Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: Minorities in Business (MIB) is an organization in Springfield that advances minority business opportunities in the southwest Missouri area. One of its efforts is encouraging minority students from higher education institutions in Springfield, like Missouri State University, to remain in the area after graduation. I'm Emily Yeap.

My guests today are Justyn Pippins, MIB board member and Javeon England, MIB member and a business major at Missouri State. England also works as a personal banker at Commerce Bank. They join me to highlight MIB's work and how it tries to attract minority college graduates to live and work in Springfield and surrounding areas. Pippins.

Justyn Pippins: Minorities in Business promotes economic development and business opportunities through advocacy, networking and capacity building for women and minority-owned businesses and entrepreneurs. We usually try to promote the minority business owners in the Springfield area, so we'll have regular monthly meetings. We usually do a small business development workshop once a year and we have a banquet once a year, where we give out small business awards.

Emily Yeap: He explains how MIB reaches out to Springfield college students.

Justyn Pippins: We've got six or seven colleges in this area, and we seem to really struggle to keep that talent around here. I've just tried to grab that mantle and say, "Hey, let me hound these kids. Where you at? Where you hanging out? Hey, have you heard of Minorities in Business? Have you heard of what's going on off campus? Are you checking out all these little pocket neighborhoods?" And just following up with them constantly. We just have to do a better job of keeping these college kids, that would help with the workforce issues.

 So, I'm doing everything from getting them on podcasts to giving them speaking opportunities in Minorities in Business, trying to skew programming in that direction. So that could be a panel discussion with college kids talking to employers about what's going to keep them in this area in terms of pay and opportunities and things of that nature. And then just trying to make Springfield more competitive with Kansas City and St. Louis. They've already made four years of headway in this community, they've met people, they've probably volunteered or had a job in this area, so there's more opportunities for them here.

Emily Yeap: Pippins connects with students in a few ways.

Justyn Pippins: I just have to go to them. You have to speak their language. They call Springfield, “The Field.” You have to talk to them and message them on Snapchat. At Missouri State, they have the Collaborative Diversity Conference every year. I'll volunteer up there with a table and I'm looking for college kids to try to see what are their plans, are you thinking about Springfield? If you are thinking about it, then check out these events off campus. Springfield is all about who you know. So, if I can connect them to one person, that person will connect them to someone else, and they'll start to see, "Wow, I didn't know all this was here." But you kind of have to show them what Springfield has to offer.

Emily Yeap: MSU student England is part of MIB. He found out about MIB from one of his mentors, Wes Pratt, who is MIB's board chair. Pratt is also MSU's chief diversity officer.

Javeon England: Well, Minorities in Business is a great opportunity to not only get to know business owners that look like you, but think like you and that went through the same experiences as you. Getting those connections drives you to not only stay in the area, but to pursue that career and not to give up.

Emily Yeap: What does Pippins tell students about why they should consider staying in Springfield?

Justyn Pippins: My biggest selling point is low cost of living. It's cheap to buy a house here. It's cheap to start a business here. You can save money in this town. If you stay in this area, you get to go to the lake all the time. You get to go walk the trails. I'm selling that quality of life. It's a slower pace of life. When you're in a bigger city, you're ripping and running all day long. You're in traffic. People aren't as nice to you.

So, it's not so much pay and big companies, it's really just simple kind of basic things. And I'm also selling, it's also a quick drive to Kansas City or to northwest Arkansas or to St. Louis. So you can still stay connected to those areas, but you can be based out of this community here.

Emily Yeap: England advises his peers to remain in Springfield because it's a growing city.

Javeon England: It is continuously growing, population and businesses as well, so, there's more opportunities out here. And plus even just living in Springfield, you have opportunities outside of Springfield, such as in Branson, Republic, Ozark that are continuously growing as well and it's just a great place to get life started, to have that starting point to grow as a person and to get your business or whatever you're trying to do, started.

Emily Yeap: To find out more about MIB, visit sgfmib.com. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.