UEHLING AT MIZZOU:

Barbara Uehling has been in office about 100 days. That's one of the traditional times to stop and take a look at a new administration. First of all, make no mistake about it: The new chancellor is in charge. The fact that the leader of the Columbia Campus is a woman already is fading into the background. It isn't uncommon for members of her staff to call her "Sir."

Much beyond that, Barbara Uehling has proved to be a good listener in her first three months at Mizzou. She believes that is one of the best ways she can get a handle on the job, one of the best means to help her set priorities. "I've done a great deal of listening to what people think the issues are," she says, "and I've tried to identify the people who will know something about them. I try to listen to more than one side of a particular issue. Obviously, some very important people for me are the immediate administrators with whom I work at the University, and so I've spent a lot of time getting to

THE FIRST 100 DAYS

By Steve Shinn

know them and how they feel about things, what the issues are and what their concerns are."

But Uehling also has met with students and faculty and department heads. She has hosted wine-and-cheese receptions in her home on Campus for members of middle management. She met with the deans in an intensive retreat at the Lake of the Ozarks. She has weekly conferences with the media. She broke bread with 500 folks at the annual Town-and-Country dinner sponsored by the Columbia Chamber of Commerce at the Craig McBride farm near Harrisburg. She has traveled the state speaking to various civic groups. And Barbara Uehling has met with alumni, literally hundreds of them. She has participated in executive committee meetings of both the Alumni Association and the Development Fund. She moved from table to table visiting with most of the 750 persons who attended the Missouri alumni rally at Notre Dame. She's been to meetings in Cole, Carroll, and Greene counties, and, of course,

to St. Louis and Kansas City. It's fair to say that the alumni have liked her. They have found her interested and interesting, receptive and articulate, intelligent and warm. The first impression has been good.

Back on Campus, the adjective, "warm," isn't always used. Some have termed Uehling courteous, but cool. Of course, for a male the terms might be pleasant, but businesslike. Everyone agrees that she works hard herself and demands performance from those who work around her. Everyone agrees that she seems to be a quick study — and decisive in tackling problems.

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What has Uehling found in all this listening and study? "The University of Missouri-Columbia is an even better place than I thought it was, and I thought very highly of it before I came."

Her initial feeling about Mizzou came about largely because of her visits with the search committee, the group screening the applicants for chancellor. "That search committee was the best I've ever known," says Uehling. "The interviews were handled so well and with such dignity. I didn't think I was going to be interested in moving. I'd only been at Oklahoma [as provost] two years and certainly wasn't out seeking jobs. But someone told me that Missouri was a place with good potential and that I really ought to look at it; so I agreed to come and talk with the committee. I came away from that first day with a sense that the faculty members were ready to do some new and different things, that they had some feeling of their own quality. I found a kind of excitement. I think I got a good picture."

Uehling cites her on-site visits to various departments as reinforcing this view. "By Friday afternoon, I'm usually tired — as you can imagine — but one particular Friday night I went home just ecstatic, because I had visited the Medical Center on Thursday and the Ag School the next day. At the hospital I had seen things like facilities for open-heart surgery. I'd seen the Burn Center, where patients are getting a great deal of help. I'd seen the Rusk Rehabilitation Center, which is a very fine unit that involves every facet of what we're about: teaching, research and service.

"In agriculture, I saw some research by Mike Chippendale. He was doing surgery on insects. And not only did he have a great lab, but it was so well organized. There was a kind of vitality about him. He's working on something that will affect the dormancy stage of insects as a means of insect control. It is a program that will benefit all of us. And that's just one example in agriculture.

"I've met with three external advisory committees so far: Agronomy, Engineering, and B & PA. For the most part, they're made up of alumni, but these people are involved in their professions also, and are very highly placed in them. They exhibit an enthusiasm, a dedication, a willingness to work, and a pride in the University that I find very gratifying."

The point that Uehling makes is that Mizzou is better than its reputation, which she describes as "a good Big Eight institution, not at the top, maybe, but near the top." And a "good" Big Eight university is generally perceived to be a notch or two below a "good" Big Ten university. She wants to change that image.

But besides the many strengths, Uehling also found what she calls, "opportunities." That's probably a euphemism for some things she didn't like, things that can be improved.

"I'm very interested in planning and looking to the future in a positive sense. I think we've got to look ahead to some institutional questions. How do we free resources for faculty and staff development, and what should those programs be like? Should we have policies that enable us to set aside some of our resources for physical plant maintenance? Should we construct new buildings or renovate the ones we have? What should an undergraduate curriculum look like in 1985 or 1990? What's the role of the professional school in the future? Of graduate education? Are there new constituencies of students we should be thinking about? I think what we're going to come up with as much as anything is a clear understanding of the things that we value. And from that we can deduce what we should be about in the future."

Uehling already has announced that she will appoint two new planning groups: an Institutional Futures Committee and an Academic Futures Committee. She hopes to get "a good planning effort really under way" this year. And she hopes to have her administrative reorganization accomplished by the end of the year, "if not people in place, at least the structure completed." Internal organization is not a topic that particularly interests alumni, perhaps, but it is the subject of considerable conversation —

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and some nervousness — on Campus. "Reorganization in itself is not a goal," Uehling says. "It's a vehicle to accomplish our institutional and academic goals."

Uehling herself can be expected to take a direct role in the financial aspects of the Campus. Her background indicates it, and the present cost-squeeze situation in which higher education finds itself dictates that chief administrative officers make budget a primary priority. Cost effectiveness is a phrase Uehling often uses.

She took an unpopular position with student groups when she came out in favor of the central administration's proposal that student fees be increased five percent next year to help meet increased funding requirements.

"I think that one of the most reasonable ways to think about student fees is in terms of what's a fair share of the total education cost for students to bear. It's a very difficult question because most of us in education would like to make fees as low as possible — I know I would. At one time there was a Carnegie Commission report that suggested that students should pay up to a third of the total cost. Most of us think a third is too high, and the new fee proposal would not mean that our students would be paying a third of the cost. What we are trying to do is to establish the students' equitable share of the cost of their education. I think the fee proposal addressed that somewhat."

Barbara Uehling received an honorary membership in the Mizzou Alumni Association at the fall meeting of its Board of Directors.

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To meet the 1979-80 budget requirements, the University will ask the General Assembly for an increase in state funding to go with the student fee hike. The rest of the total budget increase will be made up from internal reallocations, as has been true for the past several years.

Reallocation simply means that one area is cut back, and the resulting savings are transferred to another area. Money is transferred from one hand to the other. Heretofore, reallocations on the Columbia Campus worked like this: More money is needed for fuel and faculty salaries, for example. Each department was cut back across-the-board — say five percent each — to provide the funds.

Uehling does not favor the across-the-board reallocation approach. "I've made some reallocations in the past myself. I think there has to be a differential reallocation. We need to look at what programs are of most excellent quality, the programs in which we want to continue a leadership role. We ought to take pride in our J-School, for example, and there are other excellent programs that we should maintain. There are other programs which are, let us say, less meaty. And so we will have to make some differentials. We also will want to determine how well we compare in our fundings with peer-group institutions. If we are saying that the J-School is a great place, then how well are we to fund it relative to the funding of j-schools at other institutions?"

As alumni well know, there's another place where funds can be acquired: the private sector. And Uehling intends to take an out-front role in development, to involve herself closely with alumni. "We need the top-level support we can get from outside," she says.

All the emphasis on budget is important, of course, only as it relates to the University's mission.

"I want to see our Campus be one in which the quality that is already here is widely recognized and understood — and one in which greater quality is produced. That's easy to say, because quality is a hard thing to identify, but I think we can do it. I think we can see evidence of quality in the research by our faculty members, the national recognition they are receiving, their impact on our students. We can see the quality of our graduates. When our alumni come back to Campus, when I see what they have become, I know that attests to the quality of this University. □