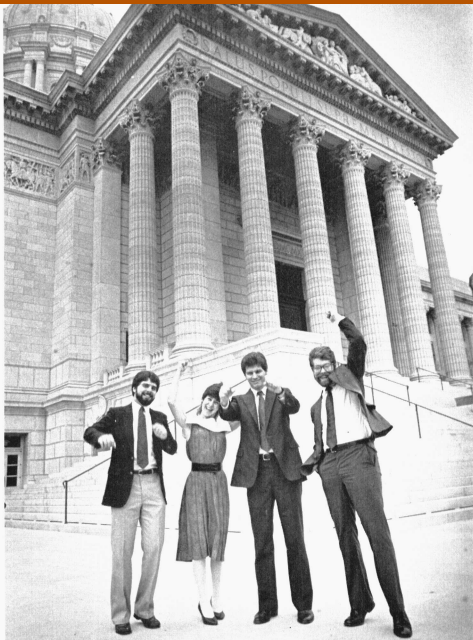




Win Seat with Curators

By Carol Again



Supporters of the student-curator bill celebrate their victory in Jefferson City. From left are UMC students Dan Conlisk and Dawn Maloney, Rep. Ken Jacob and ASUM legislative director Jim Clark.

Cementing the legislation with a handshake are Gov. Christopher Bond, seated, and MSA President Dirk Hubbard. To Hubbard's right is bill sponsor Rep. Ken Jacob. Nearly a dozen interested students attended the bill signing in the governor's office.



The clock neared 10 p.m., just hours shy of the legislative session's mandatory midnight conclusion. A measure to allow a non-voting student representative to join the Board of Curators languished beneath a stack of other bills; newspaper articles already had predicted its demise.

But the bill's author secretly savored victory. Jim Clark, legislative director of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, knew that Senate Majority Leader Harry Wiggins, D-Kansas City, soon would propel the bill to the top of the agenda. The measure finally was destined for approval.

"WE DIDN'T LIE about anything" in appearing to concede defeat earlier in the day, Clark says of the Mizzou student group that lobbied for the legislation. "But we were being exceedingly careful to hide our glee. We just didn't want to attract any opposition. It worked."

Indeed, the measure to place a student representative on the governing boards of each of Missouri's four-year, public colleges passed, 117-37, after enduring nearly a decade of defeat. Lingered opposition from earlier bills, which proposed bumping a curator to add a student, had been diffused.

Perhaps from habit, Clark still makes a point of differentiating the measure from previous versions. "We're not trying to create a curator with this bill. We're trying to create a student who works with the curators."

The first University of Missouri system representative, from UMC, will serve until Jan. 1, 1986. Subsequent two-year terms will rotate among the four campuses. This fall, a UMC search committee—composed of students, legislators, faculty and staff—will interview applicants. The governor will appoint the representative from three finalists chosen by the four student-body presidents. The representative may join the board as early as October.

At Mizzou, the idea was planted some 14 years ago, Clark says. "The bill was one of the oldest in Jefferson City," affirms Dawn Maloney, ASUM student intern assigned to lobby for the legislation. The bill's tenacious support, Clark says, reflects student sentiment for

more voice in their governance. "A student is not potentially wiser than curators, but is attending classes right now in 1984, eats at Brady Commons, uses the shuttle bus system, pays tuition. A student probably has some insight as to how the University is viewed by the consumer."

Bill sponsor Rep. Ken Jacob, D-Columbia, echoes Clark's view. "Students are the campus. They have more to offer in terms of the decisions that the governing board has to make than someone who lives in Kansas City and just comes to campus for meetings."

Adds Missouri Students Association President Dirk Hubbard, "Having a student representative on the board provides curators with the best source of student communication there can be. The representative will be there to participate in discussions at all times."

THE RIGHT TO SPEAK, in fact, is the only privilege granted the representative. Denied are voting authority and access to closed sessions, in which personnel matters, litigation and real-estate transactions are discussed. The representative also is ineligible for state reimbursement of expenses. ASUM's Maloney attributes the bill's success to these restrictions.

Clark explains that providing voting privileges would have created legal snares. The composition of the University's governing board is prescribed by the Missouri Constitution. Thus, adding another curator would have required statewide voter approval, Clark says.

Besides, "I don't think the vote is a big deal. Most decisions are not made right there at the meeting. Curators talk to each other in advance. Things are worked out in their social network, in which most of their ideas are formed."

Observers blame an ill-timed media leak for the representative's exclusion from closed sessions. As senators debated the bill, a newspaper attrib-

uted the source of confidential information published about the University's presidential candidates to a Mizzou student serving on the search committee. The leak undermined lawmakers' trust of students, Hubbard says.

To be more politically palatable, the bill also prohibits state reimbursement of the representative's expenses. The campus' student governments hope to establish a fund to pay travel, lodging and meal costs.

CURATOR JEANNE EPPLE of Columbia says that she is ambivalent about having a student representative on the board, but adds, "If it is important to them, as it obviously is, it is something we ought to try."

Typically, Clark says, boards are hesitant when a student joins their circle. Still, most public institutions have such representatives, he notes. Eleven private Missouri colleges already allow students on their governing boards.

"The pattern for better than a decade has been for members of boards to warm up to the idea," says Clark, who was a student representative to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents in 1978. "All that has to happen is for curators to see it work."

In Minnesota, he recalls, "Regents often would turn to us and say, 'What do students think about this?' They felt that too often they had to make decisions in a vacuum."

Clark also extends a testimonial for University of Minnesota President C. Peter Magrath, who will become University of Missouri president in January. "I can offer the opinion that Peter Magrath will have no trouble whatsoever in working with the student representative."

To be most successful, the representative must "learn to save ammunition instead of shooting at everything that moves," advises Clark. "There's a temptation to play it for all it's worth, what with the news cameras and sitting at the big table with important people. But people will pay more attention if the representative is not talking all the time." □