

Missourinet

Missouri college students compete in Solar Decathlon

by Steve Walsh on October 11, 2009

in [Uncategorized](#)

A team of college students from Missouri is among 20 entries taking part in what is known as the [Solar Decathlon](#) in Washington, D.C. It's a competition in which teams of college and university students compete to design, build, and operate what turns out to be the most attractive and energy-efficient solar-powered house.

Missouri's contingent is made up primarily of students from Missouri University of Science and Technology, but includes students from the University of Missouri -Columbia.

"We have 11 of us from Missouri S&T and about three or four from the University of Missouri that come in for a couple of days and either help with the decorating or a little bit of the architecture," said Sara Shafer, the public relations officer for the Missouri entry.

Each team is completing a project that began months ago and ends with erection of a house on the National Mall.

"We started construction back in February," said Shafer. "We've been working on it all through the last semester and the summer and then brought it up here a week and a half ago."

There are certain construction rules that must be followed.

"They have certain guidelines," said Shafer. "For instance, it can only be 800 square feet. It has to be able to be tied to give energy back and for us to take energy if we need it. All in all we're supposed to be a hundred percent energy efficient."

There are several contests that culminate in the awarding of the prize.

"We're set up to do ten different contests, including communications, market viability, lighting, indoor environment, just many different contests," said Shafer.

The event began October 8th and runs through October 16th.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU develops new music initiative to benefit young composers

By Alycia Yount

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COLUMBIA — A series of efforts to position MU as a center for new music is being consolidated as the Mizzou New Music Initiative.

Made possible through a \$1 million donation from the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation, founded by Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield, the initiative aims to help young composers develop and explore their talent.

"I see the Mizzou New Music Initiative as a truly ground-breaking effort to help spur creativity among young composers," Jeanne Sinquefield said. "I couldn't be more excited about this initiative and what it means for so many talented young people. I think Missouri could be the hub for turning out world-class fine arts composers."

"You can't teach someone to hear it (a composition) in their head," Sinquefield added. "You have to find the genius people and develop them. They are out there."

The new music initiative includes existing programs as well as ones to be added. One existing program is the Creating Original Music Project, known as COMP, which is heading into its fourth year and has two branches.

The first invites young people, from kindergarten through 12th grade, to submit original composition for cash prizes. Cash prizes are also given to the winners' schools.

Sinquefield thinks composition by students should be encouraged by schools statewide, and providing cash prizes for the schools is meant to do that.

COMP's other arm is a week-long composition summer camp that brings together young students from across the state to collaborate and get creative. The program is growing,

and each year there are more participants, said Thomas McKenney, professor of composition and music theory at MU.

One of the challenges faced by composition students is having their music performed and heard, Sinquefield said. So next year, the initiative will include two scholarships for graduate students to participate in the New Music Ensemble. Directed by Stefan Freund, an associate professor of composition and music theory at MU, the four-student ensemble will perform and record new music written by MU students and staff.

The group will "be dedicated to promoting new music at Mizzou through performance on and off campus," Freund said. The ensemble has already been formed and will perform for the first time on Monday evening at MU.

Also next year, the New Music Initiative will award two annual full-ride undergraduate scholarships in composition. The goal is to have eight composition students on full scholarships by 2013.

Next July, the New Music Festival will bring in eight to 10 young composers from around the world to work with "some of their heroes," Sinquefield said, referring to composers.

The week-long festival will also feature the acclaimed new-music, 20-member ensemble Alarm Will Sound, who will play and record compositions by the young composers. They will write a six- to eight-minute piece and work with the band in a rehearsal setting, with a concert of their work to be performed at the end of the week.

Fire ants have reached southern Missouri

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Red fire ants, which bite and sting humans, livestock and pets, have moved north into Missouri, an entomologist said.

The arrival of the red fire ants in Kennett, in the southeast corner of Missouri, marks the first confirmed appearance of the dark, reddish-brown insects in the state, said Richard Houseman, a state extension entomologist and University of Missouri entomology professor.

The ants have built mounds up to a foot in diameter, Houseman told the Branson (Mo.) Tri-Lakes News.

"The mounds contained alates -- winged ants that are ready to fly out of the mound and start new mounds somewhere else in the area," he said.

Houseman said the ants will swarm as long as the temperature stays above 70 degrees.

The imported ants came to the United States more than 50 years ago in soil used as ballast in cargo ships from South America.

While Missouri wants to get rid of fire ants, Marshall, Texas, had its Fire Ant Festival Saturday featuring, among other things, a "fire ant-calling contest."

Texas has been especially hard hit by the ants, which can destroy crops and speed soil erosion. American farmers spend almost \$9 billion a year on pesticides to fight the ants, the U.S. Census Bureau says.

WEARING A WET BLANKET

Rain, power outages hit big MU game day hard.

By Janese Heavin

Friday, October 9, 2009

Heavy rainfall and an electrical malfunction didn't dull Tiger pride last night.

It was a soggy night for football at Faurot Field where Missouri falls to Nebraska 27-12 in front of 65,826 fans. [Watch video](#)

Some 65,800 people, many of whom sported gold, showed up to watch the University of Missouri football team take on Nebraska in a rare weeknight game televised by ESPN. And that's what MU spokesman Christian Basi hopes the world saw, even though the Cornhuskers took away a 27-12 victory.

"Not only did we have a fantastic game; we had a game where folks were enjoying themselves and showing their support in spite of the weather," Basi said. "It was amazing. We were very pleased."

A high-voltage electrical switch near the Tiger Team Store failed just before 7 p.m., causing a momentary power outage across campus. Fifteen buildings remained without power for about an hour.

A generator helped restore power to Memorial Stadium in 12 minutes, but portions of the north and east sides remained powerless for the entire game. As a precautionary measure, crews opted to leave the new state-of-the-art video scoreboard turned off, as well as the announcement system. Country music star Sara Evans sang the national anthem as planned, but no one could hear her.

Crews are trying to figure out what caused the malfunction and don't know if weather played a part, Basi said. They were working to repair the switch this morning and to restore full power to the stadium.

MU utilities are separate from Columbia Water and Light. Rains yesterday morning caused a downed tree limb to blow an electrical fuse in southwest Columbia, leaving about 40 customers without power yesterday morning, spokeswoman Connie Kacprowicz said.

Yesterday was the wettest Oct. 8 in Columbia's history, according to the National Weather Service. The 4.87 inches that fell during the 24-hour cycle more than quadrupled the last record of 1.05 inches that fell Oct. 8, 1993. The rainiest day ever in Columbia was Sept. 2, 1918, when 6.61 inches fell.

A change in parking guidelines yesterday caused some confusion, but for the most part, everything went well, Basi said. Employees and students were asked to move their cars off game lots by 4 p.m., and staff was encouraged to leave campus by 3 p.m.

MU Health Care experienced a couple of snafus early in the day with some confusion over a surface lot-turned-tailgating spot, spokeswoman Mary Jenkins said. But, she said, there was plenty of parking for hospital patients and visitors.

Tribune Sports Editor Joe Walljasper contributed to this story.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Failed switch causes campus power outage

By Nick Friedman, Hayley Tsukayama

October 9, 2009 | 6:36 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The Missouri Tigers locker rooms managed to escape last night's blackout, but the Nebraska Cornhuskers had to be a little more creative. Keith Zimmer, the University of Nebraska's associate athletic director for life skills, said the visiting team relied on temporary lighting to see during halftime.

Less than an hour before MU's highly anticipated and nationally televised game, Memorial Stadium and its new \$3.5 million scoreboard sat disappointingly dark.

According to MU spokesman Christian Basi, a high-voltage electricity distribution switch failed at 6:53 p.m., leaving the stadium without power for approximately 20 minutes. Like the stadium, most of campus only experienced brief power loss, but 15 campus buildings were without power for up to 90 minutes.

Work crews were able to restore power to most of the stadium in time for kickoff at 8:01 p.m. Power for the stadium lights, concessions stand and south scoreboard returned quickly. But portions of the north and east sides of the building, including the brand-new scoreboard and public address system, did not have electricity for the rest of the game.

MU's locker rooms happened to be located in the unaffected portion of the power grid—some of the team's best luck of the night.

The reason for the switch's failure is still under investigation, but it was replaced this morning. According to Basi, all power was restored by noon.

With only one scoreboard functioning, the play clock was removed for the duration of the game. Zimmer said he didn't think it was a major problem for his team.

Thanks to a coordinated effort between university and city staff, the crowd didn't have to deal with any major problems either. No safety issues were reported at the game during the blackout.

"The moment power went down we discussed how to deal with the situation," Basi said. "It was a fantastic effort by the crew to get things running and get the game started on time."

He said MU Campus Facilities runs regular simulations for handling situations such as power outages, and a full crew was on standby in case of any such problems.

Nearby residence halls were also among the affected buildings.

Lathrop Hall Community Adviser Claire Pohle was sitting at the residence hall's front desk when the lights went out. She tried to keep everyone calm, although there wasn't much panic.

"Luckily there was no one in the elevator," Pohle said.

MU Health Care spokesman Jeff Hoelscher said all patient care areas within MU Health Care have backup generators which turn on automatically in the event of an outage.

"You might notice a flicker," he said.

Hoelscher said that, to his knowledge, the Missouri Psychiatric Center was the only university patient facility that needed to utilize backup generators.

Federally funded regional consortium to test ways to improve education

By JOE ROBERTSON

The Kansas City Star

With federal dollars flying at education at the speed of a national emergency, the Obama administration would like to know the money is fueling ideas that work.

Answers to that billion-dollar question soon may come from Kansas City.

Five universities from Kansas and Missouri are teaming up with at least 32 area school districts, plus Catholic schools and charter schools, to create an education research laboratory that is garnering national attention.

“We are at a real crucial time in public education,” John Q. Easton, a Department of Education administrator, recently told a group of educators and researchers in Kansas City.

Easton spoke of the burden weighing on himself and U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

“We’re spending billions of dollars,” Easton said. “And he (Duncan) said we don’t want to wait to find out five or six years down the road what ideas are successful and what aren’t.”

Kansas City is an unlikely — but potentially effective — source for quick answers.

The region is unlikely because education data are splintered between two state systems and across a diverse field of small to medium-size school districts.

Only a few of the larger Johnson County districts serve more than 20,000 students. Kansas and Missouri also use different performance tests that resist comparisons across the state line.

All of that makes it hard to amass the kind of usable data that have marked a successful research collaboration between Chicago-area universities and the 400,000-student Chicago public schools.

On the other hand, the variety of ideas at work among so many school districts provides a rich opportunity, said Michael Podgursky, a professor of economics at the University of Missouri.

MU, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the University of Kansas, Kansas State University and Washington University in St. Louis have joined the consortium. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation has invested almost \$1 million in grants to help launch the effort.

The school districts have consented to expose their programs to scrutiny that may not always be flattering, but several superintendents who attended a recent conference at the Kauffman Foundation said they were ready.

“This is the most important research project I’ve been a part of in 26 years in this profession,” Independence Superintendent Jim Hinson said.

Too often schools under pressure to improve test scores react by “throwing programs and money” at problems, Hinson said. They are besieged by conflicting research.

“We are so tired of being force-fed what we ought to be doing,” he said.

Historically, university projects have more often followed the interests of the researchers than what’s really happening in schools, Easton said.

And while many strong partnerships have happened in the Kansas City area, the projects have lacked the scale possible in a regional collaboration.

“We all have felt we could do more,” said Joe Heppert, an associate vice provost for research and graduate studies at KU. “The full force (of research capacity) has not been brought to bear.”

The timing could hardly be better, Podgursky said.

The federal government has given the states \$250 million just to build data systems, and more is coming. Kansas and Missouri have been developing identification systems to better track students.

Podgursky said he sees the consortium tackling many issues: Tracking students across state and district lines, and teachers as well. Charting where they were trained. Measuring the effectiveness of professional development.

Researchers could measure teacher effectiveness and study the accuracy of principals’ evaluations. They could look deeper into the effects of school choice and Kansas City’s charter schools.

“This is the age of data-driven assessment, and it’s not going to go away,” said John Rury, a KU professor of educational leadership and policy studies.

The aim, researchers agreed, is to get to the bottom line quickly and determine what works.

“Kansas City in many ways will be a model for the nation,” Rury said.

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