Announcer: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: There is a new leader at Missouri State University's College of Arts and Letters, also known as COAL. Dr. Shawn Wahl, former Department Head of Communication, took charge of COAL as interim dean on July 1st after Dean Dr. Gloria Galanes, retired. I'm Emily Yeap. Wahl joins me today to talk about COAL's active engagement with the community and some highlights from each department as a new academic year kicks off.

Shawn Wahl: We definitely view the College of Arts and Letters as the front porch to the performing arts in the community. When you look at the phenomenal programs in art and design, theatre and dance and the Department of Music, the list goes on and on in terms of the opportunities that people in the community have to see our students work with faculty across all of the performing arts areas. One example is Tent Theatre. We just finished our 55th season of Tent Theatre, and we had a really great run, and we're already preparing for our 56th season next year.

Emily Yeap: The Department of Art and Design will continue to provide opportunities for people in the community to attend exhibitions.

Shawn Wahl: We have student exhibitions at Brick City. We also have the Department of Art and Design that's connected with First Friday Art Walk. I know that many people in the community always look forward to First Friday, and it's a great opportunity for our students to participate in that event on a monthly basis.

Emily Yeap: The Department of Communication will focus on providing more applied and service learning experiences to students.

Shawn Wahl: One of our largest tracks within communication is actually the public relations major. We have students who work in internships here locally, in Kansas City, St. Louis, as well as other cities throughout the nation. One of the signature events in the Department of Communication is actually Communication Week, so we had a very successful Communication Week in 2017, and we already have plans to continue Communication Week in 2018, where we bring in alumni and then we also bring in guest scholars.

Emily Yeap: One of the top programs in the Department of English is technical writing, which produces outstanding graduates.

Shawn Wahl: Our technical writing major has an almost 100% placement rate across industries, which is very, very exciting. Something else that we're really proud of is there's a $2.5 million grant that faculty and students are working, that directly connects the Department of English to the community.

Emily Yeap: The Department of Media, Journalism and Film is working on the third season of Show- Me Chefs, a cooking television show.

Shawn Wahl: That's currently in post-production, and I actually had an opportunity to talk to the director, Dr. Deb Larson and her student team, just the other day, and we're really excited about the Show-Me Chefs Gala, which will be held on November the 4th.

Emily Yeap: The Department of Modern and Classical Languages is the beacon of cultural competency, one of MSU's public affairs pillars.

Shawn Wahl: We have students who are participating in study away programs, learning several languages, but cultural competency goes beyond that. It's also about learning about heritage, cultural rituals, the notion of globalization and understanding other walks of life related to social class, related to treating people with dignity and respect. One of the things that's really unique is they offer a wide variety of languages. When you look at other universities, they may just have Spanish, maybe German. The department at Missouri State University, we offer very unique languages that you can't find at other universities, and so that's something that really makes this a destination department when you're looking for language acquisition skills and wanting to learn a second language.

Emily Yeap: Ellis Hall, home of the Department of Music, will reopen after undergoing a multimillion- dollar renovation. A dedication ceremony is set for September.

Shawn Wahl: This is so exciting because we have students from all over the region and beyond the state who can come to Missouri State University, and we now have a premiere facility. This really expands our goal of offering exciting programs in music. We now have a state-of-the-art facility that really makes the future of the Department of Music bright.

Emily Yeap: The Department of Theatre and Dance offers students a chance to learn from faculty members who have professional performing experience.

Shawn Wahl: I'll give you one example. We have a faculty member named Lisa Brescia. She's currently performing on Broadway in New York, in the Tony Award-winning show Dear Evan Hansen. How exciting is that for our students to be able to work with faculty like Lisa, to get that direct experience with industry professionals and people who have been successful in their careers.

Emily Yeap: To find out more about programs and activities in COAL, visit coal.missouristate.edu. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.