UM System creates conflicts of interest policy regarding human subjects

By Katy Bergen
March 26, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The situation comes up at universities where research and finance go hand in hand. A university is undertaking a research project with human subjects and accepts a gift or grant from a company that is invested in what is being researched.

**UM System President Gary Forsee issued an executive order Thursday to system campuses that will add guidelines to existing university policy about conflict of interest issues.** This new policy focuses specifically on problems stemming from research involving humans in experiments.

The Institutional Conflicts of Interest in Human Subjects Research policy will outline procedures to address issues that might arise from a conflict of interest between the financial concerns of an institution and its own human subjects research. The previous UM System policy focused on individual conflicts of interest for faculty members, research teams and the UM System Board of Curators.

The new policy defines a human subject as "a living individual about whom a researcher acquires information through intervention or interaction with the individual or through identifiable private information."

A 12-member task force of representatives from the four system campuses formed in August 2009 to create the new policy, which will require the UM campuses to periodically review financial investments and interests with corresponding human subject research.

Just because a situation is deemed a conflict of interest doesn’t mean research can’t move forward, UM System General Counsel Stephen Owens said. Owens, a member of the task force, said the policy is about making a management plan for dealing with the issue. Sometimes that means simply disclosing conflicts of interest before research
begins or making it clear to the public that a research team is not influenced by its benefactor.

Owens said when a conflict of interest is determined on a campus, staff on the campus and at the system level will submit the issue to the resident or a designee. If a conflict of interest is deemed to exist, a management plan will be created to reduce or eliminate the conflict. The plan is then sent to the Campus Institutional Review Board, which will determine whether research should continue.

“This new policy underscores our continued commitment to the integrity and transparency of our research programs, as well as the safety of research subjects,” Forsee said in a news release issued Thursday.

Another task force will form in coming weeks to outline procedures for issues outside human subjects research. The new task force will include some but not all members of the first task force.
Missouri senators seek more spinal cord researchers
By The Associated Press
March 25, 2010 | 4:39 p.m. CDT

JEFFERSON CITY — State senators are hoping that some extra money can spur more spinal cord research in Missouri.

Legislation passed Thursday by the Senate would increase the maximum size of spinal cord research grants offered by MU to $250,000 per year for each project. That's five times the current maximum.

The bill's sponsor, Sen. Bill Stouffer, R-Napton, said the $50,000 grants aren't large enough for many researchers to start their projects.

The legislation increasing the size of the research grants now goes to the Missouri House.

Spinal cord research grants are funded by a $2 court fee charged on every criminal or infraction case. The fee has been in place since 2002.
Energy conference under way at MU

Alternatives seen as supplemental.

By Jancse Heavin

Thursday, March 25, 2010

The president of Kansas City Power & Light does not disagree that America needs to curtail carbon emissions over the next 40 years.

"The question is the path forward," Bill Downey said. "How do we get there in a reasoned way?"

That's a question about 100 business leaders and university representatives are trying to answer today at the third annual Missouri's Energy Future Conference. Sponsored by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce, the all-day event is being held in Monsanto Auditorium in the Bond Life Sciences Center on the University of Missouri campus.

During his morning address, Downey said energy solutions should be comprehensive, addressing not only environmental concerns but also taking into consideration the impact on customer utility rates. Plus, he said, federal mandates should align with available technologies.

There's no single energy alternative, Downey said, noting that KCP&L is testing biomass pellets, landfill gases and wind to supplement its coal-fired plants in western Missouri. The company also is piloting an efficiency strategy in downtown Kansas City in hopes of developing a smarter power grid.

An energy portfolio also must include gas and oil, said former U.S. Rep. Charlie Stenholm, a Texas Democrat. Before giving his keynote address at the conference, Stenholm told the Tribune he is traveling the country talking about energy policies.

Missouri might not be an oil producer, he said, but the state's farmers depend on gas and oil.

Missourians wouldn't be able to "produce food, feed, fuel or fiber without gas today, and you won't be able to do it 30 years from now," he said.

But Stenholm stressed that he supports all supplemental forms of energy, including nuclear, biomass and other renewable energies. As with other industries, oil and gas companies are researching new technologies to be more efficient and green, he said.
Researchers throughout the UM System are ready and able to partner with companies to get energy-related technologies to the marketplace, system President Gary Forsee said in his welcome address.

"We want to send a message loud and clear that we want to be partners from the research standpoint," he said.

Missouri has the potential "to be a national leader and international leader in affordable, sustainable, reliable and clean energy," he said.

The energy conference was to continue this afternoon with various panel discussions and an update on regulations from members of the Missouri Public Service Commission. State Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, also was scheduled to update attendees on Missouri's long-term energy strategies.

Reach Janese Heavin at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jheavin@columbiatribune.com.
State senators increasing grants to spur on spinal cord research

Jefferson City -- State senators are hoping that some extra money can spur more spinal cord research in Missouri.

Legislation passed Thursday by the Senate would increase the maximum size of spinal cord research grants offered by the University of Missouri-Columbia to $250,000 per year for each project. That's five times the current maximum.

Sponsoring Sen. Bill Stouffer, of Napton, says the $50,000 grants aren't large enough for many researchers to start projects.

The legislation increasing the size of the research grants now goes to the Missouri House.

Spinal cord research grants are funded by a $2 court fee charged on every criminal or infraction case.
COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) -- A group of stress-fighting University of Missouri students has joined a national effort to ease nerves on campus by providing free back rubs.

Fifty "Stressbusters" will spend one hour Thursday sharing their efforts with students at Stotler Lounge in Memorial Union.

Program organizers say the back rubs reduce anxiety and depression while keeping heart rates and blood pressure down.

A campus organizer says the community health initiative helps students get "focused on their bodies instead of the busyness in their heads that creates stress in the first place."
LETTER: Security cameras vital to law enforcement
By Doug Schwandt, Columbia
March 25, 2010 | 4:38 p.m. CDT

The recent issue of security cameras has sure been a "hot topic" in Columbia. I usually take the philosophy of "water seeks its own level," and generally the voters in elections make good, informed choices. The issue at hand is either correctly passed or correctly defeated, or the best candidate is elected, and the least desirable candidate(s) are defeated. In debates over security cameras I have heard so much incorrect or flawed information that I thought it best (and for the first time I can recall) to write a letter to the editor.

For a little over 30 years now, I have been in law enforcement in Columbia and have had countless experiences with criminal investigations and extensive training in the field of crime prevention. This has been my profession for over three decades. Without hesitation and unequivocally, I support security cameras. It is almost hard to believe or even comprehend that there are those in our community who vote for elected officials that have taken a position of being against this issue.

In my current position, we make arrests on at least a weekly basis off evidence we gather from security cameras. Let me repeat that. We make arrests very frequently, which without the evidence from security cameras would most likely have never occurred. We have also had a number of instances where security cameras have proven that reported crimes did not happen. In addition, I have heard suspects say they target or pick areas to commit crimes where they know there are not security cameras present.

It is also notable that over the years security cameras have been instrumental in proving suicides were not homicides. So, it has been somewhat frustrating to hear those who do not have firsthand experience in the field of policing/law enforcement make statements saying security cameras are not effective. They are extremely effective, to say the least! When placed in public areas, they are not unconstitutional. They are an invaluable tool for law enforcement to help solve and prevent crime.
Community policing is almost common terminology in our times now, and security cameras are an excellent example of it. Community policing means the community is the police, and one of the things the community can do now is support Proposition 1, which will be one more spoke in the wheel to help prevent and solve crime.

*NOTE: Doug Schwandt is a University of Missouri Police Officer*
'Queer the Census' campaign created to increase visibility

By Jordin Ruthstein
March 26, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT

MU MENTION on Pg. 2

COLUMBIA — Type of residence? Check.

Gender? Check

Race? Check

Sexual orientation?

The 2010 census form has no place to mark an individual's sexual orientation, so the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has taken the matter in to its own hands.

The organization created "Queer the Census," an independent campaign that pushes representation in the census count.

The campaign uses hot-pink stickers that people use to check their sexual orientation and mail back with the form.

The choices are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, and for those who just want to support the cause, there's a box for "straight ally."

“This is a visibility campaign,” said Vanessa Macoy, the Queer the Census organizer for the task force in Washington, D.C. “The sticker is a great visible way for there to be a tidal wave of hot pink as the 'queered censuses' go into the bureau.”

The campaign has sent more than 100,000 stickers to related organizations and supporters, Macoy said. The sticker can also be downloaded on the Queer the Census Web site.

“It’s great because they come from every corner in the country,” she said.
This week, Macoy shipped stickers to Vermont, Alabama, Arkansas and Utah, among other places.

The LGBTQ Resource Center at MU has been passing out stickers from its initial order of 200, said resource center coordinator Ryan Black.

"Several students have come and picked them up," he said. The stickers are still available.

In the move to add sexual orientation to the next census form, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has also posted an online petition, gathering names of 50,000 supporters.

Macoy said representation in the census is important to the LGBT community.

"The census is the basis of over $400 billion in federal funding," she said. "The LGBT community is not able to effectively lobby to be recipients of any of that money."

Having a count of the gay and lesbian community could be the basis for future lobbying efforts, she said.

"The data collected impacts issues critical to every American — like our health care, our economic stability, and even our safety. And when LGBT people aren't counted, then we also don't count when it comes to services, resources, ... you name it," according to the organization's Web site.

For the first time this year, the census is counting unmarried and legally married same-sex couples. Same-sex couples may note their relationship on the form as either "unmarried partner" or "husband/wife."

"This is a fantastic first step in making the census more LGBT inclusive, but the problem is the census still does not recognize LGBT individuals, Macoy said."