

Student dies after jump from garage

Thursday, December 17, 2009

The Hitt Street Garage on the **University of Missouri campus** has been reopened after a man jumped off the building and died early Thursday.

A 20-year-old male University of Missouri student jumped off the garage early this morning and later died at University Hospital. The man is not being identified, as family members are still being contacted, Capt. Brian Weimer of the MU Police Department said.

Officers responded to the north side of the garage at 3:46 a.m. After taking the student to the hospital, they blocked off the garage to prevent people from entering and to question those leaving. The incident appears to be a suicide, Weimer said.

The garage was reopened just before 6 a.m., and morning traffic should not be affected.



Suspended MU players won't face charges

By David Briggs

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No criminal charges will be filed against the two **Missouri women's basketball players** who were accused of assaulting an MU male cheerleader, Boone County prosecutors said Wednesday.

Prosecutors cited varying witness reports and the cheerleader's decision not to press charges in closing the case against Amanda Hanneman and Jessra Johnson, who were arrested early Friday morning on suspicion of third-degree assault.

"The statements of those who allegedly witnessed the events varied to a large degree, and we know that alcohol was involved with almost everybody who was present," assistant prosecutor Ryan Haigh said Wednesday morning. "Those circumstances, coupled with the fact that we have a victim who does not want to press charges, led us to come to the conclusion."

Women's basketball Coach Cindy Stein could not say how the decision affects her players' standing on the team. Hanneman and Johnson, the Tigers' two leading scorers, were suspended indefinitely Friday.

Stein said she will meet with Athletic Director Mike Alden as soon as possible. A Missouri spokesperson said the athletics department will release a statement Thursday.

"There are still some things that we're all discussing," Stein said. "So until I actually have my official discussion with him on my recommendations, I can't comment."

The prosecutors' decision comes less than a week after the early Friday morning incident. According to police, Hanneman, Johnson and a female friend had left a bar for Short's apartment at 36 N. Cedar Lake Drive.

Columbia police spokesperson Jessie Haden said a scuffle ensued after Short, a male cheerleader for Missouri's football and men's basketball teams, called police around 2 a.m. complaining that people would not leave his apartment. Johnson told police she shoved Short, while Hanneman, according to Haden, admitted she "pinned him against the wall, slapped him and punched him." But the two players told police they were attempting to come to the defense of a female friend. The friend said Short, one of her two roommates, had called her names and pinned her to the floor.

Short suffered a broken nose and an eye injury. Police said he was taken by ambulance to University Hospital and released around 5 a.m.

Haigh said he spoke with eight people present during the incident before making his decision Wednesday morning. Short, who is suspended indefinitely from the cheerleading team, declined to comment Wednesday. Attempts to reach the female roommate have been unsuccessful.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

College remedial math courses still needed

By Michelle Hagopian

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MU will start using an online placement exam

COLUMBIA — Starting in the spring, incoming students at MU will have their math skills tested using an online placement exam instead of one taken in person on campus.

The on-campus test will be discontinued next fall. Most students will take the test in the spring or summer prior to attending MU Summer Welcome, MU math professor Ian Aberbach said.

The need for remedial math at the college level continues; this semester, 10 percent, or about 600 students, have been enrolled in Math 0110, the catch-up course at MU, Aberbach said. That number is the same for this time last year.

MU math professor Adam Helfer said remedial courses "are not really college-level courses, and there's no getting away from the fact that it is make-up work."

Math educators at MU and elsewhere largely attribute the need to inadequate math curriculum in high school. Helfer said professors at MU are concerned with the way math is taught in K-12 education.

"The big question is how we decide to set policy for math education in the state," Helfer said. "There's no question that people on all sides are sincere and want the best for the children. How do we decide which policy is better justified?"

Helfer said decisions on how to set curricula have been made on the basis of the March 2008 National Mathematics Advisory Panel report.

"In designing the curriculum and in measuring what works and what doesn't, we need oversight from the professional scientific community — in particular, from cognitive psychologists and mathematicians," Helfer said.

Designing K-12 math curriculum is a nationwide debate, he said, and if students fail to learn the material in one grade, they continue to fall behind.

"The problem can really snowball, and we just make it bigger if we wait until high school to try to tackle it," Helfer said.

The question of curriculum comes into play just weeks after a report released by the National Center for Education Statistics found that Missouri uses some of the most stringent standards for evaluating its students in math and reading. The report showed that Missouri has the second most difficult standards set for math at the fourth-grade level and the fourth most stringent math standards for eighth-graders.

In May 2008, more than 50 math professors at three Missouri universities sent a letter urging the state to match its K-12 math education standards with those set out in a national report. The main concern was that college students were not prepared for college algebra and were taking more remedial math courses as a result.

Aberbach said the letter was sent to the Missouri departments of Higher Education and Elementary and Secondary Education. The result was a review and revision of math standards, but the changes were never adopted because Missouri joined a national common standards effort. There no longer was a need for a state standards document, Aberbach said.

"All states signed on to the national effort will adopt the standards that are decided at a national level," he said. "Up until this point, every state has had its own standards."

In Columbia Public Schools, a debate over curriculum has centered on single-subject approach versus the integrated approach. The single-subject method uses algorithms and step-by-step sequences to find answers to math problems, whereas the integrated approach encourages students to use real-world analogies to solve equations. Parents and educators have been torn between which method to use to teach students.

Columbia students in grades eight through 12 currently can choose whether to take single-subject or integrated courses.

Although curriculum contributes to how prepared students are coming into college, it is not the sole factor in determining whether a student will take remedial math as a freshman.

"MU goes off of ACT and SAT scores, dual credit from high school and AP exam scores, if students take it," Aberbach said.

Similar views in Nebraska

Intermediate algebra, considered a step lower than college algebra, is offered at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln — one of several peer institutions to which MU is compared based on a number of statistics. Intermediate algebra is taken by fewer than 10 percent of the incoming student population there, said Cheryl Kane, who coordinates the pre-calculus program.

Kane said all incoming students are required to take a math placement exam, which can be taken up to three times to get the best score possible. She said high school curriculum can often hinder a student's ability to do well in college math courses.

"Students who don't take rigorous math courses in high school are at a disadvantage," she said. "Those not good at the high school level aren't given the opportunity to develop. The courses don't expect enough of them."

Kane also said many students don't take the placement exam seriously and, therefore, don't perform well.

"There's a lot of math phobia still out there, and students are concerned about getting in over their head or they have limited expectations of their own abilities," she said.

Kane said math educators in Nebraska also are concerned about curriculum and preparing students for college level math. Nebraska-Lincoln has a program called "Math in the Middle," which is a master's degree program for middle school teachers that emphasizes comprehensive math topics and improving math instruction.

Nebraska-Lincoln changed its admissions policy several years ago to require four years of high school math — at least two years of algebra-based and one year of geometry-based math, Kane said.

"When that changed, some schools added a pre-calculus course, some a calculus course, some watered down their math curriculum to teaching the same topics in four years that they used to teach in three," she said.

Kane said the university is also looking to online options for students. She will teach an online college algebra course for the first time this spring. A pre-calculus course has also been tested, and a brief calculus course will soon be offered.

"Our hope is that students who don't have the option of taking a higher level math course in high school or through a local community college will use this option to 'beef up' their math skills so that they don't need a remedial course," she said.

College algebra in the mix

Other peer institutions, such as Colorado State University and West Virginia University, also use placement exams to determine which college math course students should enter. Anita Pattison, associate director of the pre-calculus program at Colorado State, said about 60 percent to 70 percent of students who take the placement exam are eligible to start in college algebra or a higher course.

"College algebra is the gateway course — it gets you into higher level math," she said.

Pattison said community colleges are responsible for teaching remedial math classes if students aren't placed in college algebra at Colorado State.

She said that in 2002, 67 percent of incoming students were eligible to enter college algebra based on the results of their first placement exam attempt. In 2009, 72 percent of students were eligible.

"After looking at a few years of statistics, it seems they're a little bit better prepared," she said.

Pattison said fewer students are taking the placement exam because they bring in math credit from community colleges or AP courses in high school.

Eddie Fuller, math chairman at West Virginia University, said college algebra is the lowest level class available for credit, but roughly 700 to 800 students are placed in pre-college algebra per year at the university.

Aberbach said MU also offers Math 1100 (college algebra for calculus-bound students) and Math 1120 (college algebra for non-calculus bound students). Math 1120 will be discontinued next fall.

"We'd love for everyone to come in and take a calculus course, but that's not the expectation for every student," he said. "Any student considering serious work in the sciences, technology or engineering ought to come out of high school fully prepared to take a calculus course."

Helfer echoed the sentiment, noting math is a cumulative subject and students should understand that.

"Students (and their schools) need to know that when they come to college they should have good algebra, geometry and trigonometry backgrounds," he said. "They should expect that they will have to remember material from one year to the next."

A turnaround at the tower

Program grows after budget cut.

By Daniel Cailler

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

MU MENTION P.2

After nearly losing its funding last year, one recreation program has come out stronger than ever with help from the community.



Photo by Don Shrubshell

Volunteers at the Paquin recreation program have made a variety of hats and scarves to be donated to local shelters.

The Adapted Community Recreation program at Paquin Tower offers a variety of programs for the elderly and people with disabilities, such as arts and crafts, cooking classes and Wii bowling tournaments. But a tightening of the city's purse strings nearly resulted in the plug being pulled last year when officials considered eliminating the program from the 2009 budget.

Sarah Bowman is the recreation specialist at Paquin, a public housing residence for people with disabilities and the elderly. "It was very devastating not only for the participants, but for the members of the community," she said.

Bowman said there was an immediate response from concerned residents who wrote letters and addressed the Columbia City Council. The program was saved but suffered a budget cut of about \$16,000.

The public attention yielded positive results, and two partnerships have helped turn things around for the Paquin program.

The first partnership, with the University of Missouri, began last spring when a parks and recreation tourism class volunteered to help with an Easter egg hunt. City Parks and Recreation Superintendent Karen Ramey talked with MU staff about a permanent collaboration, and since then. MU has been sending students to Paquin for class credit. Some of its majors, such as the parks, recreation and tourism field of study, require as many as 100 hours of volunteer service. Many of those hours are now spent at Paquin.

Garrett Newcomer, 24, is an MU senior who has spent time helping with crafts, playing bingo and, most recently, helping to knit hats and scarves to be donated to local shelters. Although Newcomer seeks a career in adventure tourism or professional backpacking, he said his Paquin experience is well-spent.

"The whole purpose is to provide recreational service regardless of age or disability," he said.

Karsten Ewald, the arts and ceramics instructor at Paquin, said he appreciates the partnership with the university. "There are many tasks that need to be done. One person is not enough to deal with it," he said.

A more recent partnership came this summer when Boone County Family Resources stepped up and contributed \$16,000 for next year, filling the gap in Paquin's budget. It now promotes Paquin's programs in its newsletter.

Robyn Kaufman, the director of family and community living support at BCFR, said the partnership is natural. "A number of the persons we serve participate in their programs. We want to make sure persons with developmental disabilities have choices for recreational activities," she said.

These partnerships and continued community support have led to more participants and volunteers. In 2009, Paquin reported one of the largest increases in volunteer hours in the city, achieving more than 4,000 shared hours. And a support group called CARE@Paquin plans this week to present its first \$5,000 donation to support Paquin's recreation program, group Chairman Sean Spence said.

The program "has greatly improved because of the focus on it," Ramey said. "We're expanding more of our programs to happen in the evenings and weekends. We're all just really working together now."

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