

# MIZZOU

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## Around the Columns

### Studying a broad topic

America is facing a big problem, says Chris Hardin. A professor in the Department of Medical Pharmacology and Physiology since 1993, Hardin is the new chair of the department of nutritional sciences in the College of Human Environmental Sciences.

His plan for building the program to national prominence includes involving departments from across campus to tackle what he calls the biggest health crisis facing the United States today.

“Obesity is a broad topic — pardon the pun,” says Hardin, who is recruiting researchers from across campus to study obesity “from pipette to patient to population to policy.”

On one level, Hardin says, obesity is a simple problem — lack of activity plus hyper-caloric food equals overweight people. The more difficult question: Why are obesity rates soaring? Because obesity is tied to genetic predisposition, stress, labor-saving conveniences, psychology and economics, Hardin is partnering with researchers in agriculture, comparative and clinical medicine, public policy and journalism to seek answers.

“Nobody else has all that,” he says. “MU is the only entity in the state and one of the few in the nation able to take this multidisciplinary approach.”






As the new chair of the nutritional sciences department, Chris Hardin wants to tackle the obesity epidemic. Photo by Nicholas Benner

Hardin says MU’s extension function is one key to bringing science from the lab to “the single mom in Auxvasse and the family in the Bootheel.” It doesn’t do any good, he says, to conduct research without educating citizens to make better choices. “You need a coordinated effort for the whole landscape to change,” he says. “Then you can have an effect.”

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