Two students arrested on suspicion of hate crime at MU

Charges possible after suspected hate crime at MU.

Alan Scher Zagier • The Associated Press • March 4, 2010

Columbia -- Two University of Missouri students have been arrested on suspicion of hate crimes after cotton balls were scattered outside the Black Culture Center.

Campus police arrested a 19-year-old freshman and a 21-year-old senior Tuesday night based on an anonymous tip. The two men face possible charges of felony tampering and have been suspended from school.

The freshman suspect is from Kearney and a Naval ROTC midshipman. The senior is from St. Louis. The Associated Press is not identifying them by name because criminal charges have not been filed.

The Feb. 26 incident during Black History Month sparked widespread concern on the 30,000-student campus. A Monday night town hall meeting at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center drew an overflow crowd of several hundred students and administrators.

Many participants said the cotton balls, which invoked images of slavery, indicated broader racial tensions on campus.

But Roger Worthington, the school's chief diversity officer, called it "an isolated incident" -- but one that nonetheless "has the capacity to stimulate concerns about diversity broadly."

"Incidents like this often times have the impact of raising greater awareness of whatever issues exist," he said.

Among the issues discussed Monday night was the need for a mandatory undergraduate diversity course. A faculty task force is considering the requirement as part of a larger curriculum review.

Blacks account for 8.6 percent of the Missouri student body but are enrolled in record numbers at the flagship campus. From 2007 to 2009, the number of black undergraduates increased by 24 percent.
The two men were released from the Boone County Jail on Wednesday after posting $4,500 bonds. Assistant prosecutor Ryan Haigh said the case is under review. A preliminary hearing is set for March 29.

"At this point, we haven't filed any charges," Haigh said.

The Missouri incident was one of several on college campuses that inflamed racial tensions during Black History Month.

At the University of California San Diego, invitations to an off-campus "Compton Cookout" party in February urged people to dress as ghetto stereotypes and promised there would be chicken, watermelon and malt liquor.

A noose hanging in the main campus library further roiled students on that southern California campus. A female student later claimed responsibility for what she called "a stupid mistake" with no racist intent.
Two MU students arrested, suspended
By Tim O'Neil

Two students at the University of Missouri-Columbia were suspended Wednesday after their arrests in a case of cotton balls thrown across the lawn of the campus black-culture center.

Campus police on Tuesday evening arrested the students, one of whom is from the St. Louis area, on suspicion of a felony hate crime. The two were released on bond, and charges were pending.

The incident happened early Friday at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center, near the middle of campus. Nathan Stephens, the center's coordinator, said students were offended because of the "symbolic violence" that harkened to days of slavery on cotton plantations.

University Chancellor Brady J. Deaton suspended the two students on Wednesday, identifying Zachary E. Tucker and Sean D. Fitzgerald as the ones arrested in the case.

Tucker is a senior from the St. Louis area majoring in psychology, according to university records. Fitzgerald is a freshman from western Missouri majoring in political science.

Tucker and his family could not be reached for comment Wednesday.

The university soon will begin an inquiry into the men's conduct, and punishment could range from a reprimand to expulsion.

"The chancellor thought (suspension) was in the best interest of the entire university community, including the two students, while this process can be completed," said university spokeswoman Mary Banken.

On Monday evening, about 300 people attended a forum at the Black Culture Center to discuss the incident, said Stephens. "People were angry and upset," he said.

Stephens said that unlike incidents involving nooses or burning crosses as racist statements, he had not heard about cottons balls before. "It befuddled me as well," he said.
Campus police Capt. Brian Weimer said officers received a tip Tuesday offering names of the suspects. He declined to describe evidence supporting a hate-crime charge, saying only, "The information we gathered lead to those charges being appropriate."

Weimer said cotton balls were strewn across the lawn and sidewalk near the front door of the culture center, probably between 1:30 and 2 a.m. Friday.

Ryan Haigh, an assistant Boone County prosecutor, said late Wednesday that he was awaiting more police reports before deciding whether to seek charges.

"We want to make an informed decision," he said.

Haigh said hate crime cases were rare in Boone County, and he could recall only one or two in the last 18 months. He said cases referred by police didn't necessarily lead to charges of hate crimes.

In one recent case, he said, police arrested two high school students on suspicion of a hate crime for spray-painting inappropriate words on a church. Haigh said the county did not charge them with a hate crime for several reasons, including their ages and lack of criminal records.

Stephen Deere of the Post-Dispatch contributed to this report.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Two MU students arrested, suspended after cotton ball incident

By Kelly Brdicka
March 3, 2010 | 9:00 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — The university acknowledged that it took action more swiftly than normal Wednesday in temporarily suspending two MU students who were arrested in connection with the scattering of cotton balls at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center.

University officials didn't deviate from their normal procedure other than to make the decision to suspend both students quickly out of "concern for the safety of the entire university family," said Mary Jo Banken, executive director of the MU News Bureau.

Freshman political science major Sean Fitzgerald, 19, and senior psychology major Zachary Tucker, 21, were temporarily suspended Wednesday pending the result of the university conduct process, according to a statement released and e-mailed to students, faculty and staff by MU Chancellor Brady Deaton.

An anonymous tip led to their arrest Tuesday night on suspicion of tampering in the second degree. MU Police said the incident was classified as a hate crime, which makes it a Class D Felony instead of a Class A misdemeanor.

Commander Michael Waldhauser said Fitzgerald and Tucker were members of Navy ROTC. Both are on "interim leave of absence" pending investigation, according to a Navy ROTC news release. If they are removed from the university, the release stated, they will be removed from the program.

Both students were midshipmen, and Waldhauser said they had been in the program throughout their time at MU. Waldhauser explained that midshipmen take a course together and interact on a regular basis through other structured events such as physical training. But he said he didn't know if Tucker and Fitzgerald were friends.
Fitzgerald lived on campus; Tucker lived off campus. Both were booked into the Boone County Jail and released Wednesday on $4,500 bonds each.

*Missourian* reporters Victoria Guida, Elisa Essner, Rachel Post and Bryan Richardson contributed to this report.
Two students arrested after cotton display

Chancellor gives men temporary MU suspension.
By Janese Heavin

University of Missouri police yesterday arrested two white male students suspected of dropping cotton balls in front of the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center on campus.

Zachary Tucker, 21, and Sean Fitzgerald, 19, were arrested about 7:30 p.m., each on suspicion of one count of tampering in the second degree, a Class D felony enhanced because of the hate crime classification. They each posted $4,500 bond and were released from the Boone County Jail, with a date to return to court set for March 29.

Tucker is listed as a senior psychology major in an MU directory and is from St. Louis. Fitzgerald is a freshman political science major from Kearney and is listed as an NROTC midshipman.

Chancellor Brady Deaton has temporarily suspended the students, saying he “determined it is in the best interest of the university community.” Further action will depend on the outcome of a formal student conduct process.

MU police were called to the black culture center Friday morning after students and staff awoke to find cotton balls strewn across the lawn. The racist act, an overt reminder of slavery, came on one of the last days of Black History Month.

Police said they received an anonymous tip that led to the arrest but did not provide additional details. Capt. Brian Weimer would not confirm whether nearby video surveillance images were used in the arrest, saying he did not want to jeopardize the case.

Nathan Stephens, director of the black culture center, said he was pleased to hear about the arrests.

“I am excited that justice has prevailed,” he said. “I’m saddened for these students, but I’m also hopeful we can now continue to galvanize and make this university into what we want it to be — we being all faculty, all staff and all students.”

 Asked what punishment the students should face at MU if responsible for the incident, Stephens suggested expulsion.

“ I don’t think they have a place here,” he said. “I just think there has to be no tolerance at all for that kind of thing, regardless of whether it’s a crime against race, religion or sexual orientation. I would feel the same if Muslim students were harassed or members of LGBTQ community or if a woman was sexually assaulted. There’s no room for those types of behave at an institution like this.”

Attempts to reach Tucker and Fitzgerald this morning were unsuccessful.
A provision in the university's student conduct book allows chancellors to temporarily suspend students "in order to protect the physical safety of students, faculty, staff and visitors."

In this case, "we're concerned about the safety of the entire university campus," MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said.

The cotton-ball display sparked a two-hour town hall forum Monday night that attracted more than 300 people.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
Two students arrested in racial incident at University of Missouri

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

The Kansas City Star

Two University of Missouri students have been arrested in connection with an incident at the campus’ Gaines/Oldham Black Cultural Center that apparently was racially motivated.

University police arrested freshman Sean D. Fitzgerald, 19, of Kearney, and senior Zachary E. Tucker, 21, of St. Louis about 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Both were charged with one count of second-degree tampering, a charge raised to Class D felony status because the incident is thought to be racially motivated.

Last Friday, in Black History Month, MU students and faculty found that cotton balls had been strewn across the cultural center’s lawn, walkway and bushes. The incident happened between 1:30 and 2:30 a.m. Campus police said two people were seen running from the center’s grounds.

The incident sparked widespread concern on the 30,000-student campus. A town hall meeting Monday night at the cultural center drew several hundred students and administrators.

Many participants said the cotton balls, evoking slavery, indicated broader racial tensions on campus.

Although campus administrators said the incident was isolated, the school is looking into developing a mandatory undergraduate diversity course. About four years ago Chancellor Brady Deaton launched a diversity initiative and hired a chief diversity officer.

The two arrested students have been released after posting $4,500 bonds. A hearing is set for March 29.

Deaton announced Wednesday that both students would be temporarily suspended.

To reach Mará Rose Williams, call 816-234-4419 or send e-mail to mdwilliams@kcstar.com.
Incidents roil campuses

Racial tensions rise in California.

Wednesday, March 3, 2010

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A firestorm over racially and ethnically charged incidents at several University of California campuses spread yesterday as UC San Diego announced a KKK-style hood was found on campus and students in Los Angeles and Irvine demonstrated against intolerance.

“What kind of campus promotes an environment that allows people to think it’s acceptable to target people for their ethnicity, gender or sexuality?” said Corey Matthews, one of about 200 mostly minority UCLA students who held a lunchtime rally. “It’s something about the tone of the environment that allows this.”

At UC Irvine, about 250 people gathered for a “student solidarity speakout” to condemn the recent spate of racist incidents at UC San Diego that targeted black students and another incident last month at UC Davis, which targeted a Jewish student with a swastika carved on her door, said Marya Bangee, an event organizer.

The protests came on the same day UC San Diego announced the discovery of a white pillowcase fashioned into a KKK-style hood — the third racist incident around the campus in as many weeks — and a day after UC Santa Cruz officials found an image of a noose on the inside of a bathroom door.

Officials found the hood, which bore a hand-drawn circle and cross, on a statue of children’s book author Theodor Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss, outside the main campus library late Monday. A rose had been inserted between the statue’s fingers.

Detectives were analyzing the pillowcase for fingerprints and DNA evidence, a university statement said.

UC San Diego Chancellor Marye Anne Fox vowed to punish the culprits to the fullest extent of the law. “We will not tolerate these despicable actions,” she said in the statement.

The hood came on the heels two other UC San Diego incidents: a February off-campus, student-organized “Compton Cookout” party that mocked Black History Month with ghetto stereotypes; and a noose found hanging from a library bookshelf last week.

UC San Diego campus police said they had completed their investigation into the noose incident and turned their results over to the city attorney yesterday for possible hate crime charges.

One of the students responsible for the noose apologized to the university community in an anonymous letter published Monday in the campus newspaper. She said the noose was formed while she and
friends were playing around with a piece of rope and had no meaning as a lynching symbol. The student said she is not black but is a minority.

The incident also is under investigation by law enforcement agencies, campus spokeswoman Judy Piercey said.

Although UCLA students said no racial incidents had occurred recently on their campus, in 2007, a fraternity held a “Tijuana Sunrise” party that mocked Mexican-Americans with stereotyped images, they said.

The incidents are disturbing and most likely the work of “outliers” using offensive behavior to gain notoriety, said Brian Levin, director of California State University’s Center for Study of Hate and Extremism in San Bernardino. He said surveys show young people are less prejudiced than ever, but “these things touch a nerve, and these folks know it.”

UCLA demonstrators called on administrators to institute a required ethnic studies course that would teach students about other cultures. “It would be a very strong and powerful statement for diversity,” said Kent Wong, a speaker at the rally and director of UCLA’s Center for Labor Research and Education.

At UC San Diego, officials were already moving to create a more tolerant environment after meeting with black student leaders, Piercey said.

Initiatives include recruiting more minority faculty, instituting a mentoring program, creating an African-American Resource Center and ensuring funding for the diversity office, Piercey said.
2 Students Arrested in Cotton-Ball Incident at U. of Missouri Black Culture Center

Two students at the University of Missouri at Columbia were arrested Tuesday night and accused of leaving cotton balls in front of the campus's Black Culture Center last week, an act that was widely viewed as an attack against black students by creating a visual reminder of African-American slaves' work picking cotton. According to the Columbia Missourian, a local newspaper, the two students, who are members of the university's Navy ROTC program, have been suspended pending a university investigation. The students have been charged with tampering in the second degree, a felony, and committing a hate crime, which heightens penalties.
How the student conduct review process works

March 4, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Although he could not comment on the specific case of the two MU students arrested Tuesday night, Donell Young, senior coordinator of MU's Office of Student Conduct explained Wednesday how the process works in cases where students have violated M-Book policy.

The process begins when the Office of Student Conduct is notified of a breach in policy, Young said.

- Young reviews the report to determine whether the violation in question actually occurred. The university has 12 codes of conduct, and his office handles all but the first, which deals with plagiarism and cheating. "Most violations that happen on a college campus will fall under one of these 12 codes," Young said.
- If it's determined the violation did occur, Young sends the accused student a letter telling the student to meet with him within five days. In cases where he needs to see the student sooner, he might e-mail or call the student. If the student doesn't attend a meeting, a hold will be placed on his university account, making it impossible to register for classes or use student charge.
- At the informal meeting, Young gives the student the opportunity to tell his side of the story. In the meeting, Young is "trying to engage (the student) to think: What would you do differently?" he said.
- After meeting with the student, Young decides whether the student violated university policy. If so, the student receives a letter explaining the action Young decides is appropriate. This ranges from a letter of warning to expulsion from the university. The student has five days to accept or disagree with Young's decision. If the student does not contact Young, his decision becomes formal by default.
- If the student agrees with the sanction, Young's decision will become formal and the student will complete the required sanction. If, however, the student disagrees, the student has the option to go before the Student Conduct Committee, a body of students and faculty appointed by Chancellor Brady Deaton. The committee is the only formal hearing body at MU, Young said.
• At least five faculty members must be present to hold a hearing. Students are included in the committee only at the request of the accused. The accused student also has the right to an advisor, who can be present with the student at the hearing.
• Young said it's rare for students to request a hearing and normally only occurs when the sanction involves suspension or expulsion. "If I can work out a deal, I'm going to do whatever I can not to (send the student to the conduct committee)," he said.
LETTER: Call for self-reflection on condoning racist behavior

By Julia Williams
March 3, 2010 | 8:15 p.m. CST

Ms. Wilmot's commentary was excellent; I hope many people will read it. The issue involves more than racism towards people of color, of course. Many groups and individuals are victimized by harassment, bullying, demeaning statements and deeds. America in general decries this type of behavior, yet on an individual level, most people will privately laugh at a demeaning joke — if they or their sub-group are not the target.

I can say for sure that through decisions, by every single individual, to be courageous enough to speak out immediately whenever they witness a crime would reduce the incidents of hate crimes and harassment. Most people may cringe when they see or hear something offensive, yet they do not speak up because of fear of retribution on some level (social rejection by their own sub-group or active retribution by the offender).

People who enjoy offending others tend to act out when they feel assured of support. A communal atmosphere of immediate disapproval and censure would prevent many assaults. Maybe the MU campus could encourage students to be proactive with immediate responses toward all harassment toward all sub-groups. That would mean white people taking up for black people and vice-versa; Hispanics taking up for the disabled, and so on.

Vengeful actions only maintain an unhealthy cycle. An angry response to hateful behavior is almost a justification. Responses to harassment need to be impersonal. A simple statement of fact, such as, "Did you just make a racist statement?" while waiting calmly for the response in front of witnesses is much more effective than a vitriolic assault in return. This method works because it allows a person the luxury of being self-reflective instead of defensive.

Let's try to be honest with ourselves and search our memories for when we have laughed at offensive jokes not directed towards ourselves. We are all guilty. We need to absolutely stop the behavior in ourselves, even in our thoughts, and we need to be tempered and impersonal towards other's misdeeds.
JEFFERSON CITY — The University of Missouri System president has called on the state to provide matching funds for science, technology, engineering and math programs. But on Wednesday something was lost in translation.

UM System President Gary Forsee testified before the Senate Education Committee in support of a bill that would establish the Missouri Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Initiative and create a fund to process donations supporting the program. But under the terms of the proposed bill, the state would not be obligated to provide matching funds for these donations.

Forsee outlined five goals of the initiative:

- Hire additional faculty in these areas
- Create scholarships or loan forgiveness for students in these areas
- Increase pre-college summer camp programs
- Enhance the quality of current teachers
- Improve lab equipment

The state could match private donations to support the initiative, but that money would have to be approved by legislators and the governor through the appropriations process.

Forsee said the state's budget situation would likely preclude state support in the near future.

Gov. Jay Nixon began meetings with legislators Tuesday to cut hundreds of millions of dollars from the fiscal year 2011 budget. The budget for the fiscal year 2012 will have a nearly $1 billion hole when federal stabilization funds expire.
But the bill's sponsor, committee chairman Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, said the bill is important for the message it sends.

"I think more than anything else it shows — if it passes — it shows that the state is very serious, that it is a priority of ours," he said.

Pearce added that the bill would still encourage private donations and he is optimistic about the bill's success.

Forsee told the committee that Missouri ranks in the lowest 25 percent of all states in awarding college degrees in METS (Math, Engineering, Technology and Science), and Missouri's fourth-graders rank in the bottom third nationally in math skills.

"It's not acceptable that our state and certainly the country continues to slip further behind," Forsee said. "The jobs that we think about in the future of economic growth in our state will tend to be around engineering, math, and science skills."

Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, expressed concern that the funds could support foreign students, who make up a large percentage of graduate students in these fields.

Forsee replied that the aim of the program would be to keep graduates in the state of Missouri and that financial support could be provided with the stipulation that recipients remain in the state for a certain period of time after graduation.
LETTER: Health insurance premium dropped after leaving MU

By Sharon Brock, Columbia
March 3, 2010 | 11:32 a.m. CST

In regards to Marty Swant's article on the MU Systems health insurance vs. the Missouri Consolidated Health Plan, I have a single comment to make.

I left the University of Missouri in November 2007 to take a state position. My health insurance premium at MU in 2007 was $125 per month--for just health. Dental and vision insurance were extra. Based on my paycheck stub, my insurance premium under the Missouri Consolidated Health Plan is $33.42 every two weeks -- including vision and dental. That works out to $72.41 each month.

The math speaks for itself. I am currently paying about $50 a month less than I did at MU.
What determines a college bowl invite: wins or ticket sales?

By Phil Miller

posted March 3, 2010 at 1:22 pm EST

Todd McCubbin, the executive director of the University of Missouri Alumni Association, writes a short piece on the number of tickets sold by Mizzou to this year's Texas Bowl. His short essay is located on page 47 of the spring 2010 issue of the Mizzou alumni magazine (I don't have a link to the piece, but here's a general link to the alumni magazine).

"The mystery of the Big 12 bowl selection process still casts a shadow on the 2009 campaign. For the third consecutive year, teams the Tigers defeated were selected ahead of them. Our e-mail and phone lines were busy as many of you voiced concerns about the process.

The media shed light: 'The bottom line seems to be that, unless a team is conference champion, wins and losses mean little. Instead, bowl organizations make selections based partly on television ratings but mostly on how many fans travel to watch the game in person. It can be tough to swallow that a team's performance on the field can count for so little.'

McCubbin goes on to say that about 10,000 Mizzou fans made the trip to Houston, but that was short of the school's 11,000 ticket allotment.

As part of my sabbatical research, I have been working on examining the ticket sales made at the institutional level for the 2008-2009 bowl season. My source for tickets sold is this post at the Wiz of Odds. The results are preliminary and, as such, have not been peer-reviewed yet. So take this for what it's worth.

Here are some results from a preliminary STATA analysis on my data. The numbers are the result of an OLS regression.

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I defined Tradition as the number of Division/FCS level bowl games the program has been to in its history. Local population is the local population of the university's city. I tried controlling for university enrollment and bowl city average temperature during the month of the bowl but neither added anything to the results. I didn't have any information on ticket prices. The regression explains about two-thirds of the variation in ticket sales. Not too bad. The analysis tells me that teams that have more tradition sell more tickets. For every bowl game the team has been to in the past, about 264 more tickets are sold. Teams that haven't been to a bowl in awhile sell more tickets (this tells me that winning is subject to diminishing marginal utility). For every year it's been since the last bowl appearance, the university sells about 619 more tickets. The farther a university is from an NFL stadium, the more tickets sold (about 17 more tickets for every mile in distance away from the NFL stadium). The farther the university is from the bowl location, the fewer tickets sold (about 2 fewer for every mile in distance). Playing in a BCS game doesn't statistically explain the variability of ticket sales. The bigger the local city's population in which the university sits, the more tickets that are sold. Lastly, private schools on average sell about 4,207 fewer tickets to their games.
So, if bowl executives do pay attention to expected ticket sales and to the extent my analysis captures what they do, they pay attention to tradition, how long it's been since the team last went to a bowl, how far a team is from an NFL stadium, the distance to the bowl, the university city's population, and whether the school is public or private.

So how did Mizzou perform in terms of the number of tickets sold through the athletic ticket office to the Alamo Bowl game the football team played in? According to my calculations, Mizzou should have sold about 8,817 tickets. They actually sold 6,050. Part of the difference can probably be attributed to randomness inherent in the data. But part of it could be that there may be some reason for fan disinterest at Mizzou that I don't capture with my regression. If it's the latter, what could it be?

Add/view comments on this post.

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Missouri plan to dip into special funds draws opponents

By DAVID A. LIEB

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo.

Opponents turned out Wednesday against Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon's plan to help balance the budget by dipping into special state funds dedicated to such things as airport improvements and spinal cord injury research.

Nixon wants to transfer a total of $27 million out of 23 special accounts to help plug a hole in the proposed 2011 budget. But a bill authorizing the transfers drew opposition during a Senate committee hearing from some Republican lawmakers and from various groups that benefit from the funds.

Many of the special accounts are financed by professional licensing fees or dedicated revenue sources. Opponents said taking money out of the accounts for use in Missouri's general budget was unfair to those whose paid into the funds.

"To me this is kind of a hidden tax -- robbing Peter to pay Paul," said Bruce Wylie, executive director of the Missouri Society of Professional Engineers. "This just isn't the answer for the desperate times that we're in."

The fund for the Missouri Board for Architects, Professional Engineers, Professional Land Surveyors and Landscape Architects would lose more than $1.6 million under the governor's plan.

The Senate Appropriations Committee, which is scheduled to vote on the bill Thursday, is looking at a variety of ways beyond spending cuts to help balance the budget.

Nixon already has vetoed or cut more than $700 million from this year's $23.7 billion budget for state operations and capital improvements. But more cuts are likely both this year and next, because tax revenues are falling at twice the rate as had been projected.

State budget officials reviewed Missouri's more than 500 accounting funds in search of any excess money that could be swept into the general revenue pool.
Nixon's proposal -- embodied in legislation by Sen. Tim Green, D-St. Louis -- targets only those funds that consistently have surpluses and could function without some of their money, said budget director Linda Luebbering.

"The only reason we're looking at this piece of legislation is because of the severity of the situation we're facing," Luebbering told lawmakers.

The plan would take $2.7 million of the $9.7 million currently in the state's aviation trust fund. The account already has $7 million committed to projects, and an additional $8.1 million in projects that have been given the go-ahead for engineering studies pending the availability of money, said Brian Weiler, director of multi-modal operations for the Missouri Department of Transportation.

Among the projects jeopardized by a money transfer would be improvements at Lambert-St. Louis International Airport for a proposed Chinese cargo hub and a new taxiway at Rosecrans Memorial Airport in St. Joseph, which is used by the military.

The legislation would take $4 million from a fund for spinal cord injury research at the University of Missouri, which is financed by a $2 court fee on all criminal, traffic or infraction cases. The legislation is necessary because the spinal cord fund -- like many of the others being targeted -- currently is protected under state law from having its money taken for other purposes.

If lawmakers decide to take money out of dedicated funds, they could go even further than proposed by Nixon. An analysis conducted by the Senate Appropriations Committee staff at Green's request identified up to $143 million that could be transferred from dedicated funds while still leaving a balance sufficient to cover twice the average amount of money spent from those funds during the past five years.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU athletes read to students through videoconference

By Stephanie Charsha
March 4, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CST

COLUMBIA — Two MU student athletes bonded with an elementary school student Wednesday over a shared love of author J.K. Rowling.

They, and MU College of Education faculty member Anne Deaton, were connected through videoconferencing as part of MU’s Star Light Reading Program.

Tom Knaus of the Tiger wheelchair basketball team, tennis player Jamie Mera and Deaton took turns while reading “The Three Questions,” written and illustrated by John J. Muth, to students at Hallsville Elementary School and Blackburn Elementary School in Independence.

The Star Light Reading Program, started by the MU College of Education in 2003, aims to introduce reading early in life. The program uses student athletes because youth look up to athletes as role models, an Education College press release stated.

Five elementary schools are participating in the program. Schools are chosen based on whether they have the equipment and time available for the readings. The three other elementary schools part of the program are James Walker Elementary in Blue Springs, Bryant Elementary in Independence and Dewey Elementary in Chillicothe. James Walker Elementary is new to the program this semester.

“We had four (team members) who signed up to do this,” Tiger wheelchair basketball coach Ron Lykins said. “It’s a way of us saying thank you. So many people and departments here at the university help our program out, it’s a chance for us to say thank you to them by helping others out.”

After the reading, they took questions from the students about the book and personal questions about their favorite books and what sports they watch.

“I don’t know if I’m necessarily the best at this at my sport, but one of the things that I really like to do is try and be a really supportive teammate,” Mera said when asked what she did best
at her sport. "So during matches I'm always yelling for my teammates and yelling ‘Go Tigers’ and trying to really have a lot of spirit out there and just keeping it fun for everyone.”