COVID-19’s impact on UMKC’s admissions process, budget

Staff Writer

With COVID-19 spreading like wildfire, universities across the country are trying to find new ways to recruit students during quarantine. UMKC’s Office of Admissions (OOA) is moving all campus tours and orientation days online through Zoom sessions and recordings.

Director of Admissions Alice Arredondo is now telecommuting to work, as are all of her coworkers. Arredondo said she stays just as busy now as when she worked on campus. She said the admissions office isn’t slowing down, and that the current state of the world won’t stop them from working as hard as they can to reach new students.

There will be virtual office hours next week for prospective students to call and learn about what the university can do for them, said Arredondo.

The OOA has turned campus tours and group visits into Zoom meetings where potential students can talk to admission representatives as well as current students about the campus. The sessions will be held every weekday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The tours themselves have been pre-recorded and led by some of the campus ambassadors. These virtual tours are currently available on UMKC’s website.

The OOA has also pre-recorded sessions about housing, financial aid, the Honors College, study abroad programs and academic support and mentoring that students can view online at any time. There is also concern about the retention rate of existing students during this pandemic. With most students having gone home, the OOA is planning on checking in with them to ensure they remain part of UMKC come next semester.

Asked if enrollment at UMKC would drop due to coronavirus-induced changes, Arredondo said, “We are prepared to teach in the fall, whether that’s virtually or in person. We are going to do that in the best way for all students. Hopefully, they see that.”

Due to the pandemic’s negative impact on the economy, public universities are projected to lose funding during this time. These budget cuts could affect admissions at UMKC.

“I know that we do have budget cuts, and we’re really looking into what that will do for us,” said Arredondo. “We’re trying to make sure that doesn’t have a negative impact on students.”

The state cutting funding to higher education has hit upper administration at UMKC as well. Arrendondo said the chancellor, deans, university cabinet members and provosts have taken a 10% pay cut through July 31.

“We have been working on our web application to eliminate food waste and hunger by redistributing food to those who need it. Through the app, businesses can also help by getting more involved and help eliminate food waste can join the project and help the team plan and direct active of a role anymore now that the app has launched,” Easter said. “Due to COVID-19, we have had to change how we operate, and it is harder to get together to troubleshoot problems due to only being able to use virtual meetings.”

Anyone looking to get involved and help eliminate food waste can join the project and help the team plan and direct FeedKC and the app. People can also help by getting more businesses connected to FeedKC.

“It is important that FeedKC continues to run because there is an increasing number of people who are out of work and have no food,” Easter said.

FeedKC, started and run by UMKC students, takes unwanted food from restaurants and gives it to food banks. (FeedKC Facebook).

Any student who is out of work and hungry can use the app to find a nearby restaurant and get a meal. (Amy Higginton/Unews).
How local business are adjusting to COVID-19
5B&Co, Messenger, Prairie Point, Mills, KC Soul Sistas

Annie Bolin
Staff Writer

U-News is supporting Kansas City’s local business scene with a weekly column featuring businesses and their responses to COVID-19.

This week, 5B&Co. Candlemakers, Messenger Coffee Co. & Fabric Shop, Mills Record Company and KC Soul Sistas.

5B&Co. Candlemakers

Lori Woods expanded 5B&Co. Candlemakers into the Brookside neighborhood of Kansas City in 2003 after being a pourer of sweet scents ever since.

Under Kansas City’s stay-at-home order, Woods sent her staff home and poured made-to-order candles for every last leaving bag at the door for customers to grab and delivering online orders.

“For the first two weeks, it was just myself because we just wanted to keep everybody at home,” Woods said. “I have two employees here helping me this week because when you make your product and nobody’s there to make it, then you fall behind.”

With a collection of 175 fragrances used in her products, Woods is grateful for her customers’ understanding when she runs out of shortages or other delays.

“Our many of orders online are people that may not even need candles, they’re just nice and support me,” Woods said. “We’ve got such a loyal group of people.”

Messenger Coffee Co.

Messenger Coffee Co.’s two-story downtown building is usually a place for gathering, but under COVID-19 restrictions, the Kansas City coffee giant is embracing online ordering.

While Messenger, which houses D’s Bakery in its downtown location, has experienced a cut to revenue with a shortage in wholesale orders, their online orders have grown, said Messenger Coffee Co. President Isaac Hodges.

Hodges said Messenger employees and DoorDash drivers are handling delivering bakery items and coffee, hot and cold, within a five-mile radius of the store.

“Those online orders have allowed us to continue roasting and producing things that Mills coffee at a much less staggering rate,” Hodges said.

Messenger’s subsidiaries, Filling Station Coffee, Black Dog Coffeehouse and Fervere, have made various COVID-19 adjustments to business.

Hodges said that while Filling Station’s ‘Crown Center’ location is closed, its Westport location is doing more business than they did this time last year due to its drive-through. Filling Station’s two other locations in Midtown and Mission, Kansas, are operating with online pick-up coffee orders.

Black Dog is operating a full kitchen and coffee bar while using their bakery space next door as a pick-up location for online orders to protect employees’ health.

Fervere in the Westside is operating in ways that the bakery uses a model in which customers call in orders for pick-up.

Hodges said employees are able to work at any location owned by Messenger.

“Delivery orders are going crazy, so we’ve had to staff more people, and it’s awesome to bring people back to work,” Hodges said.

Prairie Point Quilt & Fabric Shop

At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak, the KC Soul Sistas food truck is a Kansas City staple for comfort food with classics like wings, baked beans, greens and peach cobbler.

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, KC Soul Sistas has remained mostly closed, said owner Zelda Johnson. Johnson, who also offers catering and suppers, has set up two guerrilla accounts with the Kansas City Board of Education and the Marine Corps in South Kansas City. With these institutions closed or operating irregularly, Johnson said that sales have been hurting.

“It’s a family business, so it’s hurting us,” Johnson said. “My kids have to go find jobs to support their house- holds during a busy time.”

Currently, KC Soul Sistas is operating periodically and offering customers the option to pick-up meals by appointment.

For updates on KC Soul Sistas’ business and truck locations, follow their Facebook page.

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Parenting while studying
The realities of a college student with a child during the shelter-in-place order

Allison Harris
Staff Writer

The changes UMKC students have faced from Kansas City’s current shelter-in-place order have been hard to deal with. Many students are without campus, housing or food from the dining halls, or have lost jobs and are unable to pay their rent.

Some are having to deal with all these changes and more—students with their own children are now having to be full-time parents under self-isolation measures, on top of their own schoolwork and job responsibilities.

Sambela Aiono, a UMKC freshman and parent of a 12 year-old, is currently in this position.

“Some days are much easier than others,” Aiono said of her new school-at-home situation. “I think the workload is the same. I am relaying a lot of my time between online meetings, SL sessions and making sure that I am an effort to stay informed through emails.

On top of an already difficult transition to online learning, Aiono is settling into helping her daughter with her online schoolwork as well.

“She has several different teachers [and] subjects just as I do,” Aiono said. “Each teacher is trying to come up with a routine and lesson plan that is accessible to the students. As a parent in school, I am trying to help her routine as well as my own.

Aiono described the way she has leaned into learning alongside her daughter as a challenge, but one she is approaching with thoughtfulness and the mental health of her family in mind.

“I try not to get overwhelmed by looking at everything all at once and try to get a little better each day,” Aiono said. “I am teaching her the same approach I took in adjusting to online schooling as a template for her.”

Aiono said the change has even brought her and her daughter closer in a way she didn’t expect—they are in the same boat now, and often tackle school together. Aiono said she and her daughter have found ways that helped them both be successful is “...learning to accept her limitations and my own.”

Creating a safe space for us both to say “I don’t know,” and coming up with the resources to find the answers.

It may be difficult for students to approach a transition to online learning with a positive attitude, but with Aiono’s love for her daughter and optimistic point of view, she said she has “learned more about [her] daughter in the last few weeks.”

“I am constantly adjusting my approach from day to day, to what is best for her daughter’s health and her mental health,” Aiono said. “Balance is an ongoing process, and I do my best to stay mindful.”

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5B&Co, Messenger, Prairie Point, Mills, KC Soul Sistas

Staff Writer

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”The realities of a college student with a child during the shelter-in-place order

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The American spirit is sick

Mason R. Dredge
A&E Editor

“Listen to me. If we break quarantine, we could all die.”

These lines are spoken by Ellen Ripley in the film “Alien” after a fellow astronaut has been exposed to an extraterrestrial organism of unknown origin. Everyone else wants to bring him onto their ship to save his life, while Ripley urges them to follow protocol.

Guess what. They don’t listen to her. Guess what else. They all die.

And at this moment, something similar is happening in the U.S. Its citizens have written it off as just another flu, and did not show the kind of reaction that says “give me liberty or give me death” while standing in front of a closed Bastille. Ripley was not around for the American revolutions, but I have a feeling that the founding fathers would have understood just how dangerous this virus is. No, it doesn’t kill 2,000 more deaths than the three-year Korean War. It’s only 16% higher than the number of Americans killed in the Vietnam War. It’s 14 times the amount of people who died on 9/11. This. Is. Serious.

But many Americans refuse to see this. Many of them say it’s no worse than the flu. They think it’s a hoax. They say it’s fake news. Some have gone as far as to infer that the potential loss of life will be worth the trade. Do you actually know how many people are 1,000 people? Have you ever been to a concert at the football game on TV? Imagine all those people dead, your whole body will be grey and also dead.

This epidemic of misinformation is in large part brought on by our cowardly head of a president, Donald Trump. I can call him that and retain my integ- rity because this is an op-ed.

There will be countless films and books about this man’s total incompet- ence and mistreatment of the country during this pandemic in the years to come, so I won’t rail on him too much, but it would be impossible to try to di- agnose this situation without putting him on blast for at least a paragraph.

Where do I even start? His total dis- traction and misdirection is early on. His relinquishing of his executive duties and telling states just to figure it out for themselves.

Publicly stating he only wants to help states that are nice to him? Constantly trying to shift the blame to China or the impeachment or the W.H.O.? Good gray Donny.

His response to the protests is unsur- prisingly stupid. He praises them, as long as they’re in states with Demo- cratic governors, even though the dem- ands they’re making are in direct conflict with the three-phase re- opening procedures he unveiled literal- ly last week. But it’s fine; did we really think he’d read them?

Trump is an exaggerated personifi- cation of all the negative aspects of the American spirit. The most infuriating, most painful aspect of these protests is that they are yet more proof of the ap- palling values of Americans, exposing a core that is as petty as it is pitiful.

All these people have to do is sit at home and relax. That is their moral obligation. We need to know what other generations had to do for the greater good? They fought wars. They died. Which is why all these protests are asking to do. They are demanding their lives and the lives of their children, their parents and their friends be put at totally avoida- ble risk because they want to see a movie. It is unbelievably short- sighted and selfish. It is the definition of un- American. As a nation, we like to see ourselves as tough spirited, the people who can make the hard choices. We’ve done this time and time again in facing climate change.

This is not happening. This is unseen every day. It is a hidden fact that modern-day America, ravaged by ignorance and canallized by a wicked bi-partisan political sys- tem, is unable to make the sacrifice.

And it is a deep, deep shame.

Americans make sacrifices. Americans endure. And I have deepest hope, as someone lucky enough to be born in this place that has so much potential for beauty, that we’re rediscovering the American spirit. The American spirit that is exposing a core that is

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Celebrating Women in STEM: Kotchakorn Voraakhom

Madalyn Weston
Staff Writer

Happy Earth Day, UMKC! Our usual events have been canceled, but it’s a day to remember as we take a look back at our planet. While cities around the world are on lockdown, people are re- porting a drop in air pollution levels and a return of wildlife in urban loca- tions. Calls for post-pandemic lower emission and bans on wildlife trade are increasing. But as (hopefully) near the end of the crisis, a daunting ques- tion looms: what will our cities do to tackle climate change when this is over?

One of the women who has been working on long-term climate solutions is landscape architect Kotchakorn Voraakhom. Voraakhom grew up in Bangkok, Thailand. As a child, she enjoyed paddling a boat with her friends through the flooded landscape, but she didn’t yet know the dangers of rising sea levels and a sinking city. Voraakhom’s parents encouraged her to receive an education. She completed her bache- lor’s in landscape architecture at Chulalongkorn University in 2006. She also co-founded the Konkaey Design Initia- tive, an international collaboration to help communities rebuild public spaces like green buildings and parks.

After finishing graduate work, Voraakhom returned to Bangkok to put her new knowledge to good use. Her work became especially important in 2011, when severe flooding killed over 800 people and displaced millions, in- cluding Voraakhom’s family. A fifth of the city was left underwater. Bangkok’s residents are used to this — the city was built on a network of canals and was referred to as the “Venice of the East.” And much like Venice, it’s one of the most at-risk communities for cli- mate change and sea-level rises. That’s where Voraakhom’s expertise plays a critical role. In 2011, she founded her company, LANDPROCESS, to tackle rising water levels using urban land- scaping. Her company has been involved in many high-profile pro- jects, including designing the Thai Pa- vilion at the 2015 Expo in Milan.

In 2017, Voraakhom was contracted to build the city’s first public park in three decades: the Chulalongkorn Uni- versity Centenary Park. Her 11-acre design included a three-degree slope to control water flow and a large retention basin, capable of absorbing a million gallons of water across the greenspace. She also included stationary bikes that aerate the water in the basin, allowing community members to participate in the flood mitigation.

In 2018, Voraakhom’s company converted a helipad at Ramathibodi Hospital into a 1,500 square-meter rooftop garden, named the Skygarden by Professor Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. In addition to acting as a healing space for patients, the garden also helps with water ab- sorption and features a Recycle Wall made of 700 recycled salines by last year.LANDPROCESS opened the largest farming green roof in Asia (36 acres) at Thammasart University. The farm grows food for hungry students and also provides open green spaces on the campus, can absorb more than 2.5 million gallons of water.

Voraakhom is currently working on the Bangkok 250 Plan — the city’s rede- velopment efforts for its 250th anniver- sary in 2023. She’s a TED fellow, an Echoing Green Climate fellow, an At- lantic Fellow, and an Ashoka Echoing Green Climate fellow. Last year, TIME Magazine named her as one of their 2019 TIME 100 Next. She’s a genius of the Earth.

Are you interested in empowering women in the field of science? We com- pletely take a look at the latest women in Science (WiSci) group wants you! Email President Emily Larner to emily.larner@gmail.umkc.edu for more information.

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A woman proudly holding a sign reading: ‘A woman in Huntington Beach protests her lack of ice cream’ (Lispitk Alley)

Kotchakorn Voraakhom (Total Landscape Care)
Luke McKiddy
Staff Writer
Four months ago, nearly any company in the world would have killed to have the revenue, diversified portfolio and name recognition of the Walt Disney Company. However, even in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, The House of Mouse has been brought to its knees in a way that no competitor ever could have hoped to accomplish.
COVID-19 seems almost tailor-made to strike at Disney’s revenue streams. Recent reports even show that Disney’s company and stock value has fallen below entertainment rival Netflix. For its part, Netflix has only thrived with the current stay-at-home orders in effect.
Closing out 2019, Disney had nine films gross over $1 billion, including “Avengers: Endgame!” becoming the highest-grossing film in history. C.E.O Bob Iger even pulled the trigger on buying out longtime rivals 21st Century Fox. Disney Parks and resorts brought in $24.5 billion, an increase of over $4 billion from 2018. And expectations only grew bolder for 2020. In August, Disney announced its plans to spend up to $14.3 billion over the next three years to create three new cruise ships in California and Hawaii as well as an undersea theme park in Florida. And Netflix is not following suit. In December of last year, Netflix dropped its subscriber base of 10 million to nearly 83 million as of April. This is due to the current stay-at-home orders, as well as rolling out to markets internationally.

The coronavirus pandemic has marked particularly dark days for the House that Mickey Built. But Disney’s worst moment was February 2020, before any films were released. According to a report at the end of January, Disney’s profits dropped 44% from the previous year. The public didn’t notice the stock market reactions to the news until February 2020, but Iger deemed these conditions to be enough to cement his legacy as one of the most successful C.E.O.s and businessmen in history.

In the past, Disney’s diversified revenue streams had been one of its greatest strengths. The characters from films fed into the prominence of the parks and resorts. Advertising on ESPN or other Disney owned television channels promoted films, merchandising and travel. Each aspect of the business supported the endeavors of the others. This diversification allowed for high-profit, lucrative purchases, which only further strengthened the grip on many of the largest franchises in popular culture.

The film industry has essentially ground to a halt, with an inability in production either being suspended indefinitely or dropped altogether. Finished film projects are often being held for a theatrical release when theaters reopen or are being shunted off into streaming releases. Without professional and collegiate sports, ESPN has taken to speculative analysis, documentaries and e-sports with athletes playing. The shutdown of Disney parks and resorts has been the deepest cut to the company’s standing. The revenue brought in from parks and resorts dwarfs even the film divisions. This situation is likely not to change. Adette Chareunsab
Staff Writer

The scenes of Taiwan are warm and nostalgic, which suitably captures my every other time for Pin-Jui. As for the scenes after his move to America, the color saturation is more pale and drab. Although it wasn’t necessary to do so, this was an excellent choice on the filmmakers’ part. Not only is the film visually stunning, but the acting is also well-rounded.

While Pin-Jui can be an empty shell of a human at most times, Ma knows how to cleverly deliver his lines, making him rich and authentic to the point you could almost feel for his character. As for Lee, he portrays the younger version of Pin-Jui perfectly.

His acting is a breath of fresh air—easily portraying a happy, young adult doing as he pleases and then transform into a stone-cold workaholic the next second. The duality of his acting is brilliant.

While there are many good things to say about “Tigertail,” it still has its flaws. The film is very much a slow-burn. Nothing happens in the beginning, and it’s a while until anything actually worth watching takes place. There aren’t a lot of exciting scenes or plot revelations revealed, so it can feel very long. The coronavirus pandemic has marked particularly dark days for the House that Mickey Built. The company’s streaming service Disney+, which has reportedly grown from an initial subscriber base of 10 million to nearly 50 million as of April. This is due to the current stay-at-home orders, as well as rolling out to markets internationally.

However, where Disney grows for Disney+, a bonfire roars at Netflix. Where Disney blossomed by its diversified portfolio and in-person, experience-based parks and resorts, Netflix owns the living rooms of over 165 million subscribers worldwide according to Business Insider, and that comes from a report at the end of January. What’s more: Each one is paying between $8.99 and $12.99, compared to $6.99 for Disney+. And Netflix is not likely to feel the hurt anytime soon. All television and film services are facing the day when there is nothing new to show due to the current halt in production. But Netflix reportedly has more in their pipeline than most. Also, subscribers are likely to rewatch something from their vast catalogue of hit shows. And amazingly, the halt in production has actually meant that less money is going out than in the past for Netflix, so the current market has only shown greater profits.

The current pandemic will likely not take down the giant that is The Disney Company. Stock analysts across the board are telling investors that the company is likely to have a tough time for the next couple of years but will eventually bounce back. However, it is assured that coronavirus is going to have far reaching effects on many facets of entertainment, especially for how Disney moves forward. One thing is clear, the world is watching how the titan of business and entertainment can come back.

Acquired from Disney+ at the close of the year. The public didn’t find out that the movie was postponed until February 2020, but Iger deemed these conditions to be enough to cement his legacy as one of the most successful C.E.O.s and businessmen in history.

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