

# Dear Freshmen:

## Advice from Savvy Seniors

Photos by Larry Boehm

**SENIOR DAVE HILL** didn't know exactly what he'd discover when he arrived at the University of Missouri-Columbia a few years ago. As an incoming freshman enrolled in the biggest school in the state, he was a little overwhelmed by it all.

"It was strange seeing more people on my way to class than there were in my whole town," says Hill, who hails from Smithville, Mo.

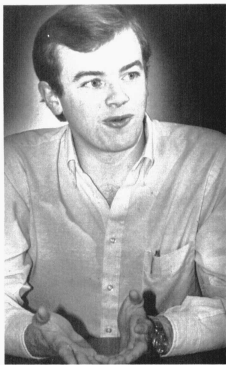
Today, he is like most college seniors: on top of the world again, feeling nostalgic and willing to drop a few marbles of wisdom behind for the rookies.

"A lot of freshmen don't like it here right off the bat because they're thinking back on how easy it was in high school, but learning to adapt to different situations is one of the most valuable things you can take from here when you leave," says Hill.

Hill agrees with many seniors that the real beauty of UMC lies in its diversity. As an agriculture journalism major, he has taken advantage of two of the largest and most prestigious schools within the University. "But I've never had trouble getting help from my professors when I needed it."

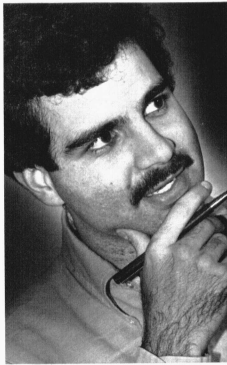
One of the great tragedies of a university the size of Mizzou is that the

**DAVE  
HILL**



students often don't make the effort to acquaint themselves with their teachers, says **STEVE SHAW**, a general studies senior from Louisville, Ky. "It's a cause of great distress to the faculty, because

**STEVE  
SHAW**



getting to know the students is one of the biggest joys for a professor," he says. "Reflecting back on my college career, there are a number of things I would have done differently, but knowing what

## BERNADETTE PISTONE



I know today, I still would attend this Campus." The students, faculty and staff at Mizzou have a real sense of community, he says. "I've seen a lot of progress in my years here."

Shaw, who feels that a sense of humor is one of the most important items a freshman should bring, remembers his first year with special fondness. "I used to make speeches from my dormitory window in the style of Peter Finch in the movie, *Network*. Small crowds of cheering people would gather on the ground below, says Shaw, who is today the president of the Residence Halls Association.

**SENIOR BERNADETTE PISTONE**, a nursing major from Kansas City, also smiles when she recalls her initial year on Campus. One bewildering day she found herself standing in front of Faurot Field looking for a class in Waters Hall on the opposite end of Campus. "The most ridiculous thing was that I had a map, and I was so sure I was in the right area that I refused to ask anyone for help."

**TOM DAVIS**, AB '84, a graduate student in microbiology, says his most memorable day as a freshman was like any other day until he went to lunch at his residence-hall cafeteria and one of the diners, wearing a raincoat and

## TOM DAVIS



galoshes, stood up and threw a piece of chicken across the room. "Food fights are like wars," says Davis. "They start out with just a few missiles and then all hell breaks loose. It was a blizzard for the next 15 minutes."

Davis is quick to point out that he doesn't advocate food fights, "but sometimes these things happen." The hardest problem for students, he says, is balancing the desire to have a good time. "Primarily, they should care about the grades. It's hard to change fields, get into graduate school or get a job without them." He recommends that freshmen start out with smaller course loads until they become acclimated to the college pace.

**SENIOR KATE CHRISTOPHER**, an education/Spanish major with a 3.96 grade point average, says strategy is helpful when trying to make the most of freshman classroom situations—she always sat in the front of the classroom where distractions are fewer. "When you're in the back of the class, it's kind of intimidating to ask the professor a question and have 500 people turn around to look at you."

The most important ingredient for academic success, says Christopher, is discipline, a feeling echoed by many upperclassmen. Discipline, though, is a

hard word to swallow for an incoming student.

Nearly all of the freshmen arriving at Mizzou are experiencing their first big dose of freedom and many unwise decisions are made in the process. All-night socializing is always possible, skipping classes is no trick at all and some students, consequently, are led astray. Indeed, 24 percent of a typical freshman class will not return the following year.

"Flunking out was my greatest fear as an incoming freshman," says one anonymous senior, "so I went to class and did well and never came in danger of flunking . . . until I overcame the fear."

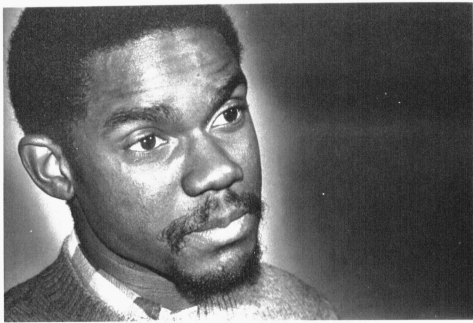
National achievement scholar **WINSTON REID**, of Warrensburg, Mo., says preparation keeps him on top of the academic game. "If you want to get a leg up on your coursework, you should find out beforehand what to expect from the class and what the professor expects from students," says Reid, a senior in industrial engineering. "Read the course catalog, talk to your adviser, talk to people who've had the course."

Reid, who has a habit of "throwing myself into my studies," says his greatest fear as an incoming student was that he would push himself too hard and get

## KATE CHRISTOPHER



## WINSTON REID



burned out. "So I learned how to relax. That's not hard to do in this town. Entertainment-wise, there are so many things going on you can't keep track."

Columbia has a pleasing blend of urban and rural elements, says **LORIE NOELKER**, a business and public administration senior from St. Louis. "It's a comfortable town that's easy to get around in. You can ride your bike to a state park, have a picnic, go caving, or you can see a world-class symphony or theater troupe."

Small local businesses are plentiful and are geared toward student needs.

"I always advise new students to go out and get a job," says Noelker. "It's a great way to meet people and make friends."

Making friends and finding your niche is not hard for the Mizzou freshman, but it usually takes a little time, says Noelker.

"In a university this big you're interacting with all different types of people. You're faced with a lot of things you've never dealt with before and a lot of incoming freshmen have a hard go of it. But I always encourage them to stick it out. With all its variety, this place is the perfect atmosphere in which to grow."—*Jim Kelly*

## LORIE NOELKER

