

Mizzou Weekly

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Business school gets moving with million-step fitness challenge



TEAM EFFORT Jada Reynolds, Doug Tarwater, Michelle Vollrath and Shahn Hogan take a turn on Carnahan Quadrangle last week as part of a 1 million-step fitness challenge in the Trulaske School of Business. The friendly competition involves faculty, staff and students. Rob Hill photo

WELLNESS

Competition draws 68 faculty, staff and students

Employees and doctoral students in the Trulaske College of Business are committed to living healthier lifestyles in 2011. But along with counting calories, they're counting steps.

Last fall, Jada Reynolds, Daniel Turban and Shahn Hogan helped organize a six-month challenge to employees to log 1 million steps through the Million Step Pedometer Program, sponsored by Healthy For Life, the T.E. Atkins University of Missouri Wellness Program.

The friendly competition began Nov. 1 and attracted 68 faculty, staff and doctoral candidates, who formed 10 teams with names such as "We Got Sole," "Hot Trotters," "Accountants on the Run," "Walkabouts," and "Marketing Millionaire Marathoners."

Hogan, a programmer analyst specialist in the college, designed a web page that allows members to record their steps and follow each team's progress toward its goal.

Three months into the challenge, the Management PhD's team is ahead, meeting 61 percent of its 6 million-step goal. The Marketing Millionaire Marathoners are at 48.9 percent of its 12 million-step goal.

“This is not all about being the best or who comes in first,” Hogan says, “but it is about being healthier.”

Reynolds and Turban are the challenge’s cheerleaders. Turban sent recruitment e-mails to everyone in the college, while Reynolds was responsible for collecting the \$15 fee for the pedometers, distributing the devices and registering participants in the program.

One incentive to sticking with the challenge is that participants who reach the 1 million-step level are reimbursed for the cost of the pedometer. They also become eligible to win a gift basket to be awarded in May.

Reynolds says she was surprised by the number of business school faculty, staff and students who accepted the challenge.

“We did it to promote wellness in the college and thought six months was long enough to encourage our employees and students to participate in the challenge and continue to exercise regularly,” she says. “Having the teams made it more fun for people, especially for the students who are on teams with faculty and staff. This gives them a chance to build friendships and get to know others in the college.”

Experts agree that you should get 30 minutes of moderate-level physical activity several times a week, and walking is one of the easiest and most popular ways to keep fit.

“Anything that gets you walking with your colleagues or spouse after work is all good,” says Turban, who racks up a few thousand steps on campus by walking on breaks, taking the stairs instead of using elevators and parking farther from Cornell Hall. “When I watch TV at home, I usually dance during the commercials or use my elliptical machine.

“The key thing,” he continued, “is we are just trying to have fun.”

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MU's student advising corps is making college a reality for Missourians

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

College-going rates have increased at 11 high schools

Professional guidance counselors are an endangered species in the United States. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, there is one guidance counselor for every 488 high school students. That means the typical student can expect to spend about 20 minutes a year with a guidance counselor — not nearly enough time for most students as they consider one of the most important decisions of their lives.

Filling that need is where the Missouri College Advising Corps comes in. Now in its third year, MCAC puts recent MU graduates into 11 high schools and three community colleges across Missouri. The advisers are there for one thing, said Beth Tankersley-Bankhead, executive director of the program at MU: "100 percent of their time is devoted to getting students to go to college."

Nearly 23,000 students were advised, in group and one-on-one sessions, in the first two years of the program. This year, advisers are on track to hold more than 30,000 sessions, helping students with enrollment and financial aid applications, as well as ACT test preparation. Advisers also conduct group financial aid and general information sessions for families. The program has secured some \$2.7 million in scholarship aid for Missouri high school students going to college.

All of the high schools in the program have seen an increase in college-going graduates. After two years with MCAC advisers, students from Van Horn High School who went on to college increased 12.1 percent. At Salem High School, in rural Missouri, the increase was 8.9 percent after one year. Other schools, in both rural and urban settings, saw increases in college-going students of 1 percent to 6 percent.

Using a "near-peer" model, MCAC advisers assist low-income, first generation and underrepresented minorities in finding their way to college. Of the students who receive MCAC services, 80 percent are ethnic minorities, 69 percent are first-generation college students and 73 percent are eligible for free and reduced lunches.

The work is hard, yet rewarding, said adviser Cherelle Washington. "What is so appealing about MCAC is that it provides services I wish I had when I was in high school," she said. "I feel like my transition from high school to college could have gone a little smoother with some help from someone who had just gone through the process; our near- peer model does just that."

It is a mission the advisers seem to take to heart: 99 percent of departing staff intend to enroll in graduate school, said Tankersley-Bankhead. It helps that part of the advisers total compensation of about \$28,000 a year includes an educational award of \$5,350 to pay for outstanding student loans or graduate school tuition.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, 59 percent of Missouri jobs will require some postsecondary education by 2010. However, less than 35 percent of the state's residents have college degrees; in more than half of Missouri counties, less than 12 percent of adults have a four-year degree.

The college advising corps will likely be an integral to the success of "Missouri Promise," the statewide initiative of making college education a reality for more Missourians. Gov. Jay Nixon hopes to increase the number of residents holding college degrees from 37 percent to 60 percent in the next 10 years.

One of MCAC's most important contributions to the effort will be helping high school students overcome social and cultural barriers that prevent many of them from even considering college. "A lot of times what our advisers are overcoming are the students self-perceptions," Tankersley-Bankhead said. "Some have been told growing up, that they're not capable of going to college."

With funding coming in from private and public sectors, MCAC's future, at least in the short term, is secure. This is good news for Missouri students, some of whom have written letters in support of the program to help secure additional funding.

Chelsea Flowers, a student at Salem High School, understood the importance of what she heard from her adviser, Alex Withrow: "Miss Alex's main goal was to get us to understand that college is no joke ... I truly think this opportunity prepared me, along with my fellow classmates, for our futures."

— *Robert Johnson*

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Computer error sends UM health-benefits records to wrong people

MAILING MISTAKE

Malfunction aligned names with wrong addresses

A computer glitch caused personal health information about participants in the University of Missouri's Choice Health Care Program to be mailed to the wrong addresses earlier this month.

According to Coventry Health Care, which administers the university's medical benefits plans, a computer malfunction aligned names with the wrong addresses. The error caused benefit statements, health services letters and new ID cards to be mailed to the wrong persons. While some of these items contained personal information, such as name, member number and birth date, no Social Security numbers of the participants were disclosed.

The problem only involved Choice Health Care Program members and did not affect participants in the Catastrophic Medical Program or the Retiree Indemnity Medical Program. In addition, none of the services included mental health or pharmacy services.

Several hundred people were notified of the mistake earlier this month. Roman Kulich, President and CEO of Coventry Health Care/GHP in St. Louis, said Coventry discovered that the computer error occurred sometime between Jan. 6 and Jan. 10.

"After correcting the error, we began working with officials to notify those affected," Kulich said. "In addition, we implemented new system safeguards to prevent this type of error from happening again."

According to a statement from Kelly Stuck, who oversees UM faculty and staff benefits programs, an employee brought the matter to the attention of university officials on Jan. 14. They immediately contacted Coventry to find out what had happened. On Jan. 20, Coventry provided university officials with an explanation of the situation and answers to some of their questions. The university then mailed letters to employees affected by the software error on Jan. 21 to apprise them of the situation.

"We are clearly concerned by this, as the privacy of health plan participants' information is of the utmost importance to us," said Stuck. "We have asked Coventry to take steps to attempt to recover the misdirected mail, and we have provided participants affected by this error with steps they can take to protect themselves."

She said these measures include: asking health providers to confirm the identity of individuals seeking services under their insurance number and to carefully review Coventry correspondence just as they would their credit card statements to ensure services actually have been provided.

Coventry is cooperating fully with the university, Stuck said, and "has assured us that this matter is their highest priority."

Stuck said that employees who received one of the early-January Coventry communications in error should call Coventry Member Services at 1-800-613-7721 to receive a postage-paid envelope for use in returning the misdirected mail.

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Animal lover donates \$3.4 million to honor canine friends



ENHANCING OPPORTUNITY As MU Chancellor Brady J. Deaton looks on, Neil Olson, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, congratulates Meredith Thoen, one of three senior residents who will benefit from a \$3.4 million donation to the college from James Redhage. The gift will support the annual salaries, as well as fund continuing education opportunities, for future residents. This year's other awardees are Kerry Rissetto and Dylan Buss. Rob Hill photo

VETERINARY MEDICINE

Endowment will support veterinary residents

James Redhage became a friend of the MU College of Veterinary Medicine when he brought his dog, Red, in for treatment. Redhage was so pleased with the care Red received that he decided to donate to the college.

Now Redhage, who died in 2008, has made another donation — a \$3.4 million-dollar estate endowment in honor of Red and two other canine friends with whom he shared a bond, Pepper and Pepper II.

Redhage's gift will support the annual salaries of three senior residents at the college, as well as a \$1,000 stipend for the awardees to provide vital continuing education opportunities.

The inaugural awardees are Meredith Thoen, Kerry Risetto and Dylan Buss. The chosen residents will be able to enhance their advanced veterinary training in a clinical setting.

"This gift will allow me to receive invaluable teaching experience with some of the leading experts in our field," Thoen said, "and will help immensely in my preparation to take my board examination next year."

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Curators take up tuition, pay increases

The University of Missouri Board of Curators is expected to raise tuition at its two-day meeting in Columbia this week.

System administrators are recommending that tuition be increased an average of 5.5 percent at the four UM campuses. Recommended increases range from 4.7 percent at the St. Louis campus to 6.6 percent at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla. The Kansas City campus is recommending an increase of 4.8 percent. At MU, the recommended increase is 5.8 percent.

The proposed increase would generate about \$30 million and reduce the projected 2012 shortfall in the system's budget from \$72 million to \$42 million.

Gov. Jay Nixon has proposed a 7 percent reduction, or \$29.8 million, in state appropriations for UM.

The system has not increased tuition in two years, thanks to an agreement with the governor to avert deeper cuts in state appropriations. The system's fiscal year 2010 appropriation was reduced by 5 percent, but \$50 million in federal stimulus funds offset those cuts.

A decade of reductions in state appropriations has made tuition the primary source of funding for UM; about 45 percent of the system's budget is funded through tuition and fees. Currently, in inflation-adjusted dollars, state spending on UM is about what it was in the mid-1990s. Meanwhile, enrollment at the four campuses has increased by 17,000 students.

The system saved \$61 million last year through various cost reductions, and has already identified \$11.3 million in "cuts and efficiencies" for 2012.

"Even with the efficiencies and cost reductions in place, this budget reduction will be significantly felt and necessitate further reductions by our campuses, challenging our ability to provide a quality education," administrators said in a Jan. 20 statement.

This is the first time tuition and fees on each campus will be decoupled, allowing campuses to recommend increases based on their particular needs.

Curators will also consider raising nonresident undergraduate and resident and nonresident graduate tuition and fees.

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Wanted: Outstanding staff nominees

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2011 Chancellor's Outstanding Staff Awards.

A total of seven awards will be presented at the Staff Recognition Awards Ceremony on May 16: four Chancellor's Staff Awards; the Barbara S. Uehling Award for Administrative Excellence; the Mick Deaver Memorial Award; and the Mizzou Alumni Association Award.

Deadline for nomination is Feb. 4. Nomination forms are available at staffcouncil.missouri.edu.

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