

Iris Molotsky Award for Excellence in Coverage of Higher Education

AAUP
1133 Nineteenth St., NW, Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20036

Entry Form

Title of Entry: Closure and Reopening of the University of Missouri Press

Name and Address of Organization:

Columbia Daily Tribune, 101 North 4th Street, Columbia, MO 65201

Date(s) of Publication: 24 May-27 November 2012

Name and Address of Applicant:

Lois L. Huneycutt, Department of History, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211

Names(s) of Author (if different from applicant):

Janese Silvey (JaneseSilvey@gmail.com)

1. Applicants are asked to provide a short statement explaining the background of the story and its significance from a national perspective. Qualities to be judged include analytical, interpretive, and investigative skills as well as convincing writing.
2. Entries that include unnamed sources must be accompanied by a statement from the supervising editor explaining why the story was written in this manner.
3. Entries and the form may be submitted electronically in .pdf format to rburns@aaup.org. These will be e-mailed to the judges. If sent by mail, five copies of the form and entry should be mailed to Robin Burns, AAUP, 1133 Nineteenth St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20036. Please do not simply send urls to the articles as these tend to change.

“Closure and Reopening of the University of Missouri Press”

Author: Janese Silvey

Organization: *Columbia Daily Tribune*

Nominators: Lois L. Huneycutt, Sudarshan Loyolka, Stephen Montgomery-Smith

On the morning of Thursday, May 24, 2012, the University of Missouri’s newly-appointed President Tim Wolfe announced that the University Press would be closing after more than five decades of operation. All ten employees were to be laid off. This decision was made with no consultation with faculty, the editorial board, or the Press employees. Aside from a handful of administrators, the University community had no advance knowledge of the closure; in fact the faculty, the Press employees, and the media were notified almost simultaneously. Janese Silvey, Higher Education reporter for the *Columbia Daily Tribune* immediately and persistently followed up with administrators, Press employees, faculty leaders, authors, curators of the University, and many others in the community to shine light on the action and the unfolding situation over the period from 24 May until 27 November, 2012.

In the days immediately following the closure of the Press, there was urgency in reporting because events were unraveling at a rapid rate. Silvey acquired a thorough knowledge of the University of Missouri Press through her interviews with all stakeholders, her monitoring of social media sites, several “Sunshine Requests” filed at the university, and her unrelenting questions. As the situation unfolded, she and the *Columbia Tribune* became the most trusted source of news as the story of the Press closure, gained traction and was picked up by national media, including the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and the *New York Times*.

Silvey’s persistence in getting to the truth of how the closure was effected, who was behind it, and who stood to gain from it resulted in at least thirty articles published in the *Columbia Daily Tribune* in 2012. The national attention gained from media coverage focused attention on the administration’s actions all summer, leading to a reversal of the decision to close the Press, and a rehiring of its senior editors. Perhaps just as important, the closure and reopening of the University of Missouri Press has opened a nationwide conversation about the dissemination of scholarly findings, the definition of shared governance in decisions about auxiliary units, and administrative transparency.

Although we are limited to submitting just one story for the Iris Molotsky award, we want to emphasize that Silvey’s work in 2012 as an investigative reporter was not limited to her work with the Press. For instance, at the same time the Press closure was being attempted, Silvey was covering the sudden and unannounced dissolution of one of the University’s Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute (NSEI). This closure, announced on 12 March 2012, again without any advance warning or consultation, was also reported with her characteristic skill, integrity, depth, and fairness. The administration, in light of continuing negative publicity, partially reversed its decision and allowed the NSEI to stay open until current students are graduated.

Silvey has not shared details with members of the nominating team, but e-mails she obtained and published showed that the university administration tried unsuccessfully to influence the direction of her reporting. She showed great courage in continuing to write stories that were unwelcome to many in this university town. Many members of the faculty of the University of Missouri are persuaded that had Silvey backed down, the resurrection of the University of Missouri Press, and the partial resurrection of the NSEI (that story is still developing) would never have happened.

Janese Silvey's work on the University of Missouri Press story, as well as her entire body of work as the Higher Education reporter for the Columbia Daily Tribune, serves as a model of journalistic integrity. We the undersigned are therefore honored to nominate higher education reporter Janese Silvey for the *Iris Molotsky Award for Excellence in Coverage of Higher Education*.

Sincerely,



Lois L. Huneycutt
Associate Professor of History



Sudarshan Loyolka
Curators' Professor of Nuclear Engineering



Stephen Montgomery-Smith
Professor of Mathematics

The Coalition to Save the University of Missouri Press

University of Missouri Press is closing

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, May 24, 2012 11:36 am

University of Missouri Press is closing after more than five decades of operation, UM System President Tim Wolfe announced this morning.

The press, which publishes about 30 books a year, will begin to be phased out in July, although a more specific timeline has not been determined.

Ten employees will be affected. Clair Willcox, editor in chief, declined to comment but did note that neither he nor any of the staff knew about the change before a midmorning meeting.

In a statement, Wolfe said even though the state kept funding to the university flat this year, administrators "take seriously our role to be good stewards of public funds, to use those funds to achieve our strategic priorities and re-evaluate those activities that are not central to our core mission."

William Peden, a member of MU's English department faculty, started UM Press in 1958. It has published roughly 2,000 books in its history, UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said. Many are academic works, but UM Press titles also include former U.S. Sen. Jean Carnahan's "Don't Let the Fire Go Out!" in 2004 and a recent release, "On Soldiers and Statesmen" by John S.D. Eisenhower, son of President Dwight Eisenhower.

In 2009, the system cut seven UM Press positions, but it still has not been able to operate without a deficit, Hollingshead said. The UM System gives the press a \$400,000 yearly subsidy.

A committee of administrators at MU is exploring new models that could support scholarly communication in new ways that take advantage of changing technology, Provost Brian Foster said.

"Technological changes have turned media up on their head, and that's turning scholarly communication on its head," he said. "It's more than publishing a book; it's a much broader change."

Communication, he said, is "central to successful research, but given how the system is in such fundamental change, we just don't know where it's going."

— Janese Silvey

Press closure by university shocks many

Janese Silvey | Posted: Friday, May 25, 2012 2:00 pm

The director of a national organization of university presses said he was shocked yesterday when he learned the University of Missouri System plans to shut down its press.

UM Press is a member of the Association of American University Presses, but Executive Director Peter Givler said he first learned about its closure from a Tribune story. "I had no idea this was coming," he said.

Neither did the 10 UM Press staff members, the editor in chief said yesterday after UM President Tim Wolfe announced his decision.

The 54-year-old campus publishing house does not make money and relies on \$400,000 a year from the system, UM officials said. Wolfe said the closing is part of a plan that prioritizes how the university spends money.

MU Provost Brian Foster said a campus committee has been formed to study ways to use technology to promote scholarly communication now published through UM Press. But that committee has not met since January and was talking about ways to collaborate with other departments, not closing down the press, said John Budd, a committee member and professor in the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies.

"We were talking about re-envisioning the way the press might work in today's world of scholarly communication," he said.

Budd said in earlier conversations there was mention of closing the press only as a last resort.

"I think it diminishes the university's standing within its peer community," he said of the decision to close the press. "I hope this wasn't based purely on financial or fiscal grounds. The UM System and MU in particular needs to be cognizant of its responsibilities as a research university."

Rice University attempted a digital scholarly publishing operation, but it closed in 2010 after four years. Otherwise, few universities have looked toward closing their presses to offset economic woes.

"I can tell you this is not a national trend," Givler said. "The university press community in this country has been very stable."

Many get subsidies from their universities, he said.

In 2005, UM Press book sales reached nearly \$1.5 million after publishing 65 books, according to

Tribune archives. But it's averaged about 30 titles a year since opening in 1958, UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said.

Because UM Press is under the helm of the system, closing it without faculty involvement doesn't appear to violate any rules.

"Certainly it's not an educational department," Faculty Council Chairman Harry Tyrer said. "But it provides a service, a means of being able to publish specialty books for faculty, so that's a loss in itself."

Tyrer said he understands the argument that technology has changed the way information is published and consumed and that he is not surprised UM Press has fallen victim to those changes.

"There are so many other outlets people can find, places where they can go ahead and publish," he said. "I don't know of any individual who publishes who sees that as their only place to publish and get their material out."

Other Missouri universities continue to operate presses, including Truman State, Webster and Southeast Missouri State universities. Truman State University Press Director Nancy Rediger said she is keeping an eye on UM's situation and was surprised by the news.

"I'm very sorry that the press is going to close," she said. "There are big changes going on in scholarly publishing right now."

Rediger thinks the closure might send more regional authors to Truman's publishing shop.

"That certainly could be one result," she said.

Past efforts aimed to save **press**

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, May 30, 2012 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri System has spent a decade and thousands of dollars trying to help its publishing house become a sustainable operation, administrators say.

And the decision to close UM Press was not taken lightly, said Steve Graham, associate vice president of academic affairs.

“We realize the importance of scholarly publishing,” he said. “There’s no question that we see that as an important role for universities.”

The press was requiring a \$400,000 subsidy, down from larger subsidies in the past, and operating with a deficit, he said.

Discussions about how to make the press viable date back to former UM President Manuel Pacheco, who served from 1997 to 2002, Graham said. Former President Elson Floyd later hired a development officer to try to raise money for the press, an effort that was not successful, and the system has brought in consultants to try to figure out how to make it sustainable, he said. In 2009, the press’ staff was cut from 18 to 11 people, and in 2010, the UM System provided \$85,000 worth of software to help the press become more efficient. “There were earnest efforts over a several-year period of time,” Graham said.

Some have argued that \$400,000 is not significant in the university operating budget, which is about \$1 billion.

“I could recoup this amount of money by eliminating two upper-level administrative positions somewhere on our four campuses,” said Gary Ebersole, a history and religious studies professor and chairman of the UM-Kansas City Faculty Council. “Should we close the libraries as well, since they are not income-producing units?”

UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said the amount is significant to the university’s budget. “The idea that the press has unfairly been targeted without efforts to save it is false. Cuts are taking a variety of forms from vice presidents to the press,” she said, referring to two system-level associate vice president positions that also have been cut.

Wolfe explains UM Press decision, says better model sought

Janese Silvey | Posted: Friday, June 1, 2012 2:00 pm

University of Missouri administrators are hashing out ways to create a new and sustainable model to operate a university press.

But any future press won't look like the current operation. Discussions are under way about how to operate a new type of university publishing house.

"We believe the publication of scholarly work is important," UM President Tim Wolfe told the Tribune, speaking publicly for the first time since announcing the closure of UM Press last week. "We're working very diligently on what" the new press "will look like."

Details are unclear, but Steve Graham, associate vice president of academic affairs, compared the proposed business model to the way The Missouri Review now operates. The Missouri Review is a highly-regarded literary magazine edited by an English professor who uses graduate students and interns to assist with editing.

Although any proposed press is expected to have digital and other components, books also could be printed, and there is "significant interest" in continuing to publish books by regional authors that preserve Missouri's history, he said.

Wolfe, a former software company president, compared the move to Wal-Mart setting up a successful store in the same location where an independent store went bankrupt. The same products were sold, he said, but Wal-Mart's business model was more successful.

The analogy wasn't comforting to Bruce Miller, a Chicago-based publisher's representative who is leading a campaign opposing closure of the current UM Press. He argued that UM Press already is successful but said he would need to hear more details about the new plan before opining. Miller started a Facebook page, "Save the University of Missouri Press," that had more than 1,000 supporters as of this morning.

Ned Stuckey-French, who is in the English department at Florida State University, also is waiting for more details.

"I'm encouraged but will want to see what it's going to be," he said. "I want to see the proportion of student interns to trained professionals on the staff."

The current 10 UM Press employees are not expected to be involved in any new operation. Wolfe said he does not yet know how the UM System will use the press's current building off LeMone Industrial Boulevard.

Talk of closing the current press began early this year when the UM System was facing a 12.5 percent reduction in state funds. Although the cut did not materialize, Wolfe said chancellors and provosts on all four UM campuses agreed the press as it now operates is not a priority.

The system provides the UM Press with a \$400,000 annual subsidy. In addition to the subsidy, the press has operated with a deficit, although press employees who asked not to be identified said the press was not expecting to operate with a deficit in the coming fiscal year.

Wolfe said he was not aware of that but said it will not change the fact the system pays a subsidy.

Past efforts to make the press sustainable have failed, Graham said. He noted that former UM President Gary Forsee had asked press staff to whittle down the subsidy to a smaller amount, which was not accomplished.

Wolfe acknowledged he has never visited the UM Press or spoken to the employees, nor did he consult with faculty about closing the current operation. He argued that the matter involved specific employees, limiting his ability to talk about it with outside groups.

In addition to consulting with chancellors and provosts, Wolfe said he sought advice from former MU Chancellor Richard Wallace.

"I don't feel the best decisions come in a vacuum," he said. "It's important to collaborate with bright people, and that's exactly what I did."

Curators ignore opponents of UM Press closure

Janese Silvey | Posted: Tuesday, June 26, 2012 7:57 pm

About 30 people who turned out to a University of Missouri Board of Curators meeting yesterday in hopes of voicing concerns about the closure of the UM Press weren't given a chance to do so.

Curators — who rarely have attendees at their meetings — ignored the subject of the press and the unusually large audience. Board meetings typically do not have time allotted for public comments, but press supporters were hoping to have a chance to make remarks. At the end of the meeting, some curators and administrators went into a sports-related news conference as others went straight into a closed-door meeting.

Although not every attendee at the board meeting was there for the press, roughly 30 people from the Save the University of Missouri Press campaign were there.

The board is holding its annual meeting at the Reynolds Alumni Center on the MU campus a month after UM President Tim Wolfe announced the university press would be phased out starting next week.

If nothing else, protest organizer Jane Lago said, she hopes a strong showing lets current UM Press staff, some of whom were in attendance, know they have support.

Although supporters weren't at the meeting this morning, Wolfe addressed the closure of the press during his remarks, saying the university still is committed to scholarly publishing.

"The decision was not easy," he said, noting that he consulted with chancellors and provosts. "Since the announcement, we have been very impressed to see such support for the university press. We've been presented with some interesting ideas and proposals regarding the press moving forward."

Board Chairman David Bradley said he hopes the university will have details about a new press on the MU campus soon.

"We're still looking at an alternative for a press," he said. "We should have something shortly, and I think we'll come up with something I hope they're happy with. We've not forgotten about the university press."

Closing the UM Press as it currently exists is expected to save the UM System \$400,000, but some question whether losses in donations and potential litigation will quickly eat the savings.

Tom Quirk, an MU English professor, said he could envision breach-of-contract lawsuits if the

university breaks contracts with authors expecting their books to be published or litigation over employment issues if not publishing hurts someone's ability to gain tenure.

Wolfe said all of the current contractual obligations with authors will be fulfilled.

Some, including a former UM president's daughter, have posted in online forums that they will redirect future donations.

Phasing out the press is part of a \$26 million pool the system hopes to reinvest in other areas considered higher priorities.

But there should be no higher priority in a university setting, said Dan Jaffe, a professor emeritus who drove from Kansas City to attend the meeting.

"The university is supposed to create knowledge, disseminate knowledge and contribute to the community," Jaffe said. "When a university press is eliminated, a university is not representing those things."

UM Press employees await word on layoffs

Janese Silvey | Posted: Monday, July 2, 2012 2:00 pm

University of Missouri Press employees reported to work as usual this morning, even though the phase-out of the university system's publishing house officially started yesterday.

It's unclear when the press office will actually close. UM System spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said there is no timeline, even though the system 2013 budget, which no longer includes a \$400,000 subsidy for the press, went into effect yesterday.

There were no signs of the office closing shop this morning at the building off LeMone Industrial Boulevard. The titles still in print were on display on a front office bookshelf, and copies of the current catalog were up for grabs at the reception desk. Also on display was a copy of the press's history by former interim UM President Melvin George, written to mark its 50th anniversary four years ago.

Employees declined to come out of their offices to speak with a Tribune reporter. No press employee has left since May, when UM President Tim Wolfe made the announcement that the press would close, interim director Dwight Browne said last week, clarifying misinformation the MU Faculty Council had received.

Reached by phone, Editor-in-Chief Clair Willcox said he and another acquisitions manager at the UM Press expect to be the first to go, although they have not yet received a layoff date. Some employees could remain on the payroll through late fall, he said, because the UM Press is contractually committed to a fall list of books that still must be edited, designed, produced, distributed and marketed.

"We have not been given a timeline in terms of when we will be laid off as individuals or an exact timeline for when the press itself will end," publicity manager Jennifer Gravley said in a phone conversation.

Wolfe has said the Columbia campus is exploring ideas for a new type of press that would be self-supporting. Those involved in the discussions on campus said it is too early to announce details, although the system has suggested student interns would be used.

Ned Stuckey-French is in the English department at Florida State University and is helping to lead efforts to protest the closure. He fears a new model will ignore the need for a professional editorial staff and a marketing department. He also worries any new press would live off proceeds from the

existing back list of 2,000 titles the UM Press created over its 54-year history.

Stuckey-French, along with Chicago publishing representative Bruce Joshua Miller, have collected more than 4,200 signatures on a petition calling on Wolfe to reverse his decision. They also oversee a Facebook campaign that has more than 2,250 participants.

Dozens of people attended last week's UM Board of Curators meeting in Columbia to show support for the press.

Authors leave UM Press amid controversial shakeup

Janese Silvey | Posted: Tuesday, July 17, 2012 2:00 pm

Correction appended

Don Spivey wants the rights to his book back: The University of Miami professor no longer wants to be associated with the University of Missouri or its new university press model.

After receiving details of a proposed new UM Press, Spivey — author of "If You Were Only White" published by UM Press in mid-May — told UM President Tim Wolfe he wants to move his book to another publishing house.

"After 12 years of research to achieve the definitive biography of the legendary Satchel Paige, I think you can understand why I want the book, in all of its forms, in competent and stable hands for both the short and the long term," Spivey wrote in an email to Wolfe.

That's the real fallout over the decision to shutter the traditional publishing house and replace it with an experimental model on the MU campus, said Clair Willcox, editor-in-chief at the UM Press.

"We've already seen a number of people who have spoken up and said, 'I wouldn't send my manuscript to that organization. I deserve professional treatment,' " he said.

Other authors who expected to see their books in an upcoming UM Press catalog also are turning to publishers elsewhere, including Ike Skelton. Skelton — who served Missouri's Fourth District in the U.S. House for more than 30 years — had been working with the UM Press to publish his memoirs until Wolfe announced in May the press was closing.

"Someone else is going to publish it, someone outside of Missouri, sadly," Skelton said. "There's no question about it, I would prefer that Missouri publish it. It's a Missouri story. ... It's very unfortunate and, I think, shortsighted, frankly, not just for me but for other Missouri authors."

MU administrators yesterday released details of a new press that would be housed in McReynolds Hall next to the Missouri Review literary magazine. Speer Morgan, editor of the magazine, has been tapped to direct the press, which also will include an editor-in-chief, a managing editor and a professional marketing director. Graduate student interns are expected to do much of the work.

Morgan said the positions will require different skill sets than current UM Press employees have. The 10 UM Press workers still are waiting to hear when they're going to be fired.

Administrators have cited various reasons for closing the current press. Wolfe has said it was a move

to save the system the \$400,000 subsidy that helps fund the operation, but it's unclear what the new press will cost. MU Provost Brian Foster said there's a draft budget but did not give a dollar amount. Foster said the move is in response to a changing market and that the new press will take advantage of new technologies.

But the existing UM Press already offers its published works electronically through eight available formats, Willcox said. "One of the immediate reactions here by staff members is we already do all of that and more," he said, referring to details of the new press.

Opponents of the move have collected roughly 4,800 signatures on a petition and are still fighting, said Bruce Joshua Miller, a Chicago-based book representative. They're expected to attend an American Association of University Professors meeting at 11 a.m. next Tuesday in Room 2501 at the MU Student Center to discuss the situation. "If they thought this announcement would put an end to the controversy," Miller said, "I'm afraid it's only thrown gasoline on the fire."

This page has been revised to reflect the following correction:

SECOND THOUGHTS: Tuesday, July 17, 2012

A story yesterday about the University of Missouri Press incorrectly said author Don Spivey is a professor at the University of California-Davis. He is at the University of Miami.

New press will resolve book rights issues

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, July 19, 2012 2:00 pm

University of Missouri administrators aren't sure yet what they're going to do about authors who want the rights to their books back after the university announced changes to the UM Press.

The latest is John Shelton Reed, who has written 19 books, five of which were published through the UM Press. Yesterday, he sent a letter to system administrators asking that the rights to all of them be returned.

"It may be that I do not need to ask, since it appears that the press with which I signed contracts will soon no longer exist," he wrote.

UM President Tim Wolfe announced in late May that the UM Press would be phased out starting July 1. MU announced this week the creation of a new press that will combine publishing functions with teaching.

UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said it will be up to those at the new press to determine whether to relinquish rights but that a decision has not been made. If rights aren't returned, it might become a legal matter, which would send the issue back to the UM System.

Reed told the Tribune he does not want to be associated with the new press because he does not believe it will be an authentic university publishing house.

Author Don Spivey also asked that rights to his biography of Satchel Paige be returned after learning details of the new press.

"Incidentally, I've heard from other authors who are interested in doing the same thing," Reed said. "We may have a whole bunch of us who want to get released from our contracts."

The university also is poised to lose out on what had been a spring 2013 list of books now being snatched up by other publishing houses, including Macmillan Publishers, Oxford University Press and Rutgers University Press, among others, said Clair Willcox, editor-in-chief of the UM Press. Former Missouri Congressman Ike Skelton is taking his memoirs elsewhere as well.

Meanwhile, Speer Morgan, an English professor who has been named director of the new press, has begun the search for an editor-in-chief. In a query letter to potential candidates, he said the backlist of books generates about \$800,000 a year, but that figure would decrease if authors are released from their contracts.

Wolfe has said the UM Press needs to close because it requires a \$400,000 subsidy from the system. It's unclear whether the new model will be less expensive, especially if rights are relinquished and book revenue drops.

Ten employees are expected to be fired and replaced by three who will partly serve as faculty members. The new editor-in-chief will be paid \$110,000, Morgan said in his letter. Willcox makes \$63,579.

The announcement of a new model for the press has fueled an already-angry group of authors, publishers and observers from across the country. A petition calling on Wolfe to reverse the decision had about 5,000 signatures by this morning, and critics plan to meet at the MU Student Center at 11 a.m. Tuesday.

"We are going through a 'perfect storm' of bad publicity at the moment due to the fact that the management of the transition was done so awkwardly," Morgan wrote in his letter. "Aside from that, which I believe is beginning to calm down, it will be a completely renewed operation which will allow the new editor to redefine the press."

UM Press staffers say rationale behind new model is bogus

They say talk is 'demoralizing.'

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, July 21, 2012 at 2:00 am

Updated: 3:07 pm, Tue Jan 29, 2013.

Correction appended

University of Missouri Press employees say they're frustrated that university administrators have indicated that a new publishing house will be more innovative than its predecessor.

MU officials on Monday released details of a new press model that will take advantage of new digital technologies and serve as a teaching tool for graduate student interns. But the UM Press already uses a variety of digital book formats and has an internship program that has taught dozens of graduate students every year about scholarly publishing, said John Brenner, acquisitions manager.

"To say they're going to do new things, when we've been doing those things well for years, is beyond demoralizing, it's infuriating," Brenner said. "How could they not know we do these things?"

UM President Tim Wolfe in May said the press would be phased out starting this month. The 10 press employees had remained mum about the situation, but several of them opened up this week after details of a new press emerged.

Speer Morgan, director of the new press, fueled the fire when he sent a letter to potential candidates for the new editor-in-chief position. Morgan, an English professor, wrote that he is looking for someone who will embrace electronic marketing and experiment with new forms of delivery. He also promises a salary of \$110,000 — about \$50,000 more than Clair Willcox, the current editor-in-chief makes — and said the "current gross income of the press" off the backlist of book titles is about \$800,000.

Morgan and MU Provost Brian Foster have said current press employees can apply for the three jobs expected to open at the new press, but they also said they're looking for people with different skill sets. The letter of inquiry, though, went to professionals who have experience at traditional university presses.

"I am utterly outraged by Morgan's recruitment letter for a number of reasons, but two cannot pass without comment," Willcox said in an email. "First, it is clear both from the letter and from the identities of at least some of those to whom it was sent that he is seeking applications for positions that would require precisely the same

qualifications now held by the employees who are being laid off. Because he has stated publicly that the present employees do not have the 'skill sets' for the new positions, he is essentially attempting a pre-emptive lockout of our staff from openings at the university.

"Second, his reference to the 'current gross income' of the press is utter nonsense and is further evidence of his ignorance about book publishing and our operating statement," Willcox continued. "The figure to which he refers is commonly known to those in our profession as 'net sales,' a completely different concept. This is a 'gross' error that will amount to a red flag for any book publishing professionals who receive his absurd letter."

University administrators yesterday released answers to some frequently asked questions about the new press, saying it will employ half the number of employees as the current press.

UM Press workers, though, say they don't understand how the three professionals expected to run the experimental model will be able to do the actual work.

For instance, Beth Chandler, marketing manager, wants to know who will replace the sales representatives who travel the country pitching book titles to buyers such as Barnes & Noble and Amazon. And buyers want to be assured that they can return books, making book returns a significant function of the press staff, she said.

Details are being discussed during the transition, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

UM administrators don't know yet what they'll do with the UM Press facility off LeMone Industrial Boulevard. The press office pays the mortgage, utilities and maintenance, in part, using the \$400,000 yearly subsidy from the UM System that it received until July 1.

Also unknown is whether Morgan and MU will release rights to previously published books to authors who request them. So far, three authors have formally requested rights be returned to them.

Current UM Press workers are in limbo. They say they can't seek other employment until their layoffs are effective, because they're expecting severance pay.

It's been tough to come to work for the past two months, said Jennifer Gravley, publicity manager. "To say it's been difficult would be an understatement," she said. "But it's very heartening to see the fight to save the press and to see people who believe in our mission and think it's important."

About 5,000 people have signed a petition asking Wolfe to reverse his decision and keep the traditional publishing house running. Critics of the decision are meeting at 11 a.m. Tuesday at the MU Student Center.

SECOND THOUGHTS: published Sunday, July 22, 2012.

A story yesterday about the University of Missouri Press misidentified Beth Chandler, press marketing manager, as Beth Candler.

© 2013 Columbia Daily Tribune . All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Previous Article: Poor yields push

corn higher

**Next Article: DRUNKEN DRIVING
DISPOSITIONS**

Topics: Higher Education

See more recent comments >

Comments (8)

The opinions expressed below are those of the readers who submitted them. Readers are solely responsible for the content of their comments.

Read the Comments

© Copyright 2013, Columbia Daily Tribune , Columbia, MO. [Terms of Use | Privacy Policy]

Meeting focuses on how to fight UM Press closure

Janese Silvey | Posted: Tuesday, July 24, 2012 2:14 pm

University of Missouri Press supporters plan to recruit students, reach out to state lawmakers and raise money in hopes of saving the 54-year-old publishing house.

Those were some of the ideas tossed out during a two-hour meeting yesterday between the American Association of University Professors and those who are fighting the university's plan to close the press and replace it with an experimental model on the MU campus.

"We'll win the fight only when we take it to the street," author William Least Heat-Moon told about 70 attendees during the meeting at the MU Student Center.

In May, UM President Tim Wolfe announced plans to phase out the press by cutting its \$400,000 subsidy starting July 1. Last week, the MU campus revealed plans for a new model to be directed by Speer Morgan, an English professor who oversees the Missouri Review literary magazine.

The plan has caused a national stir, prompting letters from academics and authors around the country and generating national media attention.

There are conflicting accounts of how the decision was made. Heat-Moon pointed a finger at Morgan because the new press is now in line to get \$800,000 in net sales that the press generates from its backlist. "Follow the money," he said. Morgan did not respond to messages from a reporter seeking comment.

The amount could decrease if authors are successful in getting back their book rights. So far, three have made formal requests that their rights be returned, and Heat-Moon urged other authors to do the same. He suggested writers get together and seek legal representation.

He also encouraged protesters to get students on board either through petitions or by asking for small donations.

Jonathon Jones, who is pursuing his doctoral degree in history, attended the meeting because he's worried the closure of the UM Press will devalue his degree. He said he's afraid it will tell future academic employers that he graduated from an institute that does not value academics.

A proposed new press on the MU campus that would heavily utilize graduate students is "a step above slave labor," Jones said. "We work hard, we work our butts off and teach quality classes, but we're not publishing professionals, so we should not be doing that."

Heat-Moon has pledged a donation to keep the traditional publishing house open and said supporters are about a fourth of the way into raising \$100,000, a mostly symbolic donation that would further snuff administration's argument that the press closure is a cost-savings move. MU also has said the new press will not make a profit and likely will operate in the red when it opens.

Leaders from the national AAUP suggested getting state lawmakers involved. That's how University of Virginia faculty were able to reverse that board's decision to fire President Teresa Sullivan earlier this summer, said Donna Potts, chairwoman of the assembly of state conferences for the national AAUP.

Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, said it would be inappropriate for legislators to mingle. "This is classically an internal decision," he said. "The greater principle here is the right of the university to govern itself."

Sen. Kurt Schaefer, who is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, agreed, saying legislators should not try to control how the university spends money. That said, Schaefer, R-Columbia, said he has expressed concerns about the press closure to university administrators.

"I have been assured the reorganization will make it a more viable entity," he said. "I'm waiting to see how this develops."

Potts said the national AAUP could get involved if faculty groups take a strong stand. The MU Faculty Council is expected to discuss the press at its meeting tomorrow at 3:30 in Memorial Union South. Morgan is expected to be there.

Faculty Council calls for delay in press closure

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, July 26, 2012 5:41 pm

Professors at the University of Missouri say they don't mind moving the UM Press from the system level to the Columbia campus, but they would like to be involved in that transition.

The MU Faculty Council yesterday voted unanimously to ask UM President Tim Wolfe to postpone the closure of the traditional UM Press pending further discussion.

Wolfe announced in May that the press would be phased out starting July 1. The first of 10 employees was laid off yesterday, but others are expected to remain on staff until later this year.

Speer Morgan is an English professor who has been appointed director of a new type of press expected to open on campus. He was on the agenda to address the council yesterday but did not attend.

Faculty Council is the official governing body of faculty at MU and is supposed to share governance with administrators. Wolfe has acknowledged that he did not consult with faculty groups — including the council that represents all four campuses — before deciding to shut down the press.

Members said they understood that the current press might have been operating with a bad business plan and said they don't mind MU revamping it.

"I'm eager to see more things from system returned to campus," said Clyde Bentley, an associate journalism professor. "I'm not enamored with the system running academia."

But he and others were adamant that Wolfe should have consulted with them to come up with a transition plan before making an announcement.

"We're now in a position of having to clean up their mess," council Chairman Harry Tyrer said.

Most faculty members agreed that a press is important to the university, but Johannes Schul, a biology professor, questioned the role of a traditional publishing house.

"Does the University of Missouri need to publish Ike Skelton's book, for example?" he asked, referring to the former congressman's memoirs that were expected to be published by UM Press but now will be published out of state.

Lois Huneycutt, an associate history professor who was in the audience, argued that a land-grant university does have a responsibility to preserve the state's history.

Lee Wilkins, a curators' professor of journalism, served on the press's editorial board and was invited to the council meeting to talk about the issue. Moving forward, she said, she has advised Wolfe and administrators to seek advice from people on campus who have a better understanding of how university presses work.

"Those are the people we fired," Karen Piper, an English professor, said, referring to press staff. She said she knows of no one in the English department who has experience operating a university press.

Council members did not embrace a longer version of the resolution that would have outlined guarantees about a UM Press model, saying the demands were too specific. The bigger concern was the lack of communication.

The resolution, said Stephen Montgomery-Smith, a math professor, "should send a message that this should never happen again."

Curators differ on perception of UM Press situation

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, July 26, 2012 2:00 pm

A member of the University of Missouri Board of Curators says he's worried that the closure of the traditional UM Press and subsequent national stir is affecting the university's reputation.

"I think we are all concerned when something rises to this level," said Wayne Goode, who also is a former state senator. "I don't think I'm alone. Most people in the administration as well as the Board of Curators and other university people are concerned. I hope this can be resolved."

Other curators, though, said they have confidence in a new experimental model being developed on the MU campus. MU released plans for that new press last week, two months after UM President Tim Wolfe announced the system would no longer fund the traditional publishing house.

"It's not closing," Chairman David Bradley said. "It's getting a fresh start."

Goode — who wrote a foreword for "The Art of the Missouri Capitol," published by the UM Press — would not discuss whether he thinks Wolfe should reverse the decision to replace the press. But he did say he thinks Wolfe "probably made a quick decision based on advice that he got and maybe didn't have a feel for the ramifications."

Even having insight into how the press operates, Goode said, "I did not see this rising to the level that it has."

News about the university's plans for the press has made national headlines. During a concert in Columbia this week, Grammy winner Lucinda Williams asked the university to "take a second look at saving" the traditional publishing house.

Williams' father founded the University of Arkansas Press. A video of her comments was posted on YouTube.

Current press employees and others familiar with the industry have questioned the legitimacy of the new press, which is expected to rely heavily on graduate students. Several UM Press authors have asked for the rights to their books back, saying they don't want to be associated with the new press.

Bradley and Curator Warren Erdman said they have faith that the proposed model will be successful. Administrators are "committed to implementing the new model in a way that can be a template for others to look to in the future," Erdman said.

And if it doesn't work, Bradley said, "they'll keep tweaking it until it does make sense."

The decision to close the traditional press prompted the daughter of a former UM System president to publicly call on Wolfe to resign. Mary Ratchford Douglass' father, C. Brice Ratchford, was a longtime university employee who served as president from 1971 to 1976.

In an email, Douglass said she believes Wolfe is not qualified to lead a major university system.

"How could he be?" she asked, noting that he has not attended graduate school, been a faculty member or been involved in grant or research proposals.

"If he has even half the leadership skills required for the president of the University of Missouri, he will recognize he is in over his head and leave gracefully," said Douglass, a businesswoman who has also said she will redirect a "two comma" donation from MU. "I am sure he is good at running something. Clearly not the University of Missouri."

In a statement, Wolfe said he was honored to be asked to serve and knew the job would require making "difficult tradeoffs."

"After nearly six months on the job, I can safely say I learn more and gain even more understanding about the university every day and will continue to make the difficult decisions required of this position in consultation with faculty, academic and administrative leaders at the system and at our four campuses," he said.

Erdman and Bradley shrugged off Douglass' suggestion as "ridiculous."

"I think Tim Wolfe is a good person," Goode said. "I think he's solid, and I think he'll do a good job at the university."

Wolfe says he's open to talk to faculty about new press

Janese Silvey | Posted: Friday, August 3, 2012 2:00 pm

University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe says he isn't going to change his mind about closing the UM Press, but he is willing to talk to faculty about what a future model might look like.

Wolfe on Monday is meeting behind closed doors with MU Faculty Council's executive committee after the full council last week approved a resolution asking him to postpone closing the press pending further discussions.

In an email, Wolfe said he thinks the meeting will show "we're not nearly as far apart on our core values as some have speculated. ... Like Faculty Council, I absolutely believe there will continue to be a place for printed scholarly books. More than just 'going digital,' the new model represents a stronger integration into the academic units on campus."

Some MU Faculty Council members said they don't mind the idea of moving the press onto the MU campus as long as quality isn't compromised, Chairman Harry Tyrer said. Speer Morgan, an English professor tapped to direct the new model, has said he plans to hire three professionals to replace the 10 UM Press employees and rely on graduate student interns to do the rest of the work.

"I think that people are looking for the quality of the new press to be similar or the same as the quality of the traditional press," Tyrer said. "That's an issue that needs to be looked at. How we accomplish that, that's another question."

One idea would be to hire current press employees at the new operation. Tyrer said he doesn't want to give the staff false hope but said "that's certainly something we ought to put on the table."

Wolfe's May announcement to close the press created a national stir that has caught the attention of the American Association of University Professors. Robert Kreiser, the national associate secretary of the AAUP, sent Wolfe a letter yesterday outlining concerns that he violated principles of shared governance by not involving faculty in the decision.

Regardless of what entity had oversight of the UM Press, "it seems plain that the administration and board should have consulted with the faculty before reaching the decisions it did regarding the press," Kreiser wrote. "The process reportedly followed by the administration, in suddenly announcing the closure of the existing press and replacing it with an experimental 'new press model,' seems to us at odds with aforementioned principles of shared responsibility and action."

Wolfe, in his email, said he recognizes "that the communication of process, facts and plans has been

less than optimal."

Wolfe also said the university is trying to ensure that the press is transferred to campus seamlessly and without disruption of service. The UM Press "as experienced by its customers, authors and vendors will have no discontinuity of services," he said. "People can still buy books, and books are still being published and marketed. During our time of transition, we are establishing protocols to ensure there is little to no disruption."

Books on the fall list are being published, but authors who were hoping to be on a spring list are now looking elsewhere. Former Congressman Ike Skelton said he's shipping his memoirs to an out-of-state publisher, and several authors have asked for the rights to their books back.

Curators differ on perception of UM Press situation

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, July 26, 2012 2:00 pm

A member of the University of Missouri Board of Curators says he's worried that the closure of the traditional UM Press and subsequent national stir is affecting the university's reputation.

"I think we are all concerned when something rises to this level," said Wayne Goode, who also is a former state senator. "I don't think I'm alone. Most people in the administration as well as the Board of Curators and other university people are concerned. I hope this can be resolved."

Other curators, though, said they have confidence in a new experimental model being developed on the MU campus. MU released plans for that new press last week, two months after UM President Tim Wolfe announced the system would no longer fund the traditional publishing house.

"It's not closing," Chairman David Bradley said. "It's getting a fresh start."

Goode — who wrote a foreword for "The Art of the Missouri Capitol," published by the UM Press — would not discuss whether he thinks Wolfe should reverse the decision to replace the press. But he did say he thinks Wolfe "probably made a quick decision based on advice that he got and maybe didn't have a feel for the ramifications."

Even having insight into how the press operates, Goode said, "I did not see this rising to the level that it has."

News about the university's plans for the press has made national headlines. During a concert in Columbia this week, Grammy winner Lucinda Williams asked the university to "take a second look at saving" the traditional publishing house.

Williams' father founded the University of Arkansas Press. A video of her comments was posted on YouTube.

Current press employees and others familiar with the industry have questioned the legitimacy of the new press, which is expected to rely heavily on graduate students. Several UM Press authors have asked for the rights to their books back, saying they don't want to be associated with the new press.

Bradley and Curator Warren Erdman said they have faith that the proposed model will be successful. Administrators are "committed to implementing the new model in a way that can be a template for others to look to in the future," Erdman said.

And if it doesn't work, Bradley said, "they'll keep tweaking it until it does make sense."

The decision to close the traditional press prompted the daughter of a former UM System president to publicly call on Wolfe to resign. Mary Ratchford Douglass' father, C. Brice Ratchford, was a longtime university employee who served as president from 1971 to 1976.

In an email, Douglass said she believes Wolfe is not qualified to lead a major university system.

"How could he be?" she asked, noting that he has not attended graduate school, been a faculty member or been involved in grant or research proposals.

"If he has even half the leadership skills required for the president of the University of Missouri, he will recognize he is in over his head and leave gracefully," said Douglass, a businesswoman who has also said she will redirect a "two comma" donation from MU. "I am sure he is good at running something. Clearly not the University of Missouri."

In a statement, Wolfe said he was honored to be asked to serve and knew the job would require making "difficult tradeoffs."

"After nearly six months on the job, I can safely say I learn more and gain even more understanding about the university every day and will continue to make the difficult decisions required of this position in consultation with faculty, academic and administrative leaders at the system and at our four campuses," he said.

Erdman and Bradley shrugged off Douglass' suggestion as "ridiculous."

"I think Tim Wolfe is a good person," Goode said. "I think he's solid, and I think he'll do a good job at the university."

UM Press transition team to include faculty

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, August 8, 2012 2:00 pm

University of Missouri administrators are establishing an advisory group to help the UM Press transition from under the umbrella of the UM System onto the Columbia campus.

The group is being formed after UM System President Tim Wolfe met Monday with the executive committee of MU's Faculty Council. Led by former MU Chancellor Richard Wallace and Deborah Noble-Triplett, assistant vice president for academic affairs, the committee is expected to be made up of faculty members from all four campuses, authors and publishing experts. Wallace said he plans to solicit recommendations for members from MU's Faculty Council and other interested groups.

The council last month asked that Wolfe postpone his decision to close the current publishing house until further consultation with faculty. In a statement about the meeting, he made it clear that he is moving forward with his plans. But he also is trying to alleviate fears about the new director, Speer Morgan, who is an English professor and not a publishing expert and about plans to use graduate students to staff the press.

"The top priority in formulating a new model for the press must be quality," Wolfe said. "Our success will be greatly dependent on the involvement and creativity of our faculty across our four campuses."

The formation of the advisory group aims to squelch the backlash Wolfe received for not talking to professors or press staff before announcing in May that the current UM Press would close. During the meeting, Wolfe said he consulted with chancellors but did not reach out to "lower levels."

That reference indicates Wolfe and professors might have different ideas about what shared governance means, said Nicole Monnier, an associate teaching professor of Russian. "Shared governance means we are equal partners, not lower levels," she said. "Faculty, and Faculty Council as their representatives, are very much deserving of a seat at the table."

Criticism of the plan to close the current press has continued, and more authors have requested rights to their books back, including the authors of a six-volume collection of Missouri history. In a letter to Wolfe on Monday, the eight authors — including Gary Kremer, executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri — also wrote that they will not be willing to assist with plans to create a new type of press.

Other authors on a Save the University of Missouri Press Facebook page say they're following suit

and will hire an attorney if necessary. That Wolfe is now saying the press is transitioning from the UM System to the MU campus might be key in a legal debate: Authors argue their contracts were with the current UM Press.

But the new press will continue to do many of the things the current press already does, university spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said, citing information Noble-Triplett gave the group at Monday's meeting.

The new press also will have a broader scope, MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said. During the meeting, he used himself as an example: About 15 years ago, he pitched a book idea to the UM Press but was told the subject matter did not match its interests. The statement drew reaction from critics who wondered whether closing the current operation is retaliation for rejecting Deaton's idea.

In a statement to the Tribune, Deaton clarified that he was in the early stages of his book and that the press's input was merely part of his information-gathering process. He said he stands by his point that the UM Press could be an outlet for a wider array of scholarly subject areas.

Deaton clarifies statement; AAUP scolds Wolfe

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, August 8, 2012 3:49 pm

Greetings from the middle of my vacation. I know what you're thinking - wait, didn't you already have a vacation this year? Yes. Yes I did. But after a long hot summer, I thought another one would be nice before school is in full swing.

I did not attend Monday's meeting between Tim Wolfe and Faculty Council's executive committee, but I hear from all sides that it was very polite. Apparently, though, one idea that was tossed out was that the new press would have a broader audience than the current press. *Chancellor Brady Deaton used himself as an example: About 15 years ago, he pitched a book idea to the UM Press but was told the subject matter did not match the interest of the university's publishing house.*

The statement drew a firestorm from critics who wondered whether closing the current operation is retaliation for rejecting Deaton's idea.

He clarified his sentiments in an email sent to me through spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken. From Deaton:

- > *"To help make that point I referred*
- > *anecdotally to information obtained*
- > *as I contacted a number of presses*
- > *about 15 years ago about possible*
- > *interest in a book I was then in the*
- > *early stages of writing. In a phone*
- > *call to the University Press, I*
- > *learned that the subject did not*
- > *match the emphasis of our Press. That*
- > *helped me clarify direction for*
- > *seeking a publisher. As it turned out,*
- > *I never submitted a manuscript to our*
- > *Press or to any other, as I did not*

> *proceed with the book. I never viewed*
> *that information gathering process as*
> *a rejection at all, nor anything*
> *negative toward our or other presses*
> *that I contacted. In the context of*
> *Monday's meeting, I do not believe*
> *there was any negative connotation.*
>
> *“In the conversation Monday morning*
> *with Faculty Council Executive*
> *Committee, I then proceeded to refer*
> *to a meeting we recently held on*
> *campus with representatives of several*
> *colleges where we brought up the*
> *matter of potentially stimulating*
> *broader interest in our Press as an*
> *outlet for the many scholarly areas of*
> *our university. I think we should be*
> *open to that possibility. Most presses*
> *focus on specialty areas for a variety*
> *of reasons which tend to change over*
> *time.*
>
> *“I admire the success of our Press,*
> *greatly respect its focus, and the*
> *high quality it has established.*
> *Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to*

- > *stimulate consideration of new*
- > *strategies for developing interest in*
- > *publishing through the Press in ways*
- > *that ultimately elevate the scholarly*
- > *work of faculty here and elsewhere and*
- > *bring it to the attention of new and*
- > *broader readership. I believe that*
- > *commitment is shared by our faculty*
- > *and many others. I regret that my*
- > *personal reference led to any*
- > *different interpretation.. There was*
- > *no intent to be critical in any way of*
- > *the press, but to remind those*
- > *present of that presses specialize in*
- > *strategic ways.*
- >
- > *“As we look to the future, I believe*
- > *we will need to continually reassess*
- > *our direction with the Press, seeking*
- > *new approaches to obtain quality*
- > *material, developing new market*
- > *approaches and effective archiving*
- > *that insures availability to future*
- > *scholars. To state the obvious,*
- > *scholarly work has value and must be*
- > *preserved for the use and benefit of*
- > *future generations. That value is*

- > *reflected in university support for*
- > *scholarly publishing by our faculty*
- > *and students in a variety of outlets.*
- >
- > *“Our campus now has a fresh*
- > *opportunity to examine that*
- > *commitment. With faculty cooperation*
- > *we can demonstrate the value of*
- > *preserving the achievements of our*
- > *press and searching for new ways to do*
- > *even better. I appreciate the*
- > *frustrations of so many of the faculty*
- > *and believe we can make a concerted,*
- > *mutual effort to find a way through*
- > *this difficult situation. We are indeed*
- > *in a building process for establishing*
- > *a new sense of trust and*
- > *cooperation.”*

I don't get a sense that the executive committee members left the meeting with a renewed sense of trust and cooperation, but Wolfe apparently acknowledged he should have reached out to faculty (although he made the unfortunate reference to faculty as "lower levels") before hand. In a press release sent to me this morning, Wolfe said he "is committed to shared governance and realizes now that more faculty and others should have been consulted during the decision-making period surrounding the transition of the Press from System to MU campus."

If Wolfe doesn't quite get it yet, AAUP is trying to school him on what shared governance means. Yesterday, he got this note from the state AAUP office:

August 7, 2012

Mr. Timothy M. Wolfe Mr. David R. Bradley

President Chair, Board of Curators

University of Missouri System University of Missouri System

321 University Hall 316 University Hall

Columbia, Missouri 65211 Columbia, Missouri 65211

Dear President Wolfe and Chair Bradley:

The officers of Missouri Conference of AAUP, representing all members of the American Association of University Professors in our state, want to go on record in support of the resolution of MU Faculty Council of July 25, urging President Wolfe "to postpone the closure of the University [of Missouri] Press pending discussions with the faculty regarding the future of the Press."

We have followed events in the press and have considered official statements from University of Missouri administrators and from some of the people who work for the University of Missouri Press or are associated with it. We must conclude that the May 24 announcement of the Press closure was ill-advised, particularly because it did not take into account the interests of the major stakeholders and the broad scholarly community that is served by the Press. Better consultation with Press staff and with university faculty could have saved Missouri's flagship institution of higher education from this public embarrassment.

Our organization seldom takes official position on budgetary and other decisions internal to one campus or system. We feel obliged to do so, however, when such decisions apparently violate the key values of our Association: academic freedom, tenure, and shared governance. All three values are associated with the function of the Press, inasmuch as scholarly publication demonstrates academic freedom and is typically involved in tenure decisions.

It is the area of shared governance, however, where the announcement to close the Press raises the most serious concerns. This sudden announcement on May 24 followed a similarly sudden announcement of the closing of the Nuclear Science and Engineering Institute (NSEI) on March 15. Considerations to close or restructure important academic institutions must be taken in the clear light of day, having heard advice and objections, particularly from associated faculty. Otherwise, irreparable harm will come to the university.

We trust that doing such harm was far from the intentions of the administration of the University of Missouri. In a recent meeting with the MU Faculty Counsel, President Wolfe agreed that he did not consult with faculty and hoped not to repeat that mistake in the future. Though he also said he would not go back on this decision, Missouri Conference of AAUP would urge him to reconsider and restart the UM Press discussion in consultation with the faculty. You have recently received a very informative letter from Robert Kreiser, Associate Secretary of the Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance, at the Washington DC office of American Association of University Professors. We join him in offering any help that we can give to improve this alarming situation, one that seems to threaten shared governance at the University of Missouri, as well as the reputation of

the university in general.

Sincerely,

David K. Robinson

President, Missouri Conference of AAUP

Department of History

Truman State University

Kirksville MO 63501

#

That's all for now. Going back on vacation - see you Monday!

In my vacation haze, I left this sentence out in an earlier version. My apologies!

Editor wrote proposal for press in April

Janese Silvey | Posted: Tuesday, August 14, 2012 2:00 pm

A University of Missouri English professor was drafting plans for a new type of university publishing house well before UM System President Tim Wolfe announced the closure of the UM Press.

Speer Morgan — who is also editor of The Missouri Review literary magazine — sent a proposal for a new type of press to the UM System in April, according to documents the Tribune obtained through an open-records request. In late May, Wolfe said the current press would be phased out to save a \$400,000 yearly subsidy. Morgan last month was named director of a new university press on the MU campus.

Although backlash over the decision has caused administrators to rethink plans, much of Morgan's original proposal remains on the table. His plan, sent to Steve Graham, UM associate vice president for academic affairs, outlined a press that would partner with his literary magazine and the Missouri School of Journalism, involve teaching and take advantage of student interns.

The model is largely built off recommendations from Ben George, editorial director of Lookout Books, a press that partners with a literary magazine at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington. In March, George sent Graham ideas for a new type of press. He was paid a consulting fee of \$1,000 plus travel expenses, UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said.

One dramatic difference between the current UM Press and George's suggestions is a peer-review process. The current UM Press ensures quality by requiring, with rare exception, manuscripts to be reviewed by two outside experts, said Clair Willcox, who was laid off as editor-in-chief last month.

George dismissed the need for the process. "I don't think that the comments of peer reviewers are as valuable as the reaction to and reception of a book once it's published," he wrote, later saying: "I don't really think peer review is the right way to go."

In an email, Morgan said a new list would "be peer reviewed. The press will have a press committee consisting of members from all of the campuses."

It's unclear whether the new press will be more literary than scholarly in nature. In his plan, Morgan wrote that the role of university presses "as tenure validators may be insufficient justification for the cost of the press" and suggested the new press include categories such as art and literature, then, over time, include more specialized titles. And on several occasions, Graham and Morgan refer to

Graywolf, Coffeehouse and Milkweed, three not-for-profit literary presses. Morgan said in his email that the new press "should be experimental and flexible in its future areas of concentration, but at the same time it should not forget its historic strengths."

Morgan's original proposal also came with a timeline suggesting the UM Press close within the first two years.

"One possible approach might be to close it but indicate that the Columbia campus will maintain the University of Missouri Press list," he wrote in April. "It may suffice to state that UMC will continue to do all that it can to pursue publishing in the 21st century through its excellent journalism school, English department and Creative Writing Program, as well as its widely admired literary magazine TMR."

Still, Morgan says he was surprised by Wolfe's May announcement. "I was surprised because I had thought the planning of the new press would be further along before they closed the old press," he wrote in an email.

Morgan said he sent the proposal because he was asked to do so as a member of a committee looking at the future of the press. But other members of that committee said they were not asked to submit ideas, nor were they aware of discussions to close the press in favor of a new model.

Budgets Morgan prepared this summer for a new press reveal a \$100,000 endowment set up for the UM Press will be moved to the new model, as well as revenue from UM Press' backlist. "Speer Morgan is simply taking the money that's generated by the backlist plus the endowment and using it to fund this literary boutique press," Willcox said.

Other critics say the documents highlight Morgan's lack of publishing experience. "It strikes me that Speer is throwing proposals out, hoping one sticks," said Bruce Joshua Miller, a book representative from Chicago who has collected more than 5,000 signatures on a petition to keep the current press open.

Meanwhile, more than 30 authors have asked for the rights to their books back. UM administrators have asked them to hold off while the new model is under discussion.

Morgan's side of the story

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, August 15, 2012 11:37 am

Email exchanges and records obtained through the Sunshine Law shed some light on the decision to close the UM Press, but I'll be honest. Trying to get the truth and nothing but the truth has become like trying to untangle a wad of seriously knotted cords.

People I talk to seem to have slightly different versions of how things unfolded, and they aren't all conflicting. Frankly, there aren't two sides to this story. There are dozens.

Some people believe UM System administrators were going to close the UM Press before Speer Morgan came up with an alternative to salvage a publishing house. That doesn't directly conflict with the fact that he proposed a new model a month before UM System President Tim Wolfe announced closure of the UM Press.

Still. It's pretty clear from his proposal that Morgan was excited about the prospect of combining the press with his literary magazine, The Missouri Review.

Morgan sent two emails this week in response to the revelations in the records. To be fair, I'm simply going to cut and paste them so you can read verbatim his side of the story.

Here's the first:

> Janese,

>

> Over a year ago I was asked by Steve

> Graham to be a part of a committee to

> study how the press could be better

> managed. As a member of that

> committee, I was asked to offer

> suggestions concerning the Missouri

> Press, and I did so last April. After

> that time and while the committee was

> continuing to meet and discuss options

> for the press, System announced that
> they were closing the Press.
>
> I was surprised because I had thought
> the planning of the new Press would be
> further along before they closed the
> old press. Since that time the
> committee has continued to meet with
> the same purpose –deciding how to go
> forward with the new Press. This is
> obviously a time of radical changes in
> publishing, and several of us feel
> that a university press can also serve
> an educational and research function,
> particularly concerning the future of
> books and book media.
>
> Subsequently, MU released a statement
> about how we might move forward with a
> new press even though specifics had
> not been worked out. I was asked to
> draft a statement because I had
> already drafted some earlier
> recommendations on how the press might
> go forward. I did so.
>
> However, the final statement that went

- > to the press was much different than
- > my original draft because many members
- > of both System and MU administrators
- > weighed in on the new “imagined” press
- > would be. However, the concept
- > remained the same – that the new Press
- > will be moved to MU, and planning is
- > still underway. Last week a
- > transition team was named to continue
- > with the planning that began several
- > months ago. The transition team will
- > form an advisory committee soon, and
- > if I am asked to be on it, I will be
- > glad to do so.
- >
- > Speer

I've spoken to two other members of that committee, which Graham, an associate VP at U Hall, set up last year. Both said they weren't privy to plans for a replacement press nor were they asked to submit ideas. One member, Tom Quirk, an English professor, is now pretty worried about the whole situation. But more on that later.

Yesterday, Mary Jo Banken forwarded me a second email answering some questions I still had. Morgan wrote:

- >The question regarding what areas of interest the press should pursue, I believe that university presses have a combination of inherited strengths and areas of focus and at the same time the need to be flexible and move ahead. At times they should undertake changes, experimenting with other subjects. The short answer to the question is that it should be experimental and flexible in its future areas of concentration, but at the same time it should not forget its historic strengths.
- >The answer to your question about peer reviewers is yes, the list will be peer reviewed. The Press will have a press committee consisting of members from all of the campuses.
- >Regarding your question about whether this committee discussed closure of the press, no it didn't.

From the start, however, it was in fact openly discussing ways to relocate to the Columbia campus, which carried with it the suggestion of major changes in personnel and operations. In my early version of proposals (which you have in your emails) one of the options that I suggested was that the press simply transfer operations to the Columbia campus. In the later, more developed proposal, written after the press closure was announced, I suggested in the cover letter that there were obviously many possible options, including just setting up a separate campus office. So no, the early committee didn't openly discuss closure of the press. The later, revised proposal models were written after the president announced the press's closure.

>Regarding the partnering distribution method with Nebraska or some other press, that was one of three final options that were discussed. Its advantages and disadvantages are written about in the description.



CAMPUS CHATTER

UM Press series editors resign

By **JANESE SILVEY**

Wednesday, August 15, 2012 at 1:11 pm

The general editor of the Missouri Biography Series—a collection of 30-some biographies of notable Missourians—is calling it quits.

Bill Foley, a professor emeritus of history from the University of Central Missouri, wrote UM President Tim Wolfe his resignation letter today. It's a position he's held since the series began in 1990.

From his letter]It is not a step that I have taken

> lightly, but the latest revelations

> detailing the machinations surrounding

> the initiative to redesign the

> University of Missouri Press have

> confirmed my worst fears about its

> future prospects.

>

> Few, if any, reputable scholars will

> be willing to associate themselves

> with the ill-considered and quixotic

> imaginings of individuals who, it is

> now clear, place little value on the
> kind of traditional scholarship that
> has been and will continue to be a
> vital underpinning for any respectable
> institution of higher learning and who
> additionally have little understanding
> of the essential tenets of scholarly
> publication. This is a sad day for
> the University of Missouri Press and
> even more so for the University of
> Missouri. One is left to wonder how
> this sorry state of affairs has come
> about.

It's the latest in a growing pile of letters from authors and editors who are not interested in working with Speer Morgan's version of a university press.

Roger Launius also has [resigned as editor of the "Sports and American Culture" series, a 19-book collection, and has asked for the rights for his two UM books back.

Christopher Phillips, a professor at the University of Cincinnati, wrote Wolfe a particularly jabbing letter on Monday asking for rights back to the three books he still has with the UM Press. Phillips said he reserved judgment on the plan to reorganize the press but lost confidence in the whole thing.

The list of authors who have requested rights back is nearing 40.

Tom Quirk, an English professor and editor of the UM Press's Mark Twain and His Circle Series, is worried about the impact this situation as on the entire university.

In an email to me yesterday, Quirk—who served alongside Morgan on a committee formed to talk about the future of the press—said there is “good chance that the American Association of University Professors will issue a censure or sanction to the university, and if that happens, it will be difficult to recruit good faculty.”

MU is, indeed, on AAUP's radar. Earlier this month, Bob Kreiser with the national AAUP office sent Wolfe a letter citing concerns that the decision regarding the press did not involve faculty members.

Quirk also knows of no other Research-I university that doesn't have a university press—and it certainly doesn't look like professionals consider Morgan's small high-tech literary printer a university press.

It's unclear at this point whether the "new model" (drink! but only if you're stressed and have really good wine) will be eligible for membership in the American Association of University Presses. Without membership, Quirk doesn't suspect legitimate scholars are going to submit their manuscripts here.

"In sum, there are, potentially, some dire consequences that could result from this maneuver," he wrote.

The letters from editors and authors indicate there already have been.

© 2013 Columbia Daily Tribune . All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Previous Article: Wednesday Camp
Report: Tigers rewarded with field
trip

Next Article: William Foley's letter

See more recent comments >

Comments (1)

The opinions expressed below are those of the readers who submitted them. Readers are solely responsible for the content of their comments.

Read the Comments

© Copyright 2013, Columbia Daily Tribune , Columbia, MO. [Terms of Use | Privacy Policy]

Supporters celebrate legacy of UM Press

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, August 22, 2012 2:00 pm

For months, Clair Willcox has been trying to dispel the notion that the University of Missouri Press is stuck in the paperback age of publishing — and yesterday, he had an e-reader to prove it.

During a celebration of the UM Press, Willcox — laid off as editor in chief at the press last month — read an excerpt from a UM Press-published book from a Kindle.

UM System administrators have said they want to phase out the current UM Press and open a new high-tech press model on the MU campus that would publish books but also embrace new types of technology. Opponents argue that the press already offers titles in a variety of digital formats. The UM Press was "offering online databases long before the iPad was a gleam in someone's eye," Willcox said.

Roughly 100 professors, community members and students attended a celebration of the history of the press at Jesse Wrench Auditorium on campus. Sponsored by the Coalition to Save the University Press, the event included readings and book displays and also allowed press supporters to plan their next move in hopes of reversing the UM System's decision to close it.

"We are here to save the press by praising the press," Columbia author William Least Heat-Moon said. "We are not here to bury the press."

Heat-Moon is not affiliated with the UM Press but has been a vocal critic of plans to replace it with a new model. "The new model is bogus," he said. "It is totally, completely, absolutely and fully unnecessary, and we must not allow this change to happen."

MU officials announced last month English Professor Speer Morgan would direct a new press staffed mostly by graduate students. The model was based on a proposal Morgan sent to Steve Graham, UM associate vice president for academic affairs, in April.

Heat-Moon pledged \$100,000 to support the current press and called on others to also contribute. Some said they're worried, though, that donations would be redirected to the new press. The current press's endowment of \$100,000 now appears on a proposed budget for the new campus model.

That budget also shows the new operation relying on an initial \$575,000 from sales off the UM Press backlist. But that figure might be in flux: As of this morning, 45 authors have asked for the rights to their books back.

"I do not wish to be associated with the press if it is merely going to be a vanity press for MU

administration or faculty members rather than the fully functioning nationally-respected and fine press that it was before your changes," Tom Spencer, a former Missouri historian, wrote to the UM System yesterday requesting rights to his three books.

Ned Stuckey-French, who is in the English department at Florida State University, said he planned to meet with an attorney today to discuss legal action if rights aren't returned.

UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said the UM System is calling for nominations for an advisory committee including authors and faculty that will consider suggestions and make recommendations about the future press.

"We appreciate supporters of the University of Missouri Press coming together yesterday, and we continue to hear and listen to their concerns," she said. "Like them, we remain committed to strengthening the press to better serve the scholarly community."

UMKC faculty 'disappointed' with press decision

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, August 23, 2012 2:31 pm

For months, those who want to do away with the UM Press in exchange for something new have argued that the operation didn't belong under the helm of the system and that the other three campuses didn't want the darned thing.

But whoever on the Kansas City campus told system administrators that did not consult faculty first.

This week, the UMKC Faculty Senate overwhelmingly approved this resolution:

“The UMKC Faculty Senate contends that the University Press is an essential component of the research mission of the University of Missouri System and all of its campuses. As such, we are disappointed with the decision to close it down, and urge the UM President and all involved parties to postpone the closure of the press and to ensure that faculty from all four campuses are involved in all future decisions and discussions involving the UM Press.”

The latest plan involves creating an advisory committee composed of faculty members from across the system, along with authors, to suggest how to move forward. But, of course, the current proposal also houses the press at MU, making it a campus resource rather than a systemwide publishing house.

News of the KC resolution was sent to MU Faculty Council today, hours before the local group is supposed to decide on its own press-related resolution.

The Columbia version mirrors a petition opponents of the press closure have drafted. It calls on UM President Tim Wolfe to rescind the decision to shut down the press and stop the layoffs of the nine employees left there.

If previous conversations are an indication, it's not going to be a slam-dunk vote. Some professors have questioned whether the press — and publishing books such as Ike Skelton's memoirs — is the university's responsibility. Proponents of the press argue that it is part of MU's land-grant mission.

The meeting is at 3:30 today in Memorial Union South 203.

Faculty vote no on asking for press reversal

Janese Silvey | Posted: Friday, August 24, 2012 11:07 am

The University of Missouri Faculty Council yesterday agreed with administration that the UM Press should be housed on the Columbia campus rather than under the umbrella of the system.

That came after former MU Chancellor Richard Wallace promised the council that administrators will rely on faculty advice and are committed to making sure the university continues to have a high-quality academic press.

He also indicated more information is coming that might alleviate concerns.

"Hopefully next week we can share information about the current thinking as to where we might go and how badly we need an advisory committee," he said.

Faculty from all four campuses will be asked to nominate committee members next week, and the advisory group also will include authors. Asked whether it would tap into the expertise of current UM Press employees, Wallace said the answer will come "next week."

The council voted twice against calling on UM President Tim Wolfe to reverse his May 24 announcement that current UM Press operations would be phased out.

In July, MU announced plans for a new press model that would be directed by Speer Morgan, an MU English professor and editor of the literary magazine *The Missouri Review*. The model was based on a proposal Morgan sent to Steve Graham, associate vice president for academic affairs, in April. Now, administrators are "rethinking everything," Wallace said.

The Faculty Council voted 11-9 against asking Wolfe to rescind his decision and stop layoffs. The group tabled a longer version of a resolution that would essentially call on the UM System to commit to scholarly publishing.

That's not a problem, Wallace said, assuring the council that the university will continue to have an academic press that uses a peer review process.

In light of Wallace's comments that new information will come next week, some faculty members wondered whether that meant Wolfe had reversed his original decision to close the current press. Art Jago, a professor of management, proposed a resolution thanking him for doing so and asking him to now reverse all related actions. The resolution — an attempt to force Wolfe to clarify the situation — was voted down.

Some did express concern about the university's reputation in light of the controversy. More than 5,000 have signed a petition against the move, and 45 authors have requested rights to their books back.

But professors agreed to move forward.

"There's no denying the damage is done," said Rebecca Johnson, an associate professor in nursing and veterinary medicine. "We need to allow the advisory board to do its work and help get it fixed."

Many council members said they do not want the UM Press to go back to being a publishing house operated by system administrators and agreed having it on campus makes more sense.

Clair Willcox, former editor in chief at the press, said he sensed little concern at the council meeting for the employees who worked to build the press's reputation and are now being laid off.

"For some council members," he said, "the press seemed to be kind of a prize that they had been promised, and now they didn't want to relinquish it or share with the other three campuses."

Press to stay open, shift to MU campus Publishing house is now Columbia campus venture.

By Janese Silvey

Tuesday, August 28, 2012 at 10:52 am

Updated: 4:40 pm, Tue Jan 29, 2013.

The University of Missouri Press will remain open in its current building and with its current staff, administrators announced this morning.

Although the press is being shifted out of the UM System and put under the helm of MU, today's announcement essentially reverses the decision to close the 54-year-old publishing house. It also negates an earlier announcement that MU would develop a new type of university press. Administrators are forming an advisory committee to help the press move forward as a campus entity.

"I consider this a great victory, absolutely, but I don't consider this as over," said Ned Stuckey-French, a Florida State University English professor who helped organize a Coalition to Save the UM Press. "We shall see whether they can undo the damage they've done."

Since UM President Tim Wolfe announced May 24 that the university would phase out the press, several series editors have resigned and about 50 authors have asked for their rights back. MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said administrators are working with those authors individually as the situation evolves.

One UM Press employee, former Editor-in-Chief Clair Willcox, was laid off last month. The nine remaining employees have been asked to remain in their current roles, though acquisitions editor John Brenner said he has accepted another job. Dwight Browne will continue to serve as interim director, and the advisory committee will help with a search for a new editor-in-chief, who will also have a faculty role.

Speer Morgan, an MU English professor who had been tapped to direct a new press model, will have a leadership role as the press is integrated into campus, Banken said. Morgan is editor of *The Missouri Review* literary journal, which will "be working alongside the press," she said.

The UM System and MU are working out details of how the press will be subsidized in the future, Banken said.

In a statement, Wolfe said moving the press to MU will help integrate it with the university's academic and research missions.

"My goal is to develop a press that is vibrant and adaptive, but I realize that change is often difficult," he said. "I have been listening to the support and dedication the community and others have shown the press and make every

assurance that university administration is working to create the kind of press of which the academic community and those that it serves can be proud."

Stuckey-French questioned whether authors and new editors will want to work with the UM Press after the negative publicity the university received regarding the press over the summer. He said the university waited too long to make today's announcement. The UM Press also has lost some book titles that were expected to be included in the spring 2013 catalog.

"They can reverse the decision, but this does not reverse history," he said. "You can't put Humpty Dumpty back together again."

Some employees this morning said they were processing the new information but weren't yet ready to comment on the decision.

For faculty, today's decision is a victory and shows administrators are listening to concerns, said Craig Roberts, a member of MU Faculty Council's executive committee.

Although the council voted down two proposals that would have called on Wolfe to reverse the original decision, he said faculty members were concerned because he made that decision without their input.

"My major concern with this whole thing wasn't about the staff, per se, and it wasn't about whether or not the press should be following this model or that model," he said. "It was about the idea of a press and not having involvement in the decision."

© 2013 Columbia Daily Tribune . All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Previous Article: Tolton tops Calvary in volleyball

Next Article: County pursues help for 911 call center staff

Topics: Higher Education

See more recent comments >

Comments (36)

The opinions expressed below are those of the readers who submitted them. Readers are solely responsible for the content of their comments.

Read the Comments

© Copyright 2013, Columbia Daily Tribune , Columbia, MO. [[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)]

Focus for university press turns to mending fences

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, August 29, 2012 2:00 pm

Now that they've agreed to keep the doors of the University of Missouri Press open, administrators are going to have to figure out how to fund the operation while it recovers from lost time, how to acquire manuscripts with a staff shortage and how to keep current authors from fighting for their book rights back.

"There's no magic wand that's going to suddenly erase the past," former MU Chancellor Richard Wallace said. "Fences need to be mended. We're going to work hard to do that, with authors being up there very, very high."

Wallace is leading a team charged with transitioning the press from the UM System to the MU campus. Yesterday, administrators scrapped plans for a new type of press and said the current press would remain committed to scholarly peer-reviewed books, essentially reversing the May decision to phase it out.

The press is in production of its fall list. But employees spent the summer preparing to shut down the operation rather than working on future catalogs. Many authors who were on the spring 2013 list have taken their manuscripts elsewhere, and nothing has been acquired for a fall 2013 catalog. Acquisitions Editor John Brenner has accepted another job, and Editor-in-Chief Clair Willcox was laid off last month, leaving the press with one editor.

That means the UM Press is not going to generate normal revenue in the coming year and likely will require funding from the university that will exceed its previous subsidy of \$400,000. Financial details are being worked out, MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

"We need to pay the bills, whatever they're going to be," Wallace said.

If authors do get rights to their books back, it also would decrease the roughly \$700,000 in revenue generated from the backlist. Ned Stuckey-French, a Florida State University faculty member and co-organizer of a Save the UM Press Coalition, said he has heard from a dozen or so authors who plan to continue to pursue their book rights unless Willcox is reinstated.

An advisory committee is expected to help recruit a new editor-in-chief who will double as a faculty member. Speer Morgan, an MU English professor who was tapped last month to lead the now-defunct new press model, will have a role in the UM Press, although his title has not been determined.

Willcox said he doubts Morgan or administrators would welcome him back, especially since he's spoken up against the previous plans for that new model.

Bruce Joshua Miller, a Chicago-based book representative and co-organizer of the opposition, said, though, that Willcox might be the only person who could successfully repair the press's reputation after the summer-long controversy.

Wallace is aware of the damage and said the next step is to rebuild relationships with authors.

"The message would be we are going to have a high-quality academic university press," he said.

"The quality of that press has grown, and it is what it is because of those authors. That is the reputation and quality of the press. Stay with us. Please stay with us. We need you."

Morgan will have no press leadership role

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, August 29, 2012 4:46 pm

MU English Professor Speer Morgan, named last month as director of a now-scrapped new type of press, will not be involved in managing the current one.

That's the latest from MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken. Banken yesterday told me, then later confirmed, that Morgan would assume some sort of leadership role at the UM Press, which administrators said yesterday they'd keep open. Banken says she was mistaken that the role will be at the UM Press; rather, it will be a role in a Mizzou Advantage initiative that focuses on new technologies.

Here's the statement from the bureau:

- > Speer will not be involved in the
- > operation or management of the Press.
- > He will continue to direct The
- > Missouri Review, and he will have a
- > leadership role in our Media of the
- > Future Program, which is focused on
- > the impacts of rapidly changing
- > technology on the ways in which we
- > share and preserve information.

UM Press supporters push for editor's return

Janese Silvey | Posted: Wednesday, September 5, 2012 2:00 pm

The fight to save the University of Missouri Press has turned into a campaign to restore one man's position there.

Clair Willcox was laid off as editor-in-chief in July when the university was in the process of phasing out press operations. Last week, administrators announced the UM Press would remain open.

"They've made a good sort of first step in backing off the decision to close the press," said Peter Givler, executive director of the American Association of University Presses. "My personal opinion is a very good next step would be to rehire Clair Willcox."

Not only might the university have a tough time recruiting a qualified editor after the recent attempt to shut the press down, Givler said, but also an outsider might have a hard time mending fences.

"They've created an enormous ill will among people who were loyal supporters of the press," he said. "It seems to me Clair could play such an important role here. He does know the authors. He could get things moving much more quickly than somebody coming in from the outside and trying to start from scratch."

Asked whether he'd accept the position, Willcox said no one has approached him.

"Because I was laid off just a couple years shy of qualifying for full retirement benefits — though I had no plans for retiring in the near future — it would be foolish not to at least consider opportunities at the university for which I am qualified," he said.

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said the university had no comment about Willcox's position.

Administrators are forming a committee to help transition oversight of the press from the UM System to the MU campus. Letters asking people to serve on the committee will go out next week, Banken said.

Speer Morgan, the English professor and Missouri Review editor once tapped to direct a new press model, is no longer involved in the UM Press.

Banken said administrators also are finalizing responses to authors who have requested book rights. "Our continued hope is that each one of them will work with us as we move forward," she said.

Several authors have said in letters to the university that they would reconsider requesting their

rights back if Willcox is reinstated. Rehiring Willcox also is a condition for well-known local writer William Least Heat-Moon, who pledged a five-figure donation if the university reversed its decision to close the press.

Two other UM Press editors have accepted jobs elsewhere, leaving the entity with no editorial staff. The six remaining employees are putting out this fall's book list, but many authors on the spring list have taken their manuscripts elsewhere. Typically, editors would be acquiring manuscripts for a fall 2013 catalog now.

"Situations in the past where other presses have gone through turmoil ... what that does is creates a hole in the list," Givler said. "You're going to have a hole for maybe a year with only a few titles coming out. There's no way around it."

He said the AAUP has tools that could help the UM Press rebuild itself, including a fund to help pay for consultants to develop new business or editorial plans.

"Anything I can do, I'll do it," Givler said. "Anytime Clair or somebody new wants to reach out and ask for help, we'd do anything we can."

Faculty seek to analyze press action

Janese Silvey | Posted: Friday, September 7, 2012 2:00 pm

University of Missouri faculty members want to examine the process administrators used to try to close the UM Press as an example of what not to do when making future decisions.

At a workshop with top campus administrators yesterday, the MU Faculty Council proposed the idea of creating the committee to dissect how the decision was made to phase out the press. Members didn't vote to officially create the group, but several agreed it would be a good idea to study the decision to see where communication broke down.

"The situation with the press exposed some missing links in our chain," said Craig Roberts, a plant sciences professor. "This is a case study in how not to do something."

The annual Faculty Council workshop is typically held to get new members up to speed on issues, but yesterday, Chairman Harry Tyrer used the event to lead a discussion about shared governance — a governing structure in higher education that gives faculty members power over decisions involving academics. Some are concerned that recent decisions, including the previously planned shutdown of the press, were made by administrators without faculty involvement.

On May 24, UM System President Tim Wolfe announced the press would be phased out starting July 1. He cited financial reasons, saying the system could no longer afford to prioritize the press' \$400,000 subsidy.

Documents that surfaced later revealed an earlier discussion between a top UM System administrator and an MU English professor about the possibility of shutting down the scholarly press in exchange for a literary publishing operation on campus.

After a summer of protests and threats from authors wanting rights to their books back, Wolfe reversed the decision last month, saying the press would be transitioned as is to the MU campus.

Nicole Monnier, an assistant teaching professor of Russian, said she thinks the case study would be useful for professors and administrators. "A root-cause analysis would be very useful because we clearly have gotten so big that the usual ways of communicating don't work," she said. "Obviously, it was a nontransparent process that wasn't communicated, but I don't think many people in the room had the sense it was done deliberately. There were just informational gaps among the various players, and I would think we'd all be interested in trying to figure out where those gaps are and how we could shore them up."

A committee would need to have involvement from the UM System, said Mel George, a former UM administrator who served as interim president.

Chancellor Brady Deaton said he thought Wolfe would be open to the idea. "He's been clear that we made a mistake with that decision," he said.

UM spokeswoman Jennifer Hollingshead said Wolfe had not received any official request to participate yet, "but we would be happy to work with Faculty Council in a root-cause analysis."

UM Press: A look back

Janese Silvey | Posted: Friday, October 5, 2012 12:23 pm

Claire Kirch of Publishers Weekly began her account of Clair Willcox's return to the University of Missouri Press like this:

"The University of Missouri has learned that pens --- along with an ongoing and relentless social media campaign waged by a loose coalition of authors and a commission publishers' rep -- are indeed mightier than the sword."

Maybe.

I have a feeling dollars were mightier than anything else in the case of the press. Authors were in the process of retaining an attorney to help them get back rights to 130-some books. If successful, it would have cost the university a big chunk of revenues from the press's backlist.

Those close to the situation say Chancellor Emeritus Richard Wallace played a key role in getting stubborn system administrators to agree to putting back the pieces that once made up the university press, including Willcox.

In light of today's announcement, I thought a trip down memory lane was in order.

Here's a timeline of significant events during the summerwide fight to save the UM Press.

May 24

The UM System sends out a strange press release saying President Tim Wolfe is committed to strategic priorities. Buried in the release is this: "Achieving these priorities, Wolfe has said, will likely include position eliminations and program reductions across the campuses, including phasing out the University of Missouri Press starting in the 2013 fiscal year."

The release goes on to suggest MU is exploring a new type of model that would allow editorial work to be done by students.

May 25

The director of the Association of American University Presses says he's shocked and that UM did not seek support before deciding to close the press.

May 28

The now-famous Save the University of Missouri Press Facebook page is born, spearheaded by

Bruce Joshua Miller and Ned Stuckey-French.

At the same time, university administrators argue they spent years trying to save the press.

June 1

Wolfe explains his decision to the Tribune, saying administrators were working hard to develop a new model.

This is also when he famously quipped that he'd never visited the press himself, nor had he met with press staff before his decision.

June 26

A group of press supporters show up at a Board of Curators meeting only to be ignored.

July 2

Press employees go to work as usual even though their operation began its "phase out" the day prior.

July 15

William Least Heat-Moon pens his powerful letter to the editor, one of many from opponents, that is later cited in national news coverage.

July 16

MU <http://www.columbiatribune.com/news/2012/jul/16/university-reveals-plans-new-press/>>announces plans for a new press model directed by English Professor Speer Morgan. Morgan touts that the press will be integrated with MU's academic mission.

July 17

Authors start asking for their rights back, saying the "new model" isn't the press they signed on with.

July 19

MU administrators say they'll resolve book rights issues with authors.

July 20

MU sends out list of "frequently asked questions" about the press.

July 21

Press employees say the notion of a new press taking advantage of technology is bogus because the existing press was already doing so.

Morgan sends out an inquiry for new press editors, promising a salary of \$110,000—about \$50,000

more than Willcox was making.

July 24

MU's AAUP (as in professors) hosts a meeting where press supporters vowed to keep fighting its closure.

July 25

Lucinda Williams, the singer whose father was director of University of Arkansas's Press, gives press supporters a shout-out at a Columbia concert.

July 26

MU Faculty Council asks Wolfe to delay decision; UM Curator Wayne Goode admits he's worried about the negative attention on MU over the situation.

Aug. 3

Wolfe says he's not backing down but agrees to talk to faculty about the future of the press.

Aug. 8

Administrators say they're forming an advisory group to help the press transition to the MU campus.

Deaton clarifies a statement he made to faculty that he made an unsuccessful pitch to the press for a book he was working on.

AAUP (professors) state President David Robinson writes letter to Wolfe condemning the decision and a lack of shared governance.

Aug. 14

Email records obtained by the Tribune show Morgan and associate VP Steve Graham were drafting plans for a new press model well before Wolfe announced closure of the press. Documents showed that the new model's operations would hinge on revenues from the press's backlist.

Aug. 15

Press series editors begin to resign.

Morgan sends emails explaining his side of the story.

Aug. 21

Authors, supporters gather on campus to celebrate the press's legacy.

Aug. 23

UMKC Faculty Senate approves resolution condemning closure of the press.

Aug. 24

MU Faculty Council members vote against asking Wolfe to reverse his decision.

Aug. 28

The university announces the press will stay open in its current building with current staff.

Administrators say it's simply being shifted from the UM System to the MU campus.

Aug. 29

Administrators admit they now have to figure out how to repair the damage. Authors start asking that Willcox be rehired.

MU also announces Morgan will not have a leadership role in the press.

Sept. 5

Authors say they won't be happy unless Willcox is rehired and will continue to fight for their book rights.

Sept. 7

MU Faculty Council members say they want to do a root cause analysis to better understand how the press situation happened.

Sept. 29

MU announces a 21-member committee to help transition the press to campus.

Oct. 5

Willcox is rehired, says first goal is to repair relationships with authors and series editors who have resigned.

This was like the never-ending story of the summer, but as I told Ned Stuckey-French earlier, it's still an unfolding situation as Willcox tries to rebuild. So even though the fight is over, stay tuned for ongoing coverage about the UM Press.

UPDATE: AAUP (presses) Executive Director Peter Givler has issued a statement about the return of Willcox. Read it here.

width="480" height="360" src="http://www.youtube.com/embed/1uSAzYbE3_A&feature=youtu.be" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen>

University rehires former UM Press editor-in-chief

Janese Silvey | Posted: Friday, October 5, 2012 10:00 am

Clair Willcox has been rehired as editor-in-chief of the University of Missouri Press and will begin duties immediately.

He also will serve as associate director and will be in charge of managing the press's editorial department and acquisitions. A search to replace interim Director Dwight Browne is ongoing.

Willcox this morning said he is calling series editors who resigned to see whether they'll come back and the authors who have asked for their rights back. "We've got a difficult road ahead," he said. "Right now I have to get in touch with many of the authors to try to make sure that they're ready to come back to the press and that we can renew those relationships."

Willcox's return marks the end of a five-month controversy that began when UM President Tim Wolfe announced in May that the press would be phased out starting in July to save a \$400,000 yearly subsidy. Thousands of people protested, signing a petition, writing letters to Wolfe and complaining about the move on a Save the University of Missouri Press Facebook page.

In July, MU announced it would open a new type of university press led by English Professor Speer Morgan that would emphasize technology and make use of student interns. Instead of appeasing opponents, plans for the new model sparked more backlash from authors, who began requesting rights to their books back, and series editors, who resigned.

The pushback prompted university officials to scrap the plans, and in August they announced the press would be shifted from the UM System to MU but that it would remain open at its current location with the remaining staff.

Willcox was the only employee who had already been laid off, although several other employees accepted new jobs on campus.

At one point last month, 56 authors representing 133 books were requesting rights back, with most saying they would nix that request if Willcox were rehired.

The authors have an attorney and planned to move forward with legal action against the university, said Ned Stuckey-French, a Florida State University professor who led opposition to the press's closure.

He said he will no longer be part of that effort but added that "there are a few people who already had offers from other presses" who might continue to request their rights.

In addition to keeping authors, Willcox also will have to begin acquiring new titles for a spring catalog.

Typically, the press would be acquiring books for a fall 2013 catalog at this time. One idea would be to print new editions of books already on the backlist, Stuckey-French said.

Although it's impossible to undo some of the damage caused by the attempt to close the press, Stuckey-French said, he considers Willcox's return a victory. "We're not out of the woods, but I think we've won everything we were trying to win," he said. "This, to me, seals the deal."

Bruce Joshua Miller, a Chicago book representative who co-headed the campaign to save the press, said he was "elated" about Willcox's return. "I think it's a good decision that will benefit everybody."

Willcox also is charged with helping the press better align with academic programs now that it's part of the campus. He said he's looking forward to working with a 21-member advisory committee formed last week to help the press move forward, but he emphasized he also has to focus on repairing the existing press. "The first order of business is to restore what we had before we can move on to something new."

Panel lauds UM Press editor, calls work a 'small miracle'

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, October 18, 2012 2:00 pm

Back in his editor-in-chief role at the University of Missouri Press, Clair Willcox is managing to calm fears among authors who previously were asking for the rights to their books back.

Ideas abound as panel plans future of UM Press

Since he got his job back Oct. 5, Willcox has contacted 60 people, and "every author and series editor I've talked to has agreed to keep working with us," he told a press advisory committee yesterday.

Willcox was laid off this summer as part of the now-abandoned plan to close the 54-year-old press. UM President Tim Wolfe said in May the press would be phased out starting in July but scrapped those plans after backlash that included dozens of authors who wanted to take their books elsewhere.

In August, Wolfe said the press would remain open but would be transferred from the UM System to the MU campus. Supporters of the press said they wouldn't be happy unless Willcox was rehired.

MU Chancellor Emeritus Richard Wallace — largely credited for Willcox's return — said he had confidence in Willcox's ability to restore the press, "but what you accomplished in a short time is truly remarkable; a small miracle."

Not all damage from the months-long controversy can be undone, though. Longtime Missouri Congressman Ike Skelton's memoir, originally expected to be printed by Missouri's press, now is being published elsewhere.

And "there's no point in pretending" there will be a UM Press catalog in the spring of 2013, Willcox said.

Typically, the press has two seasonal books lists, but staff members are too far behind to acquire enough manuscripts and edit them in time for what would have been the next collection, Willcox said. Right now, he's the only acquisitions editor there: John Brenner, the other editor in charge of acquiring manuscripts for the press, accepted a job at the Missouri State Historical Society in anticipation of the expected closure.

Willcox is making progress on a list for next fall, though. He has three previously accepted manuscripts, two of which had to be released from other presses that accepted them when the UM

Press was facing closure. There are another eight to 10 manuscripts in various stages of review, and some previously published books could be reprinted in paperback, he said.

Over the past four years, there typically have been about 15 books per catalog, so "that's a respectable number of books for fall 2013," said Mel George, UM president emeritus, who is chairman of the press advisory committee.

Ideas abound as panel plans future of UM Press

Janese Silvey | Posted: Thursday, October 18, 2012 2:00 pm

A 21-member committee is trying to determine what types of books the University of Missouri Press should publish in the future now that the press is staying open for the foreseeable future.

Panel lauds UM Press editor, calls work a 'small miracle'

That's one of the new charges of a UM Press Advisory Committee. Originally, the group was formed to help administrators transition the press from the UM System to the MU campus, but that transition has already happened.

The committee met for the first time yesterday and spent about two hours figuring out how to move forward after the university scrapped its plan to close the press. Although some members of the group said the primary concern right now is restoring the press operations, others said the committee should be figuring out how the press should evolve in a changing market.

That includes determining what types of manuscripts the press should be accepting. Right now, many books on the UM Press backlist are biographies and historical in nature. UM President Tim Wolfe and Board of Curators Chairman David Bradley have criticized the press for not publishing more manuscripts from MU authors.

Craig Roberts, a plant sciences professor on the committee, said it seems "odd" that more MU authors aren't on the backlist.

"We're sitting here in content central," he said. "The content is right here at the university, why do we not have it" published through the UM Press? "Other publishing houses, they come in here and poach our authors. Content is slipping through our fingers."

But Michael O'Brien, dean of MU's College of Arts & Science and an author, said he believes it's a strength that the UM Press has a national pool of authors. "I'm not interested in a backyard press, and that's not what it is," he said.

Plus, there are other university presses in Missouri with a more regional focus, said Gary Kremer, director of the Missouri State Historical Society and a committee member.

Right now, content decisions are made by a separate UM Press Committee, which will now be referred to as the editorial board.

The new Press Advisory Committee also plans to study how press operations could be merged with

MU's teaching and research missions. Provost Brian Foster envisions a focus on scholarly communication through Mizzou Advantage's Media of the Future initiative, which would bring together those from MU Libraries, the School of Journalism and the creative writing department. Foster also wants to see a graduate-level program that lets students study the future of scholarly communication.

Foster plans to create a third group that would lend expertise to press staff. That "board of visitors" would include professionals from the book publishing world as well as companies that specialize in delivering online content.

Susan Flader, an MU professor emeritus of history, said she's worried about overwhelming the staff right now with new ideas. "We're loading an awful lot on a few people who are trying to fight for the survival of the press," she said. "Let's make sure it's rebuilt and survives."

University Press Week sparks pledge

Janese Silvey | Posted: Monday, November 12, 2012 2:00 pm

An anonymous donor has agreed to match any contribution made to the University of Missouri Press this week up to a total of \$10,000.

It's a way to help celebrate University Press Week, a national campaign hosted by the Association of American University Presses.

"We're excited," said Jane Lago, who is serving as a consulting director of the press. "We have so many people so supportive of the press. It gives people a way to show their support and know their donations are being doubled for the week."

The gift is separate from other previously publicized pledges, including a five-figure donation author William Least Heat-Moon offered, she said.

University Press Week commemorates the 75th anniversary of the AAUP. It was in the works long before UM System President Tim Wolfe announced in May the university would be phasing out press operations here. The now-reversed decision sparked outrage among those in the publishing community and among authors, many of whom requested the rights to their books back.

Asked whether the UM Press situation highlights a need for the awareness week, AAUP Executive Director Peter Givler said: "You bet it does."

But the local case is not unique, and presses elsewhere have faced similar threats, said Brenna McLaughlin, AAUP's marketing director.

"As universities have experienced budget crunches, the importance of what a press does for its university and community is not as well known as it should be," she said. "Although the Missouri situation illustrated that in a really dramatic and unfortunate way, it's something we've been aware of."

Although this is a new recognition of what Givler hopes will become an annual awareness week, University Press Week has been held before. In 1978, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of university publishing, President Jimmy Carter proclaimed a University Press Week that summer.

University presses are celebrating across the country with local events and community readings, McLaughlin said. The UM Press held a celebration of its history this summer, when plans were still in the works to close it down.

The local press is participating in a national "blog tour." Today, Ned Stuckey-French and Bruce Joshua Miller — co-founders of the campaign to save the UM Press — posted an entry on the UM Press blog about why society needs university presses. "If poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world," they wrote, "university presses are the uncelebrated record-keepers of world history and culture."

Administrators scrapped plans to shut down the UM Press, but the publishing house was transferred from under the university system to the MU campus. An advisory committee is studying ways to ensure the press' future success.

Press employees now are just trying to undo the damage, Lago said. Although Clair Willcox has been rehired as editor-in-chief and managing editor Sara Davis has returned after leaving the press, the operation is still short one acquisitions editor. The editorial team is trying to acquire manuscripts for a fall 2013 catalog.

"We have a lot of work to do to get back up to where we were before the closure was announced," Lago said. "We're working hard to rebuild."

UM Press panel discusses new ideas

Janese Silvey | Posted: Tuesday, November 27, 2012 2:00 pm

Now that the University of Missouri Press is back up and running, members of a faculty advisory committee want to know how the publishing house should evolve to stay relevant.

The main decision is whether the press should continue to publish niche titles in areas such as American literature and history, military and political science, and regional subjects. That's what the UM Press has built its reputation on for some 54 years, Editor-in-Chief Clair Willcox told the 21-member committee yesterday.

But some in the group worry the focus is too narrow and leaves out UM System professors who might otherwise want to publish at the local press.

"The focal areas are not relevant for a majority number of our faculty," said Rebecca Johnson, an associate professor in nursing and veterinary science.

The committee met for the second time yesterday. It was formed to help the press move forward after UM System President Tim Wolfe reversed his May decision to shut down the operation.

After members got briefed on what the press now does, some questioned how to get more UM faculty members to submit manuscripts.

MU graduate students who have books prefer to send them to other institutions because they believe doing so looks better on a résumé, said Susan Flader, an MU professor emeritus of history.

"Students are more resistant to publishing with the University of Missouri Press," she said. "They think it will go further if it's printed elsewhere, even if the title is suited for the" UM Press.

At the same time, Flader said she "never felt anyone looked down at me because I published with the" UM Press.

Still, some are concerned that faculty members also think it looks more prestigious to have external presses publish their works. One concern is that those on committees awarding tenure might think a professor received preferential treatment if he submitted his manuscript to his own institution's press.

To combat that, committee member Gary Kremer, executive director of the Missouri State Historical Society, suggested outsiders should be included on the editorial board. Right now, the board — which reviews and selects books for publication — is made up of 11 faculty members from the four UM campuses.

Bringing in others from outside of the system might make the board seem more prestigious, Kremer said.

Willcox brushed off the notion, saying that's just "window dressing." Having an all-faculty group ensures that the editorial board has a stake in the press's future, he said. "They know the stakes and take it seriously."

Willcox was open to publishing more books from UM System authors, saying he's receptive to ideas.

One suggestion the committee seemed to agree on was to consider a new book series about scholarly publishing. That's a niche few, if any, presses now have a series about, and it's a topic MU already has experience in. From 2003 to 2007, MU Libraries hosted a series of forums and conferences about new types of scholarly communications, and Provost Brian Foster envisions MU hosting an international conference on the topic, possibly next school year.

As a prelude to that conference, Dean Mills, dean of the MU School of Journalism, suggested the university invite researchers to submit scholarly papers.

And that, Willcox said, "might lead to full-blown books."