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

Emily Yeap: Sustainability – that's the focus of Missouri State University's spring 2018 Public Affairs Conference. Free and open to the public, the conference will take place April 10th to 12th on campus. Presenters will share their views on the theme of “Sustainability in Practice: Consensus and Consequences.” I'm Emily Yeap.

Joining me today to talk about the conference are Dr. Michael Burton, MSU Professor of agriculture and this year's public affairs provost fellow, and Mary Ann Wood, MSU director of public affairs support.

Wood explains the reasoning behind the theme.

Mary Ann Wood: We have done sustainability as a theme in the past, I believe it was 2009, and it was very popular at that time, but we thought it was time to revisit that, as it seems to be a theme that our college students are very interested in, so we chose to do sustainability from the standpoint of sustainability in practice. We are looking at environmental sustainability. We're looking at sustainability in other areas, such as education, healthcare, business, just many different topics in those areas.

Emily Yeap: Burton believes the theme is timely.

Michael Burton: It's probably been since the late 1960s and '70s since we've seen this level of consciousness or concern about the environment, or as I might even say about our millennial generation, they're really concerned about substance. How do we find something that really means something? As our students look at this title of sustainability, how do we get consensus, how do we have practices and what are the consequences of those practices, I think it's something that this generation can really get ahold of.

Emily Yeap: The opening keynote is at 7:30 p.m. April 10th in Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts. It will feature Dr. Robert Ballard, best known for his 1985 discovery of the Titanic.

Michael Burton: Dr. Ballard is going to be talking about the technology involved in it. In this sense, we really get a look at our history and our past from an archeological perspective, and I believe what Dr. Ballard is going to build upon then is also a perspective on the sea.

Emily Yeap: Besides Ballard, the four other plenary speakers will address a wide variety of topics.

Michael Burton: Ron Ireland, who works in global supply chain management, and also Majora Carter, Brady Deaton, Vivian Carter, bringing each of their perspectives on community and development, on agriculture and international development, and also on how do race and health factors affect what people receive in terms of the sustainable system of healthcare or management.

Emily Yeap: There are two pre-conference events on April 9th. The first is a Sustainability Student Summit from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Plaster Student Union, Room 308.

Michael Burton: Student organizations will be involved in making the various presentations, demonstrations, talking about some of their activities to try to illumine what it is that these students are already engaged in.

Emily Yeap: Another event is Living Ozarks: Celebrating Our Ecology and Culture in Words and Music from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Plaster Student Union Theater.

Michael Burton: Dr. Edgar from the College of Arts and Letters has arranged a program where several folks have contributed written contributions sharing multiple perspectives of folks who have live in and around the Ozarks.

The diversity of topics that we have available, it's actually quite a stunning array. I urge everyone to take a few minutes and look through the program. You'll find something that's probably allied to your own personal interests, your major, your area of research, and probably some things that might be of interest to you simply as a hobby.

Emily Yeap: Wood explains one distinct feature of the conference.

Mary Ann Wood: This conference is set up more as a dialogue rather than a presentation conference. Our speakers that come are going to be speaking just from their experience. They're not going to be showing slides and overheads and videos and things like that of their research. They will be talking from their viewpoint, so it makes it very unique in that we open that conversation up to our audience, so it provides a really fun opportunity for people to interact with some of these people who literally are from around the world.

Emily Yeap: What does Burton hope attendees will gain from the conference?

Michael Burton: One of the things I most hope folks will take away from this is a broader perspective. That's one of the goals of the university, and it's clearly part of the public affairs mission, that we would cause people to think in new ways and from different perspectives that don't necessarily represent just their own culture, but the cultures of many, and that we would find ways to act with integrity and engage in our communities.

Emily Yeap: To view the conference schedule and find out more, visit publicaffairs.missouristate.edu/conference. 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.