

# Take a Chair

MU'S ENDOWED CHAIRS AND NAMED PROFESSORS BUILD A BETTER UNIVERSITY.

STORY BY KATHLEEN STRAND

PHOTOS BY ROB HILL

**T**HIS IS A WATERSHED MOMENT IN the history of the University," says Jack Burns, vice provost for research. Between retirements and newly created positions, almost one-fourth (322) of the tenured and tenure-track faculty will be new faces during the next five to seven years. "With the number of new faculty—an amount unseen in the past half century—and an unprecedented

increase in federal research funding, this is truly a boom time," he says. MU's new academicians will shape its academic landscape for decades.

That means a lot of offices need to be filled, and two demographic trends are making the competition for occupants fierce. First, approximately 10,000 faculty positions will open at North America's research universities during

the next decade, due in part to a new University of California campus and to a Canadian initiative to bolster its research output. Second, many faculty members are baby boomers, which means they are nearing retirement. Nearly one-third of America's full-time professors are age 55 or older.

Hiring the best candidates has rarely had such high stakes. "A talented faculty



Robert Jerry II



Antonie Stam



James Jones

is the heart and soul of any university," says Associate Provost Lori Franz. "It drives the quality of teaching and research, leads to the most fertile environment for ideas, good science, theory and discovery, and thus leads to the recruitment of the best students and the best faculty." This is no time to be shopping for bargains.

One key to attracting top talent is through endowed chairs and professorships: Private gifts of \$500,000 for a professorship and \$1.1 million for a chair—

sometimes matched with state money—provide competitive salaries and research support for professors. In turn, these top scholars give back to students and the state by offering high standards of teaching, research and service. Of MU's 40 endowed chairs or named professorships, 17 are currently filled. The search is on to fill the others. Here's a look at five of this crop of academic talent at MU, chosen to represent a cross section of the University's schools and colleges.

*Robert Jerry II's law professorship is named for the Honorable Floyd R. Gibson, AB '31, JD '33, a senior judge for the Eighth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Kansas City, Mo.*

*Antonie Stam is the first to hold the Leggett & Platt Missouri Distinguished Professorship of Information Systems. The professorship was created specifically to bring an MIS and decision-science scholar to the College of Business.*

*James Jones holds both the Hugh E. Stephenson Jr., MD Missouri Chair of surgery and the W. Alton Jones Distinguished Professorship. The chair is named in honor of Curator Hugh E. Stephenson, Jr., AB '43, BS Med '43, professor emeritus of surgery. The professorship is named for W. Alton Jones, a philanthropist and friend of the late John R. Kuhn, BS Med '28.*

*Geneva Overholser's chair in public affairs journalism was established by Edgar A. McLaughlin, BJ '31, to honor his mentor, Curtis B. Hurley, a small-town Arkansas newspaper publisher and MU alumnus.*

*Wilma King is the first Arverh E. Strickland Distinguished Missouri Professor in African-American History and Culture, which is named after MU's first full-time African-American faculty member who taught from 1969 to 1995.*



**Geneva Overholser**



**Wilma King**

## ROBERT JERRY II

Floyd R. Gibson Missouri Endowed  
Professorship of Law  
School of Law



Robert Jerry II is at the center of a legal and medical maelstrom.

As scientists with the Human Genome Project decode DNA and RNA strands into usable genetic information, Jerry ponders its ramifications on insurance law and on the millions of people who pay the premiums. Genetic information enables scientists to identify an individual's predisposition for disease, which helps those individuals and their doctors make better decisions about their health care. Although it could be a medical miracle, consumer advocates worry about what insurers might do with that information.

Insurance companies price their coverage based upon projected risk—the likelihood that an individual will require medical care, be disabled by illness or even die. If an insurance company had access to that individual's genetic profile, it would have a better idea of the risk and how much it should charge for coverage. Insurance companies call it good business. Watchdogs call it genetic discrimination.

The concern about discrimination is so great that many states have enacted statutes limiting health insurers' use of genetic information. Although life and disability insurers have objected, no

insurer is using genetic tests to sort good and bad risks, Jerry says. He has confirmed this with thorough searches of Congressional testimony, insurance reports, and legal and business literature. Why?

Expense, for starters—a full battery of genetic tests runs thousands of dollars. But genetic information does not come just from genetic tests, Jerry says. Insurers already have access to genetic information in the form of family histories and tests of urine and blood. These sources are second best, but they're cheap, widely available, legal and often used by insurers. Jerry says that if legislators are concerned about genetic discrimination, they ought to be looking at these "second-best" sources, which simply escape the reach of the statutes. In time, Jerry says, the costs of genetic tests will come down far enough that health insurance companies may start clamoring for access to that mother lode of information.

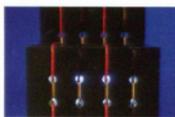
Meanwhile, Jerry will continue reviewing the laws and making public policy recommendations to federal and state agencies.

*Upright, authoritative and enduring, the law chair, pictured with Robert Jerry II, was designed by Laura Smith of Jefferson City, Mo. See sidebar at right for the evolution of Smith's design.*

*The "motherboard" information systems chair, shown with Antonie Stam, was designed by Teresa Ball of Springfield, Mo.*

## ANTONIE STAM

Leggett & Platt Missouri Distinguished  
Professorship of Information Systems  
College of Business



It's a paradox of modern business and government: Data are every-

where, yet sound decisions are scarce. For instance, how do government officials decide how much water to release from a dam? It's a task that's so complex, so full of variables—including rainfall forecasts, current water reserves, the need for hydroelectric power and the impact on fisheries and the environment—that decision-makers often consult management information systems (MIS) specialists to help them understand the range of possibilities.

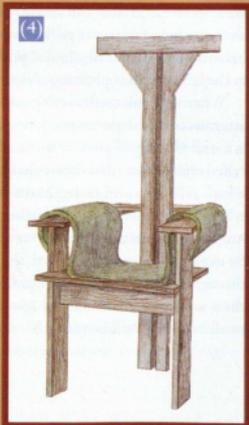
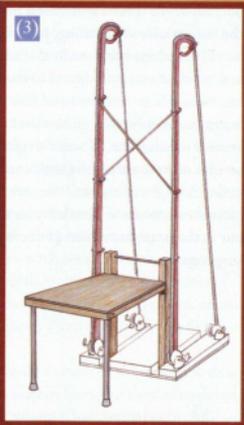
As a researcher with IIASA, an international think tank near Vienna, Austria, Antonie Stam developed computer models to help Zambian government officials determine the amount of water to release from a dam on the Zambezi River, which flows through Zambia and Mozambique in southern Africa. His decision-support models played out several scenarios depicting the effects of varying amounts of water released.

*The chairs in this story are the culmination of a three-week project in the design studio course of Daniel Naegele, assistant professor of environmental design. His students, 18 aspiring architects and interior designers, start by choosing well-known side chairs and exploring their design and size while making technical drawings of all sides. "The chair is one of the constants of most interiors," Naegele says, "so students need to know the dimensions in detail." Next, students draw a perspective (1) of their selected chair to use as a template for future designs. They then lay*

Stam says the officials "got a better idea of the pros and cons and the trade-offs," and ultimately had enough information to make better decisions about the dam's operation.

Many corporations are in the same fix as the Zambian government. In business, knowledge gleaned from raw information creates a competitive advantage. MIS professionals design computer systems that turn data into knowledge, which yields usable strategic, operational and tactical information. Basically, they help managers make decisions.

That adds value to a company, Stam says, which is why MIS programs generally are housed in business schools, and computer science programs are not. Although MU is one of the few large, public institutions that's only beginning to build an MIS program, the University has hired a distinguished scholar to do the job. Last fall, MU recruited Stam from the University of Georgia's highly ranked MIS department. Stam's plan is to first bolster the course offerings in the MBA program, with classes such as MIS, E-Commerce and Decision Support Systems. Then, with the anticipated addition of new faculty members, the MIS offerings will expand to reach undergraduate students as well.



DRAWINGS BY LUCAS SMITH

tracing paper over this perspective and sketch ideas for entirely new chairs based on the parameters of each assignment. For instance, they recast the chair in a different material, whose characteristics force students to adapt their designs. Students then create either an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic version (2) of the chair. That's all about image, Naegele says, in contrast to the next assignment, the "nomadic" chair (3), which requires structural ingenuity. Designing the nomadic chair entails the practical task of imagining an object that's easy to move because it's either

collapsible, foldable or deflatable. The final morph is a full-size chair of plywood. Usually, the young designers construct this in the style of a famous artist, which Naegele says helps them see the world differently. But, in order to illustrate this article, last fall's class produced chairs representing the academic disciplines of the featured faculty members (4). All in all, Naegele says, the project helps students limber up their imaginations and gives them experience with strategies that work in architecture as well as interior design.—Dale Smith

## JAMES JONES

Hugh E. Stephenson Jr., MD, Missouri Chair of Surgery and W. Alton Jones Distinguished Professorship, School of Medicine



To lead MU's Department of Surgery to national prominence, James Jones

performs a balancing act worthy of a tightrope walker. Surgeon, researcher, administrator, scholar, teacher and visionary—he moves among roles with aplomb.

Jones strives to create an environment in which faculty members can achieve their potential, whether that prompts him to add lab space, encourage collaboration with basic scientists, assist in grant writing or spend time as a mentor. Those elements help foster star performers who have the ability to solve clinical problems in the lab or in the operating room.

When it comes to attracting national attention to his department, Jones himself is a star. He helped pioneer a procedure called transmyocardial revascularization, which relieves debilitating heart pain where other treatments have failed. Angina occurs in hearts receiving too little oxygen. Jones gains access to the heart through a small incision in the patient's chest and uses a laser to make 15 to 30 small holes—1 millimeter each—in the

left ventricle. Studies show that the holes encourage the growth of small blood vessels, which lead to less pain and a better quality of life.

Jones also studies medical ethics. Together with co-editors Laurence B. McCullough and Brody Baruch, Jones published *Surgical Ethics*, the first text on this topic. The book examines issues particular to surgeons, such as operating on patients who are family members, friends or colleagues.

As chair of the Department of Surgery and University Hospital's surgeon-in-chief, Jones says that his administrative and clinical duties demand the greatest portion of his time. He stresses, however, the importance of teaching. Jones leads weekly sessions with medical students and residents on rounds and in the operating room. He questions them, like Socrates, in ways that guide them toward correct conclusions. "I want to give them an idea of how surgeons think and how to make the right decisions," he says. "The ultimate measure of worth for an academic is the next generation of doctors and surgeons."

*The "hypodermic" chair of surgery, pictured with James Jones, was designed by Bo-Ram Lee of Seoul, South Korea.*

*An abstraction of a rolled-up newspaper, the journalism chair, shown with Geneva Overholser, was designed by Jannette Beamon of Austin, Texas.*

*Wilma King poses with a history and black studies chair designed by Carrie Crozier of Grain Valley, Mo. The decreasing frequency of slots from bottom to top represents diminishing gulfs that African Americans must cross to be accepted in American society.*

## GENEVA OVERHOLSER

Curtis B. Hurley Endowed Missouri Chair in Public Affairs Journalism School of Journalism



Geneva Overholser, who last fall joined the J-School's Washington

Program, has spent her 30-year career reporting and editing for some of the country's top newspapers, including *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Her career-defining experience came soon after she took the helm as editor of the *Des Moines Register* in 1988:

A former colleague at the *Times* was writing a story about a recent Florida State Supreme Court ruling that protected newspapers' right to print names of rape victims, and he called Overholser for her comment. At the time, few media named rape victims because it seemed to victimize them twice. "I worried that our *not* naming rape victims—which actually is a journalistic aberration for adult victims of crime—might contribute to the continued, stigmatizing message to them: 'You've got to hide; you can't be named.'"

Overholser then wrote an editorial on the subject, which was published simultaneously in the *Times* and the *Register*. A few weeks later, she received a phone call from Nancy Ziegenmeyer of Grinnell, Iowa. Ziegenmeyer was a recent rape victim, and, prompted by the editorial, she wanted the newspaper to tell her story.

Overholser gave reporter Jane Schorer the assignment: Write a human look at what Ziegenmeyer had gone through, not as an anonymous victim, but as a woman confronting her experience. Schorer's five-part series, "It Couldn't Happen to Me: One Woman's Story," is an unflinching and detailed description of the rape and its aftermath. Overholser oversaw the editing, even electronically peering over the shoulder of a well-intentioned copy editor who changed some of the story's unpleasant details to

## WILMA KING

Arvath Strickland Distinguished Missouri Professorship in African-American History and Culture, College of Arts and Science

euphemistic expressions. She asked him to restore the details. "Although the top editor isn't usually involved at this level," she says, "this was a story close to my interests." Overholser expected that some readers would be offended by the stories, so, she also wrote and printed a letter explaining why she felt the story needed to include details of the rape, and why it was important for the paper to meet Ziegenmeyer's honesty with its own forthrightness.

Her concerns turned out to be unfounded. "The readers were just gripped by it," Overholser says. "Some were even calling us to ask, 'Can you tell me what happens next?' People got it; they understood that we do tend to put 'rape' in a dark corner and not talk about it."

After the series ran, it began to attract national attention, including book and movie proposals, talk show requests, and a cover piece in the Sunday edition of the *Times*. In 1991, the *Register* won the Pulitzer Gold Medal for Public Service to recognize the efforts of the entire newspaper. "One significant result is that after the series, the issue of naming rape victims and rape itself came to the national forefront," she says. "We contributed to bringing it out in the open."

Overholser says that she's proud of the series and of her part in it. "A top editor is the arbiter, in the end," she says. "That person definitely makes the decisions about what kind of paper he or she is editing. You can be careful, you can be risk-taking, you can be a combination of the two. There's no question that the editor is going to put a very personal imprint on the paper."



The annals of American history have well documented the rise and fall of presidents, generals, business tycoons and religious leaders, says Wilma King, but they are not the whole story. King is part of the contemporary movement that is reshaping the way history is taught.

"We're talking about including average, ordinary people in history, not to the exclusion of well-known people, but looking at everyone."

King's research has examined the lives of children born into slavery. She documented their experiences in *Stolen Childhood: Youth in Bondage in Nineteenth-Century America*, for which she received the Outstanding Book Award from the National College of Black Political Scientists. "In 1860, more than 50 percent of the people who were enslaved were less than 20 years old," she says. Using historical documents and data from Works Progress Administration interviews with former slaves, King pieced together children's experiences of work, play, education, socialization, resistance to slavery and the transition to freedom.

Childhood as most of us know it is dramatically absent from the lives of enslaved children, whom King compares to children growing up during wartime. Neither group can protect itself from intense suffering. "They didn't live amid actual bombardments or fear of going to concentration camps," she writes, "but their experiences with separations, terror, misery and despair reduced them to children without a childhood."

From an early age, they were sent to work with their parents or to plantation-run nurseries. Owners dictated the type and duration of work. At Monticello, Thomas Jefferson organized the work of his slaves by sex and age: Children up to 10 years of age served as care givers or baby sitters; boys aged 10 to 16 made nails; girls aged 10 to 16 spun thread; and everyone above age 16 worked in the fields or learned a trade. As children moved into the work place, they experienced dangers, such as punishments from overseers and owners, and separations from family through sales or hiring out.

With all this, children of slavery found ways to express their youthful exuberance. After work, games like "hide the switch," in which children tried to evade a player with a switch, may have helped them cope with the fear of whippings, though violent games are a part of many societies. Other games, like "all hid," similar to hide-and-seek, informally taught them to count.

King's book charted new territory: It was the first monograph about the daily lives of children in slavery. "What I've done with my research is very much in line with my interest in filling voids," King says. "It brings attention to a sizeable population that has been understudied." ❁