University on Demand

Technology, customer-oriented service change how UMKC interacts with students

Class Clowns • Top 25 Neighbor • Chancellor’s Medal
UMKC Alumni Awards Dinner
Thursday, April 19
Swinney Recreation Center
UMKC campus
For ticket information and additional details, e-mail alumni@umkc.edu or call 816-235-1563.

Rocky Levell
Alumnus of the Year
Angela Bennett
Bill French Alumni Service Award
Obie Austin
Defying the Odds Award
Steve Bernstein
Spotlight Award
The Bloch Family
Legacy Award

University on demand
It’s 10 p.m. Do you know where your professor is?

Community connections
University earns national accolades for its outreach efforts.

A vision with a view
Student housing goes west with a new complex on Oak Street.

A+ for the class clown
This course is all about clowning around.

On the fly with Guy
Join UMKC’s chancellor on his road trip to see alumni across the country.

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LIFE@UMKC a slice of campus life 28
Points of Interest

Play still paramount

The moving crew had disbanded, and there I was stuck in the midst of the circus that was to be home.

It’s surprising that a space so full of boxes could seem so empty. It left me feeling overwhelmed and out of place.

Not knowing where my shower curtain or shoes were called for a fresh perspective. Fortunately, I was fresh from a visit to clown class.

So, for the first time in too many years, I treated my bed like a trampoline. I laughed in the face of misplaced mementos—and at myself in the mirror.

I rediscovered the reason for recess and realized that play time wasn’t such a silly way to start a college class.

My move-in day outlook felt so good I decided to apply the lessons learned to everyday tasks. Approach mundane meetings with a pillow fight mentality because it’s impossible to survive one without giggling.

Clown therapy could really catch on.

The class isn’t all fun and games. It can be physically and emotionally exhausting, but the graduate acting students aren’t about to skip the one exhaustings, but the graduate acting students aren’t about to skip the one

Editor’s note:

Perspectives is interested in the opinions of alumni, friends or other readers regarding articles published. Due to size and style constraints, Perspectives reserves the right to edit letters. Letters to the editor may be sent to: Perspectives Editor, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 300C Administrative Center, 5100 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO, 64110–2499. Letters can also be e-mailed to perspectives@umkc.edu.

Class notes

Watch for your alumni connection to return in the Perspectives fall 2007 issue. Send your news to the UMKC Alumni and Constituent Relations office via e-mail at alumni@umkc.edu, via fax to 816-235-5189 or via mail to: Alumni: Class Notes, 300B Administrative Center, 5102 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110. The information is published as space is available.

Letters

Article brings tears

The article on Obie Austin (fall 2006) was so beautiful to me I had difficulty finishing it, because I could not see through the tears—happy tears—in my eyes.

Even with all of the negative things that faced him in his youth, he excelled. I hope others are also giving praise to this young man. He sounds like such a regular and honest guy.

I wish him a life filled with happiness, health and success.

Rooting for him,
Wilbur R. Brown

Praise for Perspectives

As a graduate of the UMKC Class of 1938, I was deeply impressed by the latest issue of Perspectives (fall 2006).

Cordially,
Frank R. Kelly

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UMKC is being recognized as Kansas City’s University well beyond the metro area. The University was named a top 25 “best neighbor” institution for its community partnerships by the New England Board of Higher Education. “This award recognizes that UMKC has taken its rightful place in Kansas City and is responsive to its underserved peoples, to its economic possibilities and to its educational needs,” says Chancellor Guy Bailey. “To us, this is only what an urban university should do.”

Evan Dobelle, president and CEO of the New England Board of Higher Education, ranked UMKC 23rd after a two-year study of universities and educational programs and offers free food, clothing and health care to hundreds more. Students from more than half of UMKC’s academic units make up about 20 percent of the organization’s 300 volunteers. They took its rightful place in Kansas City and is named a top 25 “best neighbor” institution by the New England Board of Higher Education.

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The former Twin Oaks complex will be transformed into Oak Street West, a vibrant residential and retail venue that will benefit both campus and neighborhood. A ceremony was held to spotlight the project on Nov. 10. By fall 2008, more than 500 students will live in the new Oak Street West apartments. Currently, UMKC offers about 900 residential spots on campus, and there is a shortage of rooms for those who request them.

Oak Street West students will reside in modern two-to-four bedroom apartments featuring private baths for each bedroom. They will enjoy amenities such as common living areas, computer labs, study rooms and a fitness center.

In 1998, UMKC purchased Twin Oaks to house students. During the seven years of operation, sustainability of the facility became increasingly challenging.

"UMKC asked the question, once again, ‘are we serving the needs of the students?’" says Chancellor Guy Bailey. In July 2006, the Board of Curators received a proposal calling for the redevelopment of the Twin Oaks site into contemporary student housing coupled with retail and commercial space. The two existing buildings are being taken down and the new apartment structure erected in their place.

The developer had done careful planning. Renderings of the amenities and the exterior appearance of the new living quarters were impressive," Bailey says. "Next, the Curators turned their attention to the long-term lease. Both parties, UMKC and the private corporation, will have income from the terms of agreement, and the buildings will become the sole property of UMKC when the lease expires in 2038. This was an arrangement that was good for everyone, and so we gave our enthusiastic approval. We welcome the next phase of UMKC’s changing face."

The $55 million project will be funded by a private investor, Provident Group - UMKC Properties. Place Properties, the project developer, will design, build, operate and manage the facility. Five thousand square feet of retail space is planned for the first level of the development, giving students and neighborhood residents access to new restaurants, shops and services. A multi-level parking deck will provide space for 400 vehicles.
Technology, customer-oriented service change how UMKC interacts with students

By Donna Menmona Diks

It’s 10 p.m. Do you know where your professor is?

Chances are, he or she is patiently explaining the finer points of a difficult lesson, responding to a student’s complaint about deadlines or weighing in on an important curriculum decision. All from the comfort of an at-home computer screen.

Thanks to technology and its ever-increasing role in education, UMKC has become the campus that never sleeps. While most in the college culture do not wish to return to the days when Bill Gates had no computer to touch, many are wondering, is it too much?

According to the most recent survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, almost all college students have a computer screen.

For Celeste Buckner, a freshman psychology major, the integration of technology is second nature. She and her peers have never known a time without hard drives, software and cell phones.

“I’ve never been what you’d call tech-savvy, but I have a laptop and a cell phone,” she says. “We had computer classes in high school, where we learned how to design presentations. I remember way back in fourth grade, they removed the chalkboards and installed marker boards. That was a big thing back then.”

Instead of checking a campus mailbox for grades and registration forms, UMKC students like Buckner just log onto their campus e-mail account.

“It’s just a habit to check my UMKC account every day,” Buckner says.

Some students even have the option of taking a class through distance learning, where most of the course content is delivered through the computer connection, making it unnecessary to don a winter coat and brave the elements to get to class on time.

UMKC, offers courses in disciplines such as dental hygiene, pharmacy and nursing that can be taken online, meaning that anywhere students can get a signal on their laptop, they can “attend” class.

The Young and the Relentless

Many professors now carry Blackberry devices that alert them to incoming e-mails from students at any hour of the day. It’s easy, convenient – and it’s taking over their lives, some say.

“Work is a 24/7 phenomenon,” says Shannon Jackson, Ph.D., a professor of anthropology who has researched the subject of technology and the body. “There are no rules anymore.”

This leaves some faculty members feeling that their students’ expectations of availability is off the charts.

Now that work can invade the home with increased use of technology, students and faculty members are bombarded with e-mails, and it can be challenging to answer them in a timely fashion. The biggest drawback is that faculty members never get a break – the e-mails continue over vacations and find you wherever you are.

The Frontier Zone

“We are in a frontier zone now, experiencing the freedom of collapsing old boundaries and the clash of not knowing our limits,” says Jackson.

“UMKC’s classrooms have been transformed from four walls and a chalkboard to Ideal Learning Environments (ILE) complete with the latest instructional technology: computers, network connections, video projectors and document cameras.

After class, students can log on to their personal computers and obtain links to further information, class notes and student discussion boards, courtesy of their instructor’s BlackBoard Web site. (a comprehensive course-management application that has been widely adopted in higher education)

“ILE classrooms and other educational technology, such as Blackboard, provide a different approach to interacting with students and a way to present information to students that was, at best, cumbersome without the technology,” says Mary Lou Hines Fritts, Ph.D., chief information officer and vice provost for academic programs. “The options as to how to present a concept in multiple formats, or with multiple approaches, and then translating those into the classroom opens up new ways of teaching.”

The rapid advancement of technology undoubtedly brings in new and more daunting possibilities.

Some faculty fear that the more electronic use of technology undoubtedly brings in new and more daunting possibilities. So what kinds of teaching applications might be on the horizon of this new frontier?

“Certainly, expansion of currently available options, such as podcasting and voicemails (multimedia audio and video files distributed over the Internet). The ability to watch real-time demonstrations of different techniques within a discipline,” answers Hines Fritts, a research professor at the School of Computing and Engineering, who earned her doctorate in computer science.

“The real breakthroughs, however, will not be on the technology side – they will be on the use of the technology to enhance learning.”
Scholarships: Where the smart money is

By Heather Haas

Ruth Ann Meek and Mimi Moon are pursuing different degrees in order to achieve a common goal: to help others. They also share the distinction of being awarded scholarships created during the Your UMKC campaign.

Meek, a senior pursuing a degree in art education, is the first recipient of the Marian Alice Simmons Scholarship. The award honors the memory of a longtime School of Education reading instructor and student mentor. The financial assistance provided by the scholarship enabled Meek, a full-time student and mother of three, to take classes during the summer, carry a lighter course load in the fall and remain on pace to graduate in May.

“I appreciate the scheduling flexibility the scholarship afforded me,” she says. “Without it, I may not have been able to complete all of my coursework before commencement.”

Meek is excited to begin teaching next year. “The older kids get, sometimes the less creative they feel,” she says. “I can’t wait to begin nurturing their artistic confidence because I believe we all have creative potential.”

After graduation, Meek, a third-year School of Medicine student, plans to help families navigate the health care system. “I became interested in medicine after observing my grandfather’s treatment for cancer,” Moon says. “I think there are areas in which the medical profession can improve, especially when it comes to communicating to other family members that they are receiving care.”

Moon is the 2006-07 recipient of the Ida Bamberger Memorial Matching Scholarship, which is awarded to students based on financial need and demonstrated potential for research productivity. She plans to use the scholarship funds to gain research experience before embarking on a career in family medicine.

More than $33 million has been raised for scholarships and financial support through Your UMKC to help students like Meek and Moon achieve academic success.

Most of the funds were earmarked for scholarships and raised through endowed matching scholarship programs. Each endowed scholarship was created with an initial value of $30,000 and an annual distribution of $1,500.

Your UMKC began in July 2000 and is slated to exceed its $200 million goal. During the campaign, several endowed chairs were created, including two in the Bloch School, five in the School of Medicine and one in the Conservatory. Your UMKC also made possible the following capital projects: the Health Sciences Building on Hospital Hill, Oak Street Residence Hall, the Law School’s courtroom/classroom project and the Marion H. Bloch Terrace and Park.

Your UMKC’s success is due to the philanthropic leadership of the University’s many constituents. During the campaign, the percentage of alumni who contributed to their alma mater rose by more than 100 percent.

“I am gratified by the outpouring of support by so many of my fellow alumni in order to advance the economic and cultural growth of Kansas City and beyond,” says Terry Dunn (M.B.A. ’73), campaign co-chair. “The Your UMKC campaign is the largest fundraising endeavor in the University’s history, and I’m proud to help build a strong foundation for future generations of students.”

Saxophone major Nathan Dishman, Ovation Scholarship recipient, visits with scholarship donor Laura Carkener at the Conservatory’s annual scholar/donor brunch in September.

Medical School Associate Dean Dr. Renae Shannon (right) congratulates medical students who received the St. Louis Friends of the School of Medicine Scholarship at the school’s fall scholarship reception. From left, Cynthia Bazaz, Haasan Chowdhury and Bhan Singh.
Strengthening community relationships

Q&A with alumnus Miguel Menezes, member of the new Chancellor’s Hispanic Advisory Council

Why is it important for UMKC’s chancellor to convene the Hispanic Advisory Council for UMKC?

Hispanic community leaders who have attended the meetings have all brought years of experience to the table. Many concerns have been expressed by the council and we feel confident UMKC will work closely with us in addressing each issue. As an alum, I feel a close personal interest in assisting UMKC to accomplish its goal of recruiting more Hispanics.

What are your hopes for what the Hispanic Advisory Council can achieve?

I hope we can reflect back and measure the progress we have accomplished and that the results benefit the University and our community. We cannot sit back as a community and not get involved with the changes occurring on the campus. I am grateful the chancellor has been proactive and has armed himself with a team of leaders that will assist him in attaining his goals.

What did you learn during your time as a UMKC student that you consider important enough to share with your peers?

Although I did not have the liberty of spending a lot of time on campus when I attended, I learned that UMKC is a small community enriched with very talented students and faculty. The road map is laid out, and it’s time to begin adding new avenues to keep up with the growing economy and deliver a first-class education for many others to follow.

How can universities encourage and support students of Latino heritage?

First, universities can begin by making financial assistance easily accessible to Latino students by promoting scholarships. I would like to see Latino students from UMKC attend the Hispanic Advisory Council to become familiar with the Hispanic leadership in the community, share ideas and develop a mentorship to help develop these students. Having Latino cultural diversity events throughout the year reinforces inclusion and acceptance by the University. Hiring more Hispanic faculty and staff also displays a serious commitment to not only the students but to the vested community.

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Interview by Donna Mennona Diiki

Miguel Menezes is an alumnus of the College of Arts and Sciences, where he received a B.A. in Spanish in 1996. He has served on the Multicultural and Community Affairs committee of the Alumni Association, the Alumni Awards selection committee and the Hispanic Advisory Council.

Perspectives caught up with this proud Canguro (that’s Spanish for Kangaroo) and posed a few questions about the new Chancellor’s Hispanic Advisory Council.

It’s vital to the success of the University to include a well-rounded perspective. The leaders in the community who have attended the meetings have all brought years of experience to the table. Many concerns have been expressed by the council and we feel confident UMKC will work closely with us in addressing each issue. As an alum, I feel a close personal interest in assisting UMKC to accomplish its goal of recruiting more Hispanics.

Cancer patients harness healing power of music

Project gives pain a voice

Heather’s song lives on.

During the fight for her life, the 12-year-old non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma patient wrote and sang “Chemo Kid Rock.” Heather also created and selected pictures to accompany her lyrics in a music video.

In life, the project gave her pain a voice, her emotions and imagination an outlet. In death, it gives her parents peace.

Heather’s video was part of a project piloted at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. Its preliminary success and potential earned UMKC music therapy Associate Professor Sheri Robb, Ph.D., and a colleague at Indiana University a $1.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. The study also became the first behavioral intervention project to receive funding from the Children’s Oncology Group, a national research consortium.

“These grants are really important for our profession,” Robb says. “It’s a major milestone that we hope will help us improve the quality of life for cancer patients.”

Music therapists at nine hospitals in five cities are offering the opportunity to create music videos to adolescent and young adult undergoing stem cell transplants to boost their immune systems.

“For these kids, [the transplants are] their last hope for remission,” Robb says. “The project encourages them to be active instead of shutting down in the stressful environment, which places them at risk. It empowers patients who’ve lost control of so much to have complete control as creative director.”

The project’s production schedule is tailored to the physical symptoms and psychological patterns of patients in the transplant process.

“They feel good and anxious before the transplant when the writing and decisions are happening,” Robb explains. “Then there’s a let down, and they get pretty sick. The intervention is designed to accommodate those changes. When they’re feeling great, the foundation is already there, and they can be motivated by what they already accomplished. There are goals for each session, but they’re set up so the patient is successful no matter how sick they are. Then, when they reach the goal, they can look at how they’ve risen above the sickness and see the building effect.”

No matter what stage of transplant care, the video project provides a deliberate distraction.

“It gave Heather something to focus on other than the details of her cancer,” says her mother, Jefti Leonardi. “It’s a very scary time, and there are no guarantees. There was a lot of waiting and worrying and looking at lab numbers every day. I remember watching her draw the pictures and change the words and thinking, she’s in the midst of something really creative and not even thinking about numbers now. It was a wonderful relief.”

Leonardi says even though “Chemo Kid Rock” was about cancer, it still served as a diversion from the disease for her daughter.

“She put her in a place to be more objective about what she was going through because she was sort of writing a story about it,” she says. “Creating the video allowed her to review the situation and gain clarity.”

It gives the patients... something positive to focus on during a difficult time.

Many of the patients involve family and friends in the video preparation and invite everyone from nurses to neighbors to their hospital room premiere party. Heather’s parents shot the photos she requested and sang with her on the video.

The project aims to decrease symptoms — Lindsey V. Corey
A+ for the class clown

Red noses are required and laughing matters. In Stephanie Roberts’ clown class, acting students sign up to be seriously silly.

“What could be better than to laugh in class for two and a half hours?” says Angela Cristantello, graduate acting student.

They warm up with tumbling and trips before their comic timing and catch-as-catch-can is tested.

“Handstands are important here,” says Roberts, M.F.A., visiting assistant professor of physical theater. “They have to be comfortable being upside down because a clown’s whole world is basically turned around.”

But these graduate-level students aren’t training for circuses or birthday parties. They’re rehearsing scenes from Shakespeare for the class clown.

“People think being a clown is about putting on shoes and makeup,” Roberts says. “It’s about revealing. Personal clowning requires the actor to be vulnerable and open. Clown work can be edgy, tragic and poignant. They have to realize how deep and rich it can be.”

The students are exploring the serious side of being funny, while wearing a big, bright red nose, of course.

Handstands are important here.”

“The nose is a truth seeker,” Roberts says. “There’s no hiding behind it like larger nose people. The nose is a window to the soul.”

The students are exploring what’s funny. And emotions and energy create connections with the crowd.

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But these graduate-level students aren’t training for circuses or birthday parties. They’re rehearsing scenes from Shakespeare to see how their clown roles evolve.

Supporters sign final beam on new Health Sciences Building

From deans to dignitaries, members of the UMKC and Kansas City communities as well as the state legislature joined in a ceremony in July to celebrate the near completion of the new $50.2 million Health Sciences Building on UMKC’s Hospital Hill campus. Private donors contributed $9.5 million.

The facility, directly south of the School of Medicine, will house the schools of nursing and pharmacy and is scheduled to open in August. It is part of a master plan for Hospital Hill that includes the future construction of a research facility to support interdisciplinary, basic, clinical and translational research.

UMKC Chancellor Guy Bailey, Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes (M.A. ‘71, M.P.A. ‘78), Missouri state senators Charles Wheeler (J.D. ’59) and Yvonne Wilson (M.A. ’71), Ed.Sp. ’78 and UM Board of Curators President Angela Bennett (B.A. ’74, J.D. ’77) were among those who took part in the Topping Off ceremony in which an uppermost steel girder with signatures of various dignitaries and supporters was hoisted into place atop the new building.

School of Pharmacy Dean Robert Phipps and School of Nursing Dean Lora Lacey-Haun were at the forefront of the project and celebration.

“The Health Sciences Building will greatly contribute to the city’s downtown revitalization efforts,” Bailey says. “It is considered one of downtown Kansas City’s top development projects.”

Once completed, the 227,649-square-foot structure will also include research laboratories, a clinical classroom, simulation laboratories, the latest in technology, lecture halls, classrooms and administrative areas.

The facility will support the translational research programs by providing needed lab space for interdisciplinary research teams focusing on issues such as high blood pressure, high-risk pregnancy, neurological disorders and drug delivery.

Researchers from UMKC and the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center have identified a whole class of small, repeated elements found in genes expressed in the brain that may help make humans distinct from other primates.

In the search to identify uniquely human genetic traits, many particular genes emerged as interesting study targets for their roles in reproduction and brain development. Results of the study were reported in a September issue of the journal Science.

The scientists found one class of repetitive elements present in a number of genes is over-represented in great apes, particularly humans. Additionally, some subsets of these elements show all the earmarks of so-called “Darwinian” or adaptive selection, indicating that the segments may have been beneficial to the organisms over time.

The segments were found consistently in neurons and in many regions of the brain, particularly the neo-cortex, the region associated with higher thought in humans.

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“The audience laughs at.”

Her students come to learn that even when playing a part, honesty is enduring, and emotions and energy create connections with the crowd.

“You have a case here where the repeats are associated with higher thought in humans. “You have a case here where the repeats are associated with higher thought in humans.

Why we’re different: Researchers study gene duplication

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Clock honors professor and past in new courtroom

Among the state-of-the-art technology and polished new wood in the recently remodeled E.E. (Tom) Thompson Courtroom at UMKC’s School of Law stands a piece of the past. A grandfather clock, made by Law School Professor Robert Downs from the dark-stained oak removed from the old courtroom, greets visitors in the foyer of the new courtroom.

Downs, an experienced woodworker in furniture and desks, first built a grandfather clock for his wife’s 50th birthday. The courtroom clock is the 10th he’s constructed.

“I saw the lumber they were going to throw away from the tearing out of the old courtroom, and I just thought this would be a neat way to carry the old over to the new,” he says.

Downs outfitted the clock with Celtic knots in honor of his friend, Professor Edwin T. Hood.

“He’s been such an active person here, and he’s such a good Irishman,” Downs says. “These are both things I like.”

UMKC Concert Jazz Band: the European tour

When UMKC Conservatory of Music and Dance students visited Europe, they were equipped with a language barrier tool: music. The 17-member Concert Jazz Band and 16 fans spent 11 days in July touring Europe and playing at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland and the North Sea Jazz Festival in The Netherlands.

“The performances (at the Montreux Jazz Festival) were also outdoors and students had breathtaking views of the Swiss Alps and Lake Geneva right while they were playing,” says Michael Pagán, Ph.D., associate jazz professor. The band also performed in Paris at the Kiosques de Champs de Mars, close to the Eiffel Tower. The trip included sightseeing in Amsterdam and The Hague.

“The Montreux and North Sea festivals are two of the most famous and prestigious jazz festivals in the world,” Pagán says. “It was quite an honor to be selected and speaks to the quality of the band and the entire jazz program.”

Members of the Conservatory’s Jazz Friends board member, described the journey as “priceless, awesome, unforgettable” in an article in the August/September issue of the Kansas City Jazz Ambassadors’ JAM magazine. “Then there was also the matter of how the band played—they just blew people away. An admirer in Switzerland said, ‘I can’t believe they’re a college band!’”

The UMKC Concert Jazz Band performs during its trip to Europe in July. The band performed in Switzerland, The Netherlands and France.
At UMKC alumna Angela Bennett (B.A. ’74, J.D. ’77) ended her term as president of the University of Missouri System Board of Curators, she took some time to reflect on highlights of the past year.

As president of the Curators, Bennett traveled across Missouri on behalf of higher education. But her journey took her 9,000 miles away from her home state.

“It was an honor and privilege to represent the Board and the University at the celebration of the 20-year partnership between the University of Western Cape (Cape Town, South Africa) and the University of Missouri,” she says.

Bennett and UM President Eillon Floyd met with Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the event, which commemorated the historic academic exchange agreement between the two universities, brokered in 1986 during the academic exchange agreement between the University of Western Cape and the University of Missouri.

“่วน had the proud privilege to be on the home state. “It was an honor and privilege to represent the Board and the University at the celebration of the 20-year partnership between the University of Western Cape (Cape Town, South Africa) and the University of Missouri,” she says.

Bennett earned three degrees from UMKC—two bachelor’s degrees from the College of Arts and Sciences (in political science and in television, radio and film), and a juris doctor from the School of Law.

After her campus years, she distinguished herself in both the public and private sectors, doing notable work as director of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, Kansas City Office, and at the Kansas City law firm Lathrop and Gage. She was appointed by Gov. Bob Holden to the UM Board of Curators in 2001.

“I have gained a more intense appreciation for individuals, both employers and volunteers, who work in higher education,” Bennett says of her service. “They work very hard and make significant contributions to our society and our students.”

Her service to the board was also a large time commitment.

“But assisting in carrying out the mission and purpose of the University is well worth the sacrifice,” Bennett says.

Karen Dace, Ph.D., has been named deputy chancellor for the Office of Diversity, Access and Equity.

She will serve as a senior member of the chancellor’s leadership team responsible for developing new diversity initiatives and programs, as well as strengthening current ones; advising the chancellor on diversity and equity matters; and fostering a welcoming and appreciative climate of diversity.

Prior to joining UMKC in February, Dace was associate vice president for diversity at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, where she worked in the Ethnic Studies and African-American Studies programs. Dace collaborated with deans and faculty in the development of faculty recruitment and retention plan that resulted in a significant increase in minority faculty.

At UMKC, she has a joint appointment as associate professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Communication Studies.

“I am getting a good feel for the campus and the community,” Dace says. “I hope to participate in the variety of diversity efforts already underway, and work with various campus and community entities to create some new programs and initiatives that will, as Chancellor Bailey says, ‘make UMKC a model for urban universities.’”

Researchers uncover source of damage to West African forest

The Niger Delta region in Africa is home to the third largest mangrove forest in the world. The creeks of the forest contain about 60 percent of West Africa’s fish, providing many fishing communities with their livelihood.

A recent study by UMKC Assistant Professor of Geosciences Jimmy Adegoke, Ph.D., found that more than 52,000 acres of mangroves have been lost due to rapid urbanization and oil and gas exploitation.

Adegoke began the study in 2004 by obtaining satellite-based data on the changes to the mangroves. Two summers of field work in the Niger Delta allowed Adegoke and his team to interview residents of the region to study the socio-economic impact of the forest depletion.

“The Niger Delta region contains large deposits of hydrocarbon mineral resources,” Adegoke says. “We suspected the discovery of the resource in 1956, and its subsequent exploitation has caused environmental damage to the very sensitive mangrove ecosystem of the region, but we didn’t know how extensive the problem was.”

Adegoke hopes his findings will advance conservation efforts in the Niger Delta. The study was funded by the Nigerian National Space Research and Development Agency, and Adegoke has received an additional $60,000 from the organization to continue his research.

Results of the study were included in a National Geographic cover story on the Niger Delta region earlier this year.

Soccer, cross country teams compete at championships

The UMKC men’s soccer team got hot at the right time, winning four of its final five contests and placing second in the Mid-Continent Conference.

Seeded second in the conference, UMKC advanced to the tournament final. With a berth to the NCAA College Cup on the line, they bounced Oral Roberts from contention before falling 2-0 to Western Illinois.

Three Kangaroos earned all-conference recognition. Defender Josh White and forward Bryan Perez were named second team all-league, John David Hernandez received the all-newcomer honor.

Three Kangaroos garnered all-conference accolades. Junior Sara Hiller earned first team all-conference recognition for the third straight year. She finished fourth in the 4K with a time of 21:52.62. And junior Jessica Scott earned her first all-conference honor, finishing sixth in 22:01.24.

Men’s team sophomore Jimmy Keown won a place on the all-conference second team, his first all-league honor. He placed ninth in the 8K with a 26:32.60 time.

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Herman Johnson Scholarship reception

Recipients of the Herman Johnson Scholarship were honored at a reception Nov. 16. Wearing blue ribbons, scholars surround Tara K. Johnson (center, in red) and her family – her husband, Curtis Johnson Sr., and her sons Curtis Jr., DeMaria Townson and Elith Dee Townson. Tara Johnson is the daughter of the late Herman and Dorothy Johnson, who led efforts to establish UMKC’s first endowed scholarship for African-American students. At the reception, Johnson announced the first distribution of income of the trust established by her parents’ estate that will help support the scholarship.

Appointments

Brenda Bethman was appointed director of the UMKC Women’s Center. Nationally, she chairs the Women’s Center committee for the National Women’s Studies Association. Prior to joining UMKC’s student affairs team, Bethman served as director of Texas A&M University Women’s and Gender Equity Resource Center, which she founded five years ago.

Grace Hernandez joined the Office of Diversity, Access and Equity as director of affirmative action. She is responsible for ensuring compliance with federal and state civil rights laws and regulations as well as implementing campus anti-discrimination policy and procedures. Prior to her post at UMKC, she was director of institutional diversity at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Karyl B. Leggio, Ph.D., has accepted the position of associate dean for academic programs at the Bloch School of Business and Public Administration. She is also an associate professor of finance and previously served as executive director of the EMBA program and as department chair for the department of finance, information management and strategy.

O. John Ma, M.D., was promoted to chair of the department of emergency medicine by the UMKC School of Medicine and Truman Medical Centers. He has been a member of the emergency medicine faculty since 1997 and is recognized internationally for his research in emergency ultrasound.

Dev Maulik, M.D., Ph.D., was appointed chair of the obstetrics and gynecology department by the UMKC School of Medicine and Truman Medical Centers. A pioneer in the development of fetal ultrasound, Maulik comes to UMKC from Winthrop University Hospital in Mineola, N.Y., where he was chair of obstetrics and gynecology.

Nicholas C. Peroff, Ph.D., was named professor of public affairs and administration in the department of public affairs at the Bloch School of Business and Public Administration. He is also faculty coordinator for the interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in public affairs and administration. He is a past recipient of the Bloch School’s Elmer P. Pierson Teaching Award.

Jan Russell, Ph.D., was promoted to professor at the School of Nursing. She is the director for the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center. Since 2000, she has served on Kansas City’s Ryan White Title I Comprehensive HIV Prevention and Care Planning Council after an appointment from the mayor.

Snow Symposium spotlights U.S.-China relations

Guests gathered at UMKC in October for the Edgar Snow Symposium, which focused on advancing the partnership between China and the United States. The symposium honors the life and legacy of journalist Edgar Snow, who reported on the rebellion in China in the early 1930s. This 12th biennial meeting attracted a delegation from China and included discussions about U.S.-Chinese relations with China’s ambassador to the United States, Zhou Wenzhong, former U.S. ambassador to China J. Stapleton Roy, and Visa International Vice President William Reid.

The symposium was hosted by UMKC’s Edgar Snow Memorial Fund Board.

School of Nursing receives $2.7 million grant

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services awarded the UMKC School of Nursing $2.7 million to develop a unique clinical training program to be implemented across the country.

The grant – the largest received by the School of Nursing since its Office of Research was established in 2001 – was developed based on a need recognized by the U.S. Office of Family Planning. The grant aims to increase hands-on clinical support for health care practitioners working in family planning clinics for low-income, underserved people.

“This is exciting and definitely moves us forward in a major way in strengthening UMKC’s expertise in women’s health,” says Lora Lacey-Haun, Ph.D., School of Nursing dean.

The funding will allow the school to create a standardized curriculum, develop centrally coordinated training processes and facilitate national training meetings for 200 people in more than four years. The first training course will be conducted in Kansas City.
A Friend Next Door

UMKC’s proudest neighbor receives its highest honor

For nearly 82 years, Jeannette Terrell Nichols’ journeys have taken her all over the world, but her fondest memories and passions lie within walking distance of her home on Kansas City’s Country Club Plaza.

To the north, Nichols peers out over the Plaza, an internationally acclaimed shopping district designed by her father-in-law, J.C. Nichols, in 1922, and expanded by her late husband, Miller Nichols. Walking south a few blocks, her mind fills with faces, names and memories of childhood.

Just a few blocks eastward lies UMKC, which she has touched in many ways. Though she didn’t attend UMKC and rarely set foot on campus until later in life, she has taken the institution under her wing and helped strengthen its reputation, programs and fundraising efforts.

In recognition of her commitment, UMKC will award Nichols the Chancellor’s Medal, UMKC’s highest non-academic honor bestowed upon a member of the community, during Commencement May 5.

Never too late

Thirty years ago, Jeannette Terrell Dewese couldn’t have envisioned receiving one of UMKC’s highest awards. But she hadn’t yet joined forces with one of the University’s staunchest supporters, Miller Nichols.

In the late 1970s, after both had lost their spouses, Jeannette and Miller frequently were invited to dinner parties where they were often seated next to each other. Some dinners and conversations later, their friendship grew and in 1979, they were married. It wasn’t long before Miller turned his wife onto his passion for UMKC, where he served as a trustee and himself was honored with the Chancellor’s Medal in 1970. Miller believed that a strong UMKC would create a stronger community, and he committed millions of dollars and thousands of hours to ensure its success.

“My real acquaintance with UMKC came from Miller,” she says. “That was a passion of his. He felt you couldn’t have a dynamic city without a strong university. This University didn’t have the local support that some urban communities gave, because much of the population went to KU or MU.”

Once her husband sold her on UMKC, she and Miller saw to it to change the level of local interest. In public conversations, they tied Kansas City’s success with that of UMKC’s. They also provided substantial monetary support to show their seriousness about the cause. When Miller died in 2000, Jeannette continued the commitment to UMKC’s growth by serving as honorary co-chair of UMKC’s $200 million capital campaign and working with UMKC to enhance and expand the Miller Nichols Library.

Community roots

Jeannette Nichols’ support for UMKC took flight in the 1970s, but the foundation was being set years ago.

Her great-grandfather, James R. Paar, settled the area and served as the first mayor of the territorial community of Wyandotte – the precursor to Kansas City, Kan. Her grandparents and parents were lifelong residents of the Kansas City area, and they instilled in Nichols a sense of community pride and commitment.

As a teenager, in 1938-39, she, her mother and sister traveled through pre-war Europe, just ahead of invading armies. When conditions worsened, she eagerly returned to the security of Kansas City, where she attended Sumner Hall (now Pembroke Hill) High School.

For college, she chose Vassar in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. After graduation, she went home to the Midwest, received a master’s degree in economics from the University of Kansas, and researched the economic history of Kansas City for the University of Kansas, and researched the economic history of Kansas City for the Federal Reserve Bank. She then returned to New York where she worked on the editorial staff of Fortune magazine. After marrying a Kansas Cityan in New York, she returned home for good.

“As soon as I got home, I joined the Junior League,” says Nichols. She volunteered for numerous children’s projects. Over time, her community involvement has grown into more than a full-time job, with volunteer positions in many area arts and philanthropic organizations.

With regular workouts and a full schedule of community board meetings and projects, it doesn’t appear she has plans to slow down. And for that, Kansas City and UMKC are fortunate.

—Nick Staro

The Nichols commitment

Since 2000, Jeannette Nichols has served as honorary co-chair of UMKC’s $200 million Your UMKC capital campaign. She has been a leader champion for the fundraising effort, lending her own passion and resources and personally seeking gifts.

Among her many UMKC commitments, she has served as a board member and donor to the Kansas City Repertory Theatre, a board member of the Friends of the Library, and helped found the Bloch School of Entrepreneurship of the Year Awards Dinner, which has contributed more than $1 million to UMKC entrepreneurship programs.

Major gifts have been donated to UMKC over the past 25 years from Jeannette and Miller Nichols and the Miller Nichols Charitable Foundation, whose trustees are Jeannette, Miller’s daughter Kay Callison and J.E. Dunn Construction CEO Terry Dunn (M.B.A. 73).

With the help of UMKC Trustees, Miller purchased many properties for the University, including the former insurance building that now serves as the UMKC Administrative Center, which was gifted to the University to foster UMKC’s growth.

One of Jeannette’s deepest commitments is the Miller Nichols Library Expansion Campaign. The Miller Nichols Charitable Foundation made a leadership gift of $2 million toward the total private dollar need of $20 million. The project, which will help create a larger, state-of-the-art library in the heart of campus, will include a 81,167-square-foot information commons; a 300-seat lecture hall; a covered-parking structure and 20 percent more classroom space for the campus.

Chancellor’s Medal

The Chancellor’s Medal, established in 1958, is the highest non-academic honor awarded by UMKC. Award winners have included Thomas Hart Benton, Donald J. and Adele Hall, Henry W. Bloch, Ewing and Muriel Kaufman, Bill and Corky Pfeiffer, Ed and Beth Smith and Mary Kay McFlee.
Jerry Whalen walked three blocks from his Kansas City home at age 17 to ask Research Medical Center for a job to help fund his college education.

The short walk began a lifelong career in the business of health care. Two Bloch School degrees and years of experience later, Whalen (B.B.A. ’72, M.P.A. ’81) is shaping the quality of patient care in Maine as a vice president for Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems.

A Southeast High School graduate and son of an auto worker, Whalen took to heart his parents’ advice to study hard and find a way to pay for college, as they wouldn’t be able to send him.

“I knew I didn’t want to be a clinician, but I was very interested in hospitals and health care delivery, so I thought a business degree would get me where I wanted to be,” he recalls.

After completing his bachelors’ degree at UMKC in 1972, Whalen pursued his graduate degree in public administration at the Bloch School while working in patient care management at Baptist Medical Center. Baptist tapped him to establish a communications and public relations effort, and he evolved through various marketing roles before moving to work for the parent company, the former Health Midwest.

Whalen was recruited in 1998 to a newly developed role with Eastern Maine Healthcare Systems after more than 25 years working in patient care management at Baptist Medical Center. Baptist tapped him to establish a communications and public relations effort, and he evolved through various marketing roles before moving to work for the parent company, the former Health Midwest.

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Whalen’s most recent success is an initiative to leverage the clinical care power of the Eastern Maine Healthcare System with the basic science prowess of the Jackson Laboratory and the academic expertise of the University of Maine. The Maine Institute of Human Genetics and Health brings these three partners together to move discoveries from the lab into clinical practice to improve patient outcomes.

His role has been to develop the institute with the leadership of all three organizations, initiate collaborations and seek funding support. Last year, the institute received a $2 million federal appropriation for its efforts, which will target new medical breakthroughs to affect the quality of life for aging and chronically ill patients in rural Maine. This January, the institute received another $4.8 million in federal funds to continue its work. For Whalen, it’s another achievement in a career focused on making health care more effective and efficient.

“I was a simple blue-collar kid,” Whalen says of his professional journey. “I often speak with pride about where I went to school. I feel I really owe UMKC something for helping me to learn about myself and for helping me shape a career.”

—Lizoon Tammeus
Chancellor Guy Bailey says he believes alumni are UMKC’s best ambassadors. “They carry our message to hundreds of places,” he says. “When they talk about us in a positive light, our stock with potential students goes up. They represent us by their work, their good reputations and their places in their communities.”

So Bailey has made meeting alumni and reconnecting them to the University a priority since he became chancellor in January 2006. The visits coincide with Bailey’s planned travel to conferences. “I’ve made 28 trips on behalf of UMKC that covered thousands of miles,” Bailey says. “I’ve met an American hero, Missouri state legislators and experts in many disciplines.”

He extended invitations to prominent alumni to speak on campus, made potential internship connections on behalf of students and accepted capital campaign contributions. Bailey hopes his travels will help increase alumni participation, a significant weight in U.S. News & World Report’s college rankings. “The health of a university is often measured by the participation and interest of its alumni,” Bailey says. “I’d like to see UMKC lead all urban universities in alumni participation.”

Journey with him as he visits UMKC graduates at receptions across the nation. Coming soon: Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

—Sandy Beaty
A UMKC student aims for a free car in a campus contest sponsored by Pontiac.

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