Our department unfortunately lost one of our outstanding faculty members in March when Sidney Christiansen, M.D., officially retired from MU. Dr. Christiansen came to the department in 2006, where he re-established the otology service and has been a key faculty member with his educational and service contributions, particularly in otology and the Business of Medicine lecture series. However, we expect Dr. Christiansen to maintain a presence within the department, as he has agreed to continue to be involved with the Legacy Lecture (visiting Professor) Series and occasional lectures on the Business of Medicine. Dr. Christiansen was recently awarded the academic rank of Associate Clinical Professor Emeritus by the School of Medicine. I want to thank Dr. Christiansen for his energy, innovativeness and contributions to the educational and service missions of our department over the years.

On a more positive note, we have added Jim Denneny, M.D., to our full-time department faculty. Dr. Denneny comes to us from private practice in Knoxville, TN. He has clinical interests and significant experience in sinus and rhinology, allergy, laryngology and otology. Dr. Denneny brings strong current and past leadership skills, as he is Past President of the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery (2008-2009) and is currently a member of the Board of Governors of the American College of Surgeons.

In February, we received good news regarding the status of our residency training program. The Otolaryngology Residency Review Committee (RRC) notified us that we were awarded full accreditation following a site review last fall. This accomplishment may be largely attributed to the substantial efforts of our Residency Program Director, David Chang, M.D., and our Residency Coordinator, Vici Anderson, C-TAGME. Our faculty, residents and support staff have successfully worked together with our program leaders to understand and embrace the training program requirements set forth by the ACGME and RRC. We couldn’t be more proud of the hard work and dedication of the entire department towards excellent resident education.

Robert P. Zitsch III, M.D.
William E. Davis Professor and Chair
Every fall, our program director, Dr. David Chang, leads a medical mission trip to Kenya to perform cleft lip and palate surgeries. He brings one resident each year to accompany him and learn these procedures; I was fortunate enough to have been chosen this past year. In October 2011, we set off for Kijabe, Kenya, as part of a 7-member surgical team for a two week medical mission trip. After a long journey, we arrived at our host hospital, the AIC-CURE Children’s Hospital. Kijabe is a mountain town located northwest of Nairobi, where patients travel throughout Kenya and even Somali refugee camps to be treated.

Team members included Dr. Chang, Dr. Michelle Vessely (an MU ENT alumni), my wife Bobbie and myself. We performed 58 surgeries during the two-week mission. Each child had a unique, inspiring, and sometimes heartbreaking story. Unfortunately, there is a social stigma in Africa associated with these disorders, and abandonment is common. Mildred and Joyce are two sisters, both born with bilateral cleft lip and palate. Following Joyce’s birth, the father left the family and the village shunned the mother who struggled to provide for her children. A local aid worker found them and brought them to Kijabe where we performed successful cleft lip repair on both sisters. Their mother’s reaction – one of thankfulness and hope - is one I will never forget. I hope this is the start of a new life for these sisters and their mother.

While we were very busy during the work week, we did find a little time for sightseeing by going on safari to the Masai Mara game preserve. Lions, giraffes, hippos, elephants, cape buffalos, hyenas, and wildebeests were just a few of the incredible array of animals we saw in this beautiful country.

The trip was incredibly rewarding on so many levels. I was able to learn new surgical techniques that we typically are not exposed to in our residency program; it offered a good introduction to international humanitarian work, a field in which my wife and I see ourselves being involved in at some point in the future, but most importantly, it provided these children with new opportunity.

- Jason C. Goodwin, M.D. (PGY3)
In January, we welcomed a new faculty member, James C. Denneny, M.D., to the department. Dr. Denneny earned his M.D. at the University of Oklahoma, where he also completed his surgical internship, followed by his residency training in Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Pennsylvania. He then completed a Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery fellowship under the auspices of Dr. Tardy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, and joins us after running a private practice in Knoxville, Tennessee for the last 25 years.

Dr. Denneny has served as President of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, is the founding chair of both the Sinus and Allergy Health Partnership and the Coalition for Hearing and Balance, and served as Chairman of the Board of Governors. Dr. Denneny is a Senior Examiner for the American Board of Otolaryngology and has been recognized several times as one of The Best Doctors in America.

Dr. Denneny’s ties to mid-Missouri run deep. He owns a farm in Fayette, MO, that has been in his family for almost 200 years. As a former college baseball player at Baylor University, he enjoys college sports and is quickly becoming a Tigers fan.

The University of Missouri Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery has established mid-Missouri’s only Voice, Swallow and Airway Center, headed by Matthew Page, M.D.

The Voice, Swallow and Airway team provides comprehensive analysis and treatment plans for a wide range of problems including hoarseness, dysphagia, aspiration, tracheostomy dependence and occupational vocal hygiene in professional voice users (e.g. teachers, singers, salespersons, clergy). Our center features a state-of-the-art endoscopy suite where diagnostic and therapeutic procedures are performed without the need for sedation and with minimal downtime and discomfort. We also offer broad surgical resources as well as on-site voice therapy.

The team also has multiple research endeavors in the works including the development of animal models for dysphagia to enable future translational efforts, ambulatory monitoring devices and software for swallowing issues, and an electronic tool to optimize cough referrals to specialists from primary care providers adoption of clinical practice guidelines.
Donna Jenkins’ Retirement

Donna Jenkins, Administrative Assistant in the department for 25 years, retired from the University of Missouri in November 2011. She has been an important part of our growth and transition from a division of the Department of Surgery to a full department in the School of Medicine. Over the years, Donna has faithfully supported many of the faculty and residents who have come through our doors.

It is remarkable that she has seen over 50 residents and fellows graduate from our program during her tenure. During this time she has seen many changes and has dealt with division and department challenges, but has remained committed to her work and to the department. Thank you Donna for your loyalty, efforts, dedication and the time spent with us.

Class of 2017

We are very excited to welcome two new residents in July.

Ben Erhardt comes to us after completing his undergraduate degree in Science-Business at Notre Dame, then his Master’s in Clinical Anatomy from Creighton University where he also completed his M.D.

Mike Puricelli completed his undergraduate degrees in Biological Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies (physiology and health professions) followed by his M.D., at the University of Missouri.
Sid Christiansen, M.D., retired from the University of Missouri Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery on March 9th. Dr. Christiansen has been a valuable member of our department since he started here in 2006. He brought to us a wealth of experience and knowledge in otolaryngology practice management, as well as clinical skills in the management of otologic problems. He became a valued teacher of these skills and experiences for the residents, and enhanced our clinical service and resident educational program.

In addition, Dr. Christiansen will most certainly be remembered for the manner in which he crafted the weekly otology conference, as well as the very popular Legacy Lecture Series.

The department hosted a celebration for Dr. Christiansen, just prior to his retirement, where he was remembered for his dedication to resident teaching and excellent patient care. Dr. Christiansen took the opportunity to thank those along the journey of his career from support staff to audiologists to the faculty mentors he holds dear to his heart - Dr. Bill Davis and Dr. Jerry Templer.

Dr. Christiansen and his wife Beverly, plan to keep their retirement days filled with traveling, reading, gardening and rooting on the Kansas City Chiefs.
Alumni Spotlight: J. Reagan Thomas, M.D.

Our department extends the warmest congratulations to one of its former residents, J. Regan Thomas, M.D., for the acknowledgement of his work by the MU School of Medicine Alumni Association on March 29th. Dr. Thomas was given the highest honor at the 55th Annual Alumni Awards banquet when he was chosen by the University of Missouri School of Medicine Alumni Association to receive the Citation of Merit.

Dr. Steven Smith, President of the Alumni Association, highlighted the remarkable academic career of Dr. Thomas. Upon finishing medical school and his Otolaryngology residency at MU, Dr. Thomas completed a Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery fellowship at Northwestern University. This was followed by a rapid ascent to acclaim in otolaryngology for his clinical, research and leadership accomplishments. It is astounding to realize that he has authored more than two hundred publications including five textbooks. In addition, he is a former past president of the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery.

We are delighted that Dr. Thomas has been chosen to be awarded this year’s Citation of Merit and are very proud to count him among our former residents completing the residency training program here at MU!