

Mizzou Weekly

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After retirement, road will go on for Vicky Riback Wilson



RIGHT AT HOME Vicky Riback Wilson outside Townsend Hall, where she attended elementary and high school. Riback Wilson, who was born on the MU campus, will retire from the university July 29. She's held several jobs in the UM System, most recently as MU's fellowships coordinator. She also was a member of the Missouri House of Representatives for eight years. "I never planned a career path," she says. "In fact, I would say that I still don't know what I want to be." Shane Epping photo

LIFELONG CONNECTION

"There is always something to learn."

Vicky Riback Wilson's connection with the University of Missouri began early in her life. How early? Well, she was born in Noyes Hall on the MU campus, when the building was a hospital.

She spent 13 years attending elementary school and high school in Townsend Hall and later worked in Conley House for four years, Clark Hall for seven years and Lowry Hall for six years.

"Mizzou is just part of who I am," she says. "It has shaped my perspective on the world."

Her years on campus will come to an end on July 29, when Riback Wilson retires after spending the last six years as MU's fellowships coordinator, assisting students in pursuit of national fellowships and honors.

"It seems that every time a student receives one of these impressive honors, the first person they thank is Vicky," Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies, says. "She has such a great connection with the students on this campus."

While Riback Wilson has spent time away from Mizzou — she attended the University of Pennsylvania, lived in Uganda and Indonesia and spent eight years in the Missouri State House of Representatives — something always brought her back.

"I thrive on change, challenge and new experiences," Riback Wilson says, which would explain why someone who had spent her entire youth in Columbia headed to the University of Pennsylvania for college.

If attending school in Philadelphia wasn't a big enough culture shock, her next move would prove to be. After earning a degree in English, she joined the Peace Corps, where she met her husband, Willy, and spent two years teaching English at a boarding school in Uganda. She later lived and worked in Indonesia.

"That experience gave me a lot of confidence," she says. "I gained the sense that I could navigate new waters, get along in just about any environment and work with a variety of people."

After nearly two years in Indonesia and a brief time living in Washington, D.C., the Wilsons returned to the place she considered home—Columbia. Riback Wilson renewed her association with MU, earning her Masters of Education degree from Mizzou.

She held several jobs within the University of Missouri System, starting with a summer teaching English as a second language. She also worked with the Missouri Cultural Heritage Center and then for University Extension with the Missouri Rural Innovation Institute, developing leadership programs for youth and adults.

While working on a program in Rolla, Riback Wilson received a phone call from someone encouraging her to run for the Missouri State House of Representatives. Though she considered herself politically active, she initially turned down the offer. But after spending a weekend talking it over with family and friends, she decided to run. She won, spending the next eight years representing Missouri's 25th District.

"I loved it," Riback Wilson says. "I've found in every job I have ever had that there is always something to learn, a new experience to be had and it is always fun. I wouldn't do it if it weren't fun."

When she left the legislature in 2005, Riback Wilson found herself again returning to MU. She was hired initially to work half-time for the Office of Service Learning, helping faculty expand service learning courses on campus, and half-time researching the formation of a fellowships office for MU.

At that time, other universities had started up fellowship offices, and Riback Wilson was asked to study whether Mizzou needed such an office. Her recommendation led the administration to establish a fellowships office, with Riback Wilson in charge.

"Although there were people doing good work and we had students who were getting awards, there was no one place where students could go for comprehensive information," she said. "They had to know what award they wanted and which person to go to for help."

Riback Wilson and the MU Fellowships Office gave students a central location to start developing qualities to make them more competitive, whether it's for graduate schools or for a job or for a fellowship. She feels the greatest service offered is not just going after the awards, but helping the students develop and making them aware of the opportunities that could be available to them.

"The biggest challenge in the start, and it is still a challenge to the office today, is building an expectation of success into the culture of MU so that faculty members automatically think about encouraging students to visit the office, and students tell each other about the office," she says.

"The work Vicky has done with the Fellowships Office has been exceptional," MU Chancellor Brady Deaton says. "Our students are being recognized for their talents at a national and international level. They are doing amazing things, such as teaching in South America or doing research in Europe. The advice and guidance they received from Vicky and the Fellowships Office has helped them immensely in excelling at such a high level."

MU's recent award winners include Truman Scholar Kam Phillips and Goldwater Scholar Amanda Prasuhn. In addition, a school record six students earned a Fulbright Scholarship last spring, and a pair of Mizzou students claimed the Jack Kent Cooke Award in 2011.

"Vicky became a sounding board for me," Phillips says. "As there were opportunities for me to apply for nationally-competitive scholarships, I was working with Vicky and learning the skills that helped me when it was time to go through the application process for the Truman Scholarship."

The interaction with students such as Phillips is what Riback Wilson will miss the most.

“It’s very stimulating to hear what they are working on,” she says. “The greatest thing is when students with whom I’ve worked years ago get back in touch to tell me that something that they learned through the fellowships application process, they are applying to what they are doing now.”

For now, Riback Wilson wants to break away from what she is used to. She and Willy are planning a road trip, although the only known destination is the final one — Maine — to visit their daughter and her family.

“Exactly where we go or what the timetable is, we don’t know,” she says. “I figured the only way I could retire and do it right would be to have a complete break from what I’m used to, where I have no routine, no expectations and no responsibilities,”

It is just another opportunity for someone who is no stranger to new experiences.

“I never planned a career path,” Riback Wilson says. “In fact, I would say that I still don’t know what I want to be.”

—*Josh Murray*

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For more, visit mizzouwire.missouri.edu/stories/2011/riback-wilson/index.php
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MU's translational research efforts get a boost with \$5 million grant

FROM LAB TO CLINIC

Funds will support collaborative projects

A five-year, \$5 million grant from the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation will help biomedical engineers at the University of Missouri take promising research from the lab to the clinic.

The grant, through the Coulter Foundation's Translational Partnership Award Program, will be used to develop technologies that will save, extend and improve patient lives around the world. The funds will be used to support collaborative projects between biomedical engineers and clinicians to take research discoveries to clinical practice.

Jinglu Tan, James C. Dowell Professor and chair of biological engineering in the College of Engineering and the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, said the grant agreement the university reached with the foundation on June 21, represents "major recognition" for MU's translational research efforts. Only about 15 universities have been given the award, he said.

"This award will allow our scientists to take their discoveries and develop them for use in the hospital or other clinical settings in an effort to improve the quality of life for many people," Tan said.

The agreement stipulates that the Coulter Foundation will provide \$666,667 per year for five years, while MU will match that money with \$333,333 each year, for a total amount of \$5 million over the next five years. An oversight committee, consisting of stakeholders in translational research, will be formed to decide how to award the money to MU bioengineering faculty who are seeking to commercialize their research discoveries in partnership with clinicians.

Tan, who also is the director of the Division of Food Systems and BioEngineering; Bill Caldwell, director of Ellis Fischel Cancer Center and professor of pathology and anatomical sciences in the MU School of Medicine; and Chris Fender, director of the MU Office of Technology Management and Industrial Relations, led the MU effort for this nationwide competition. The board will consist of Tan, Caldwell, Fender, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists.

"This program creates a framework and culture that requires physicians, scientists, and intellectual property and commercialization specialists to work together in multidisciplinary teams to take discoveries in biomedicine and transform them into viable, commercial products that address unmet clinical needs," said Caldwell, who also is the CRC Missouri Chair in Cancer Research at MU. "We truly have an enormous amount of biomedical research and intellectual property across this campus, and the Coulter award will take us much closer to developing a system for moving our research quickly into clinical practice."

Interdisciplinary efforts to take new technologies to the marketplace are numerous at MU, said Rob Duncan, vice chancellor for research. One example is the BioDesign Program, which has led to the collaboration of post-graduate fellows in medicine, engineering and business to develop and market products that are helpful for doctors. So far, the program has resulted in eight patents for new devices.

"This is affirmation and validation of our efforts toward economic development," Duncan said. "Being given this award identifies us as one of the few institutions in the country that has the resources to move new discoveries into products that will benefit health professionals and patients. The faculty and staff on our campus have worked hard and long to achieve this recognition. This is a testament to the interdisciplinary research that occurs at Mizzou."

In FY 2010, MU received more than \$9.5 million in licensing revenue, which includes royalties and licensing fees. MU also licensed 38 new technologies for commercialization, and filed 57 patent applications in FY 2010.

MU officials are expecting the number of new licenses to increase over the next fiscal year.

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School's out

With MU's summer session drawing to a close, this is the final issue of *Mizzou Weekly* for the 2010-11 school year. After a little break we'll start publishing again Aug. 25 with all the latest updates on living and working at Mizzou.

It's never too early, though, to start sending in items for our Fall 2011 Semester Calendar, which will be published Sept. 15. If your department is sponsoring a campus concert, a film, play or lecture, a symposium or a conference send the information to: Mizzou Weekly Calendar, 407 Reynolds Center. You can also email it to wallstinb@missouri.edu or call 882-5918.

Deadline for submissions for the semester calendar is Sept. 2.

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MU nabs service honor

MU has been named to the 2010 President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency.

The honor roll annually recognizes higher education institutions that have demonstrated a commitment to community service. MU also was named to the honor roll in 2009.

The honor is based on the variety and originality of service projects, percentage of students who participate, incentives for service and number of service-learning courses offered by the school

"This is a great honor that recognizes the wonderful spirit of community service our campus has embraced broadly and is intentionally embedded in the curriculum through the Office of Service Learning," said Jim Spain, vice provost for Undergraduate Studies at MU.

The Office of Service Learning works to combine community service and student instruction through academic coursework. During the 2010-2011 academic year, nearly 3,800 MU students participated in about 160,000 hours of service learning throughout the Columbia community.

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Election deadline nears

Seven MU staff members are vying for election to the Staff Advisory Council.

Ballots will be mailed to all full-time staff members within the next two weeks. They must be returned to the council's office, 27 Jesse Hall, by Aug. 9.

The 16-member council serves as a liaison between staff members and MU's administration.

Winners, who begin a three-year term in September, will represent the interests of their colleagues in one of four occupational categories: administrative/ professional, crafts/maintenance, secretarial/clerical and technical/ paraprofessional.

For more information about the election, call the council's office at 822-4269.

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