kind that you often hear students talking about, keeps you on your game."

Grady tries to be like his mentors as much as possible. When talking about his experiences in the classroom in general, Grady expounded on the traits that are a source for his admiration.

"The [teachers that] I've admired routinely brought...mastery of the material, a contagious and unwavering enthusiasm for the job at hand ... a

sense of humor ... and a commitment to taking student's efforts seriously and to holding them to a high standard," he said.

However, Grady brings his own perspective and years of experience to his teaching. He explained that his classes are student-centered, but that this result is, "inevitably the focus of my efforts as well as [the students' effort]."

He tries to appeal to different learning styles but said, "If my practice can be said to appeal to different learning strategies, that's because over the last decade the integration of classroom technologies has helped me develop a pedagogy that's increasingly flexible."

In recounting an anecdote from his son's baseball game, Grady demonstrated how his pedagogy has grown to into a mindset for life. He recalled an instance in which he was assisting a game and the coach was having a hard time communicating with one of the players; the jargon that the coach used was unintelligible to the kid.

"You can't teach that way—not baseball, not literature, not cooking, not car repair," Grady said. "You always need at least two and preferably three or four ways to explain something in order to help someone put it into practice. That's certainly what I try to do in the classroom."

His success in teaching has been also dominated by his resolute passion for medieval literature, with an emphasis on Chaucer in particular. His choice field of study was first fueled by a lecture on Chaucer, though Grady says, "Chaucer and medieval texts work as well as anything else to serve the larger goals and values of a liberal education: rigorous critical analysis and clear communication, flexible and innovative thinking, the cultivation of a sympathetic imagination.

"Plus, I think they're a lot more fun than some of the alternatives," he said.

Keep an eye out for some of Grady's courses in the upcoming spring semester.

Mikhail Yelenskiy: The Last of the Custodians

BRIAN SHERRILL
STAFF WRITER

Budget cuts have devitalized an already hurting University of Missouri-St. Louis custodial staff, and as a result, it is more difficult to keep up with facilities on the south side of campus, like the E. Desmond Lee Technology and Learning Center (TLC) of the College of Education in Marillac Hall. However, Mikhail Yelenskiy, a veteran custodian here at UMSL, came to the rescue.

Michael Butler, the director of the TLC and Operations Manager of the Education Collabiat said, "Getting good custodial help down here has been tremendously hard. Over time we dropped from having about eight custodians down to three. We haven't had a full custodial staff for a continuous amount of time for a while now."

The ground floor section of Marillac Hall, in which the TLC resides, has had three custodian newbies hired and let go since the beginning of the spring semester.

"The sad part is, all three members have come and then immediately vanished for weeks," Butler said.

Because of this, the summer semester's trash cans towered periodically and sometimes overflowed, creating stains on the carpet and jenga-styled stacks of cups and to-go boxes. This was when the TLC reached the height of its sanitary issues. And this coincided with a time when the UMSL campus received lots of outside visitors.

"When new students and parents come to visit the campus, it makes us look like we don't care," Butler explained.

Custodial services on South Campus divide work evenly among the small amount of trained staff members available. In this case, the available staff members are Mikhail Yelenskiy and Dale Houston.

Yelenskiy, a hard-working member, added to his already unforgiving workload to make up for the dwindling staff that has had difficulty finding good help.

Butler undoubtedly gave a big fist pump when he received news that

Yelenskiy would begin overseeing the custodial work of his facility.

Butler also mentioned, "Mikhail has basically taken over our building, that used to have a seven person custodial staff, and for two weeks he did it all alone by himself. Every day he showed up, he had a positive attitude, and he just tried to do what he could do and so that is when we fell for him."

Dr. Keith Miller, an Orthwein Endowed Professor for Lifelong Learning in the Sciences, said of Yelenskiy: "Academic institutions require a team. Everyone should be working together: students, teachers, and staff. We count on Mikhail to help us keep the place clean, tidy, and ready for visitors. We also enjoy chatting with Mikhail when we encounter him in and around the Center. He is always cheerful, well-mannered, and eager to help."

Yelenskiy is a generous custodial man, with springy grey hair, who speaks with a clear and inviting Russian accent.

He said, "I am from Belarus. Well, it was part of Soviet Union when it was together, but then it independently became the Republic of Belarus."

He moved to the United States after the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl. "[It] was not too close but, about forty miles away. My daughters were five and eight years old, and my wife, of thirty nine years now [was there as well]," he said. "I miss my friends very much but hey... what can you do."

The Chernobyl disaster of 1986 discharged radiation from its blown nuclear power plant for 10 days, contaminating 77,220 square miles (larger than the state of Missouri), displaced more than 250,000 civilians and caused more than 4,000 estimated deaths (double than that of Hurricane Katrina). Yelenskiy and his family were nearly 20 miles away from the exclusion zone that still surrounds the reactor today. It is truly a miracle that they evacuated safely, away from a place which most people still cannot occupy to this day.

Thirty years after this hellish tragedy, Yelenskiy tidies UMSL's halls and stops by faculty's offices to warmly

Continued online at
thecurrent-online.com



ED Collabiat, where Yelenskiy works

LEAH JONES/THE CURRENT

Geary Gears Women's Basketball Team Up For Victory

LEAH JONES
FEATURES EDITOR

As the University of Missouri-St. Louis Men's Basketball team lost Assistant Coach Rob Holloway, the women's team gained Emily Geary as the new assistant coach at the beginning of this year. Though she has only been at UMSL for two months, Geary said that she is happy in her new position and holds high hopes for the rest of the semester.

"I'm grateful for the opportunity that I've been given by Coach Vaughn and our athletic director, Lori Flanagan. They're really such great people to work for and such a great department to work with," she said.

Head Coach Katie Vaughn expressed a similar enthusiasm for working with Geary and said, "I am elated to welcome Emily to the UMSL women's basketball program and look forward to working with her... She brings in a strong basketball background that will make an immediate impact on the program.

"Her knowledge of the game and desire to help young women achieve their goals both on and off the court is another attribute that makes her valuable, along with her drive and passion for this profession," Vaughn continued.

Geary hopes that their mutual enthusiasm and compatible goals will carry over to the team's performance on the court. "I think when your values align on the court, it really helps kind of keep that team. The team feels that. Everybody feels that. That's important when you're working with somebody so closely," she said.

Geary began her coaching career at Franklin College, a Division III school

just south of Indianapolis, in 2006. In 2008, she began coaching at the University of Detroit Mercy, a Division I school, where she remained for five seasons.

"We turned that program around," Geary said. "They had only won, I think six games, the year before I had gotten there and they went on in those five years to have two postseason tournament bids and we won a WBI (Women's Basketball Invitational) championship."

Geary coached with her husband, Mike Geary, for four out of the five years that she was at the University of Detroit Mercy. When he got a job working as an associate head coach for the Saint Louis University's Women's Basketball team, Geary said that they initially planned to live apart.

The distance proved to be a challenge though, and Geary took a position as the director of basketball operations/video operations for the Women's Basketball team at SLU.

While working at SLU, Geary, who graduated with her bachelor's degree in social work from the University of Northern Michigan in 2004, completed her master's degree in leadership and organizational development from SLU in 2016. She also had her first child, Cruz.

"So everything happened [at once] in those last three years when I was at SLU... I wanted to have a child. I wanted to get my master's. So I am really happy about that," Geary said.

Since her position at SLU did not include recruiting, she said that she was able to balance having a small child and completing her degree program.

The Women's Basketball team at SLU finished with a 26-8 overall record and reached the third round of the



Assistant Basketball Coach Emily Geary

COURTESY OF ATHLETICS

Women's National Invitation tournament while Geary was there.

Geary got her start in basketball at six years old when her parents moved into a new house that had a basketball court. By 11, Geary said that she was playing pick-up games with grown men on another nearby court.

"So that really helped me really become a good basketball player because I played with boys my whole life," Geary said. "My mom would drive by with her little minivan to make sure I was

okay, and I would be at the courts all the time."

She continued to play basketball through college and played professionally in Germany's top division until two injuries brought her into the coaching world at Franklin College.

As a coach, Geary said that she is demanding, but that she also thinks that it is important for players to have fun.

"I'm really intense... I'm very detailed with what I want done, but at the same time, I'm not going to be somebody that's going to be take myself too seriously and take the fun out of the game," Geary said.

"The main thing... with any coach is to bring out the players' strengths, and make sure they're playing to their highest ability and to really do that you have to coach really every player in a different way," she said.

Geary holds high hopes for her time at UMSL. "Coach Vaughn and I, we want to raise the standards this year. We want to have a championship team," Geary said.

Though Geary acknowledged the importance of championships, she also said, "I think that the biggest thing for me is making sure that the players that we bring in have a really good and positive experience and they walk away, one becoming better basketball players but also better people and they continue their love for the game, even after their time at UMSL."

To read more about Coach Geary, visit www.umsltritons.com/news/2016/7/12/geary-joins-womens-basketball-program-as-assistant-coach.aspx.

Weekly Sports Calendar

Friday, September 23

Women's Tennis
ITA Regionals
All Day
Away

Women's Soccer vs.
Rockhurst
5 p.m.
Home

Women's Volleyball vs.
Rockhurst
7 p.m.
Home

Men's Soccer vs.
Rockhurst
7:30 p.m.
Home

Saturday, September 24

Women's Tennis
ITA Regionals
All Day
Away

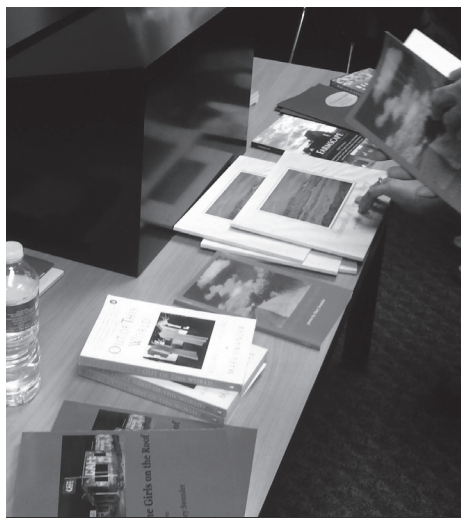
Women's Golf
GVSU Laker Invite
All Day
Away

Sunday, September 25

Women's Golf
GVSU Laker Invite
All Day
Away



Irish-American Writers Focus of Literary UMSL Event



From left to right: the authors' books on display in SSB 331; Mary Swander speaks; attendees come up for a better look of the speakers' works; David Gardiner tells the audience a story

DANIEL STRAWHUN/THE CURRENT

SARAH HAYES A&E EDITOR

The fourteenth series of the International Studies' programming kicked off on September 13 with "Irish American Voices: Stories and Verses," presented by Dr. Eamonn Wall, endowed professor in Irish Studies.

The event ran from 12:30 to 1:45 in room 331 of the Social Sciences & Business Building at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. Wall presented the two speakers, authors Mary Swander and David Gardiner, who are both Irish-American writers and poets.

The first speaker, David Gardiner, has written over 60 essays and articles, two books of poetry, and has also been published in the campus publication "Natural Bridge."

He is also a good friend of Wall, and gave the professor some gently humorous remarks before launching himself into his reading.

Gardiner spoke about his experiences as an Irish-American in Omaha, Nebraska. Poems such as "Chivalry of Crime" trace his family history from an ornate pocket watch to gunslinging

guerrilla groups in Missouri, while "Phoebe in Fourth Position" examines his daughter in front of an Edgar Degas painting.

He also spoke about how a court writer taught him that poetry can have a sense of humor and that, according to one of his professor's, poetry is "language at its most intense."

The second speaker, Swander, is the state poet of Iowa and a graduate of the MFA program at Iowa State University. She has published and edited volumes of prose and poetry, written one play, which has been performed in multiple cities, and has written several memoirs.

While Gardiner opened with admitting that his heritage is "suspect at best," there is no doubt about Swander's connection to Ireland and the people who crossed over the ocean to settle in America in the early 1900s.

Much of what Swander read from drew upon her Irish family history, from her family members being harassed by the KKK in Iowa to Swander finding her family cemetery on Omev Island, a small island off the coast of Connemara, Ireland (which in itself should give

Martin McDonagh fans a short pause).

Through a series of excerpts, she makes the particular island culture of Omev and the people who live around it come alive and feel more approachable for the majority American audience in attendance.

After the reading, Gardiner and Swander took questions from the audience. Most of them were about the craft of writing itself. One attendant asked how long after an event did they start writing about it.

Swander answered and said it depended, it could be right away, but often she needed the perspective of distance to write about an event properly.

Gardiner spoke about constantly journaling and going back to see what he wrote during a particular incident and whether or not there would be anything in that writing that could inspire something bigger. Sometimes, a random line could be the key to a larger idea.

"It has meaning," he said, referring to these random fragments of inspiration, "but you may not know what that meaning is."

The next Irish Studies event is on

September 30 at the Webster Groves Public Library. It will be a showcase of Irish-American writers and artists.

On campus, the next Irish Studies event will be on October 6 at 12:30 p.m. in SSB 331. Joseph Lennon of Villanova University will be giving a presentation on hunger strikes in Ireland.



Smurfit-Stone Professor Eamonn Wall
COURTESY OF UMSL DAILY

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The Current is now seeking graphic design students to fill two design positions for this semester.

Applications are available on our office, 388 Millennium Student Center, as well as our website, thecurrent-online.com.

Bring your completed app to our office or email it to thecurrentjobs@umsl.edu. To be considered, email your portfolio to thecurrentproductionstaff@gmail.com.

For more information, contact us at thecurrentjobs@umsl.edu or contact the production manager directly at thecurrentproductionstaff@gmail.com.

UMSL'S INDEPENDENT STUDENT NEWS

Social Science Building: The Unofficial Smoking Lounge

DANIEL STRAWHUN
OPINIONS EDITOR

It is hard to overlook the fact that the University of Missouri-St. Louis is a tobacco-free campus, given that the phrase is proudly plastered and placarded over nearly every vertical surface on campus, be it window, door, or wall. It seems if there is one crucial thing that visitors to UMSL should know by the time they leave, it is that absolutely no one was smoking, chewing, vaporizing, transdermally absorbing, or otherwise consuming any tobacco products whatsoever during the visit. Not a soul. Nobody. “No ifs ands or butts,” as the signs themselves remind.

But this is simply not the case, as anyone who has unwittingly sat outside the entrance to the Social Sciences & Business Building between the hours of 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. knows. There, UMSL smokers join in solidarity, gathering round a double-sided no-smoking sign in what looks like the world’s most casual protest—all, of course, with cigarettes in hand. The carcinogenic plumes these dissenters emit are vexing to passersby who, within a 10-minute walk to class, have already been told in at least five different places that this a tobacco-free campus. How utterly absurd then, to walk right into a cloud of such outright



Quad at UMSL next to SSB

Eric Wynen/THE CURRENT

contradiction!

But the rationale behind UMSL’s tobacco-freeness evinces an even larger, ideological contradiction which underlies the whole situation.

The no-smoking signs state that the UMSL campus is tobacco-free “to promote a healthier community,” which sounds noble enough at first, if a bit idealistic. But what does that phrase “a healthier community” actually mean, anyway? Surely someone could abstain from using tobacco products and yet still be unhealthy, no? To equate not using tobacco with healthy living would be downright silly, and admittedly, the signs do not do this. They do not say, for example, “tobacco-free. . .to promote a healthy community;” rather, they use the comparative adjective

“healthier,” which implies that while not using tobacco will generally improve health, there are still other factors that further contribute to a person’s overall wellness—one does not simply become healthy by not smoking, only healthier. So the question that logically arises from all this is “In what other ways are UMSL students unhealthy?”

The most obvious answer to this question is that many UMSL students are obese. I personally have seen students who cannot even walk down a normal desk aisle unimpeded by their own largeness; I have even had to physically move my desk in order to make more room for them. All anecdotal evidence aside, obesity is an undeniable problem in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) found in 2015 that 30 percent of adult Americans over the age of 20 were obese. N.B. the terminology used here—the study found that 30 percent of American adults were obese, which means that they had a Body Mass Index greater than 30. This percentage does not include, for instance, people who are simply overweight. In other words, 30 percent of adult Americans are at risk for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, osteoarthritis, gout, and sleep apnea, many of which are also negative effects of smoking tobacco. But as American obesity is on the rise, up more than 10 percent since 1997, smoking has been on the decline: only 15 percent of Americans over the age of 18 used smoking tobacco in 2015—exactly half the amount of those who were obese.

But despite these hard numbers, the powers that be at UMSL—and at universities across the country for that matter—have illogically decided to wage war against the statistically lesser evil by completely prohibiting tobacco use campus wide, all while doing little to nothing to address the obesity epidemic. UMSL’s tobacco-free policy was enacted Jan. 1 2012, at a time when the CDC

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SEMO to UMSL: A Transfer Student’s Perspective

BRIAN SHERRILL
STAFF WRITER

“UMSL sucks” was what I thought while touring the campus three years ago. As a freshman, I went to Mineral Area College, a tiny community college in Park Hills Missouri, and I did well. I woke up for my freshmen eight a.m. classes, aced my Trig final, wrote my Eng Comp 101 research paper, and made my Spanish flashcards.

However, something was missing. I was not getting the college experience Hollywood had promised me. I was not getting the American Pie epitome of partydom. When it came time to transfer, I had two choices: return home to attend Southeast Missouri State University, where I knew I could slide right into college party lifestyle, or I could transfer to University of Missouri-St. Louis in a city where I knew not a soul.

I chose SEMO because, well, “UMSL sucks.” I thought, “UMSL would be less fun.”

I moved back home, transferred to SEMO, joined a party fraternity, and drank too much beer, because, as Abby N. Virio put it nicely in last week’s publication, “everybody was doing it.” And yes, students at SEMO, more often than not, in my opinion are coasting on their studies, and ardent about their drinking.

After losing a year and two GPA points, I left the Redneck Stifler Clones’

Frat and took a break from classes to collect my thoughts and figure out what I really wanted out of life. I even began to journal again.

Sidenote: Are you that 4.0 honor student with a healthy dose of self-esteem, who is not fazed by what the cool kids are doing, who is involved in clubs, and is saying, “well college is what you make of it and you’re just a idiot with a drinking problem . . . loser”? If you answered yes to all of these questions then good, smarty-pants, you are completely right. Now stop reading this because it is not for you.

This is for those freshmen and sophomore idiots like my past self that are thinking, “man, UMSL really is boring,” and is having a hard time making friends within a student body that generally does not socialize as much as other non-commuter colleges. If you are thinking about transferring to SEMO for the party scene and the hot people, then keep reading.

First off, yes the parties were fun, for a while. Then you start to see the same old drunkards that can not remember your name from the last party they saw you at but still spend 10 minutes stumbling over trying to guess it. You begin to make friends that have nowhere near the same interests as you, or hardly any interests at all, other than in themselves. You will never have those conversations about math, literature, art, revolutions, history, or anything worth talking about.

“You are a combination of the five closest people around you,” is what someone said somewhere, and I am telling you to chose those five carefully.

And Baby Einstein/amateur D.A.R.E. officer, yes, you are right again, “just say no” is the right thing to do. But like I said earlier, if you are that kid having a hard time making friends then it is hard not to do “what everybody else is doing.”

My friend Bria McGhee, also a transfer here from SEMO says, “The students [there] just wanted to party. I wanted to meet people that could study and then party later. They had that mindset and I just couldn’t do that.”

The reason why SEMO students do not fail is simple. It is because their professors do not care. SEMO has big attractions, like the college town atmosphere, Greek life, athletics, and low costs, that get them their enrollment numbers.

If SEMO professors actually challenged their students, then the university’s retention ratings would go down the tube. Consequently, students never find their true interests. They become wanderers, depressed and searching for a reason to enjoy waking up early.

It is depressing, not knowing what you enjoy, not being pushed intellectually. Is it not? Are those long, idling hours not the ones that you regret the most?

UMSL, however, has professors that actually motivate, spark ambition, and create interest within their students’ minds. UMSL students wake up eagerly to continue that short story they were working on the night before, continue the Calculus homework, continue analyzing that psychological theory.

Bria also said, “I think the classes at UMSL are more in depth. I feel like the

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Counseling Services Offers Training To Prevent Suicide

TRAVONTE HARRIS
STAFF WRITER

September 2016 is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. In honor of the month, The Current interviewed Dr. Laura Holt, Psychologist/Outreach Coordinator for Health, Wellness, and Counseling Services at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, about their new Ask, Listen, Refer training.

The Current (TC): What is the suicide prevention giveaway?

Dr. Laura Holt: UMSL Counseling Services has partnered with the Triton Health Educators for our #JustAsk campaign, which is designed to encourage UMSL students to just ask a friend or loved one if they're concerned about their suicide risk. 43% of UMSL students have thought about killing themselves, and most students go to their friends first for help. So we can save lives by empowering students to spot the signs of suicide risk and talk to their friends about their concerns. We are offering a free #JustAsk t-shirt to anyone who completes the Ask, Listen, Refer training. The Ask, Listen, Refer training (www.asklistenrefer.org/umsl) is a free 20-minute training that teaches the risk factors and warning signs for suicide risk, and does a great job of demonstrating how a conversation expressing concern for a friend can go. I often hear people say they're afraid to ask someone if they're thinking about killing themselves because they're afraid that will give them the idea, but in reality the opposite is true: talking about suicidal thoughts actually REDUCES risk. You're giving someone a tremendous gift when you offer to walk with them through their hardest times, and it's often not as difficult as you think. So #JustAsk!

TC: What impact will it have on the college?

Holt: We're already seeing the #JustAsk t-shirts around campus, which is tremendous because every person wearing them is taking a stand against the stigma surrounding suicide. Even



The #JustAsk t-shirt from Counseling Services

COURTESY OF LAURA HOLT

more exciting, with each person that completes the Ask, Listen, Refer training, that's one more person on campus who knows what to look for and how to talk about suicide. It's our hope that every student will complete the training, rock the shirt, and save lives!

TC: What impact will it have on students?

Holt: Suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students. Suicide has touched many, many lives on campus but it's still something that's hard to talk about because of the stigma surrounding it. The way UMSL is embracing the #JustAsk campaign is a huge strike back against that stigma, and a message of support and encouragement to students who are struggling with thoughts of killing themselves and may feel very alone. We would love to never lose another Triton to suicide, that's our hope for the impact of this campaign.

TC: Who is most at risk for committing suicide?

Holt: People who are most at risk for suicide may perceive themselves to be in a hopeless situation; they may have just experienced a loss of a relationship, failed a class, or found themselves in financial difficulties. They may struggle with substance abuse, which can contribute to that trapped feeling. Loneliness and social isolation is a risk factor because people who are

struggling may isolate themselves, and loneliness can increase their sense of hopelessness and make them feel like no one cares about their pain. If a person has attempted suicide in the past or has a family history of suicide, that increases their risk, as does mental illness, particularly depression. In 2014, the highest U.S. suicide rate was among white people and the second highest rate was among American Indians and native Alaskans. Women are more likely than men to attempt suicide, but men die by suicide nearly four times more often than women. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual young people are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers, while 41 percent of transgender people have attempted suicide.

TC: What can be done to prevent it?

Holt: We can talk about it! Part of what makes suicide so deadly is that sense of isolation, so watching for warning signs in our friends and family and having the conversation about it helps fight that hopelessness that comes with feeling so alone. A man named Ken Hines is one of only thirty-six people to have ever survived jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge, and now he travels around the world talking about his experience and teaching suicide prevention skills. He says he walked around the whole day before he tried to

kill himself hoping someone would ask him if he was all right, because he did not want to die but he did not know what else to do. No one talked to him that day or for the entire 40 minutes he stood on the bridge, which he took as a sign that no one cared, so he jumped: for want of someone to ask him if he was all right, to show him that he mattered and help him figure out a different plan. The Ask, Listen, Refer training is a great way to learn how to do that.

TC: If a student knows someone at risk for committing suicide what can they do to help?

Holt: If someone you know is talking about feeling hopeless or about killing themselves, has withdrawn from their loved ones, or is talking at all about wanting to die or giving up, just ask them if they are thinking about killing themselves. It's important to trust your instincts; you know your friend, and if their behavior has changed enough to make you worry, especially if they're displaying the risk signs, it's important to ask straight-forwardly. The worst thing that might happen is a brief bit of awkwardness, but chances are that person will feel validated that you're taking their pain seriously and care enough about them to talk about hard stuff. If they do say they're having thoughts of killing themselves, listen! It can be painful to hear that someone you care about is feeling suicidal, but the most loving thing you can do is create space for them to talk about how they feel. That action alone will reduce their suicide risk. But this is also not a secret you should keep, it's important to refer them to resources to keep them safe. Call us at 314-516-5711 or walk them over to our office in MSC 131; we're open Monday - Friday 8-5 for crisis walk-ins but our phones are answered 24/7 by trained clinicians. We can help them make a plan to keep themselves safe. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-8255 (TALK)) and sit with your friend while they talk on speaker phone. Help them text the

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