Faculty study decision-making

MU council wants to assess group’s rights.

By Janese Silvey

Sunday, September 5, 2010

The University of Missouri Faculty Council plans to spend this year reviewing its rights and responsibilities to make sure its members’ voices are being heard when it comes to decision-making on campus.

The council’s faculty affairs committee is taking on the task, in essence, to ensure faculty is flexing its existing muscle, said Sudarshan Loyalka, professor of nuclear and chemical engineering who is chairing the committee. He outlined the committee’s agenda during a council workshop on Thursday.

Right now, Loyalka said, decisions are being made from the top down when — according to the Collected Rules and Regulations — faculty members should be advising administrators on matters such as drafting the budget, hiring, planning new buildings and applying criteria that affects promotion and tenure.

The Collected Rules and Regulations is the policy manual that essentially governs the university. It has been in need of a thorough review for years, said Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin, calling the rules outdated and unorganized.

“There may be sections that don’t need to be touched, but we need to go through the collected rules,” she said. “Everybody has been saying this for years, but nobody wants to tackle it. I think the committee is ready to tackle, and I’m ready to tackle it.”

Rubin and Loyalka are interested in having the rules better define faculty members’ roles when it comes to decision-making.

“We have shared responsibility in many aspects of the university, but I don’t know that we exercise that,” Rubin said. “It seems to be the perception that ‘shared’ means if they want our input, they ask us, as opposed to there being a formal process for our input.”

Provost Brian Foster said he believes administrators have worked hard to communicate and share information with faculty through Faculty Council and various forums. “We’ve tried to put
together venues that allow real communication to happen so it’s not just show-and-tell,” he said,
but stressed he’s open to discussions about faculty governance.

One campus procedure that Loyalka fears has chipped away at faculty representation is the way
department chairs are appointed.

Even though the rules state the chancellor is responsible for appointing chairs, the task is being
delegated to college deans, and many chairs are serving at the discretion of their deans. A
Tribune review of some 30 chair appointment letters also showed that some are getting stipends
and other perks — all of which can be taken away by deans.

That’s cause for concern, Loyalka said, because he fears it gives deans too much power and hurts
a chair’s ability to act in the best interest of faculty.

Foster said deans are in the best position to appoint chairs because they have a better knowledge
of the department than upper-level administrators. Plus, he said, chairs and deans must be able to
work together.

“The chair is the representative of the unit to the dean,” he said. “If the chair and dean don’t have
a good working relationship, it’s to the department’s disadvantage. There has to be chemistry
between the chair and the dean — that’s absolutely critical.”

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Midcareer faculty not as engaged

UM survey may highlight issue.

By Janese Silvey

Saturday, September 4, 2010

Faculty members who have been with the University of Missouri between six and 12 years are the least engaged group of employees on the system’s four campuses. That finding surfaced from questions posed to faculty and staff earlier this year in a system-wide salary and benefits survey.

Roughly 6,000 staff members and 1,000 faculty members — some 37 percent of all employees — completed the survey.

Betsy Rodriguez, vice president of human resources for the system, still is analyzing the data but shared some findings with department chairs during a retreat last week. Among the findings was the fact that only 20 percent of faculty members with careers spanning six to a dozen years feel inspired to do their best every day.

Rodriguez told the Tribune this week that the wording of the question might have affected answers. In many cases, she said, faculty members are engaged in their own research and department, just not the university as a whole.

She also stressed that the survey sought input about salaries and benefits, not about employee engagement. Still, a handful of questions were asked employees how they feel about their work.

More than half of survey-takers said they’d thought about leaving the university to work elsewhere, and 41 percent of all faculty and staff indicated that the university inspires them to do their best work every day.

On the flip side, 54 percent said it would “take a lot” to get them to leave the system, and 64 percent said they tell others great things about working for the university.

Faculty Council Chairwoman Leona Rubin said she wasn’t surprised that mid-career faculty members don’t feel engaged: That’s usually when they’ve attained tenure.

“There’s this intense climb to tenure, then you get it and think, ‘Now what?’ ” said Rubin, an associate professor of veterinary biomedical sciences.
Rubin also said many faculty members often are encouraged to stay in their labs and concentrate on their research, limiting their engagement in the university outside of their own departments. If administrators want a more engaged faculty, she said, department chairs must encourage it.

Robert Baum, chairman of the Religious Studies Department, said engagement isn’t a problem in his department. His faculty members serve on committees across campus and are a “tight-knit” group.

What he’s seeing instead, Baum said, is low morale.

“People are still very engaged and very committed to the department and the university, but they are a little discouraged about salaries that are ranked last in the group of universities we compare ourselves with,” he said. “They like the college; they like the university; they like the community. But they would like to be paid adequately for their work and feel a sense of respect from people in the state.”

Rodriguez warned that the engagement survey questions were not meant to gauge employee morale. That said, she wouldn’t be surprised to learn morale is low.

“But morale being low doesn’t necessarily mean people are not doing amazing work,” she said. “It is amazing what we’ve accomplished in this economy.”

She does worry, however, that comparatively low salaries will cause the least-engaged group to look elsewhere.

“I think we are in danger of losing them,” Rodriguez said. “I know the provost is worried about that, and we talk about that a lot.”

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Fans focus on game, not Tigers' off-field woes

Legal problems don’t spoil win.

By Rudi Keller

Sunday, September 5, 2010

Janson Lanier wasn’t sure he wanted to wear his black-and-gold MU jersey with the number 24 to Shiloh with a group of friends to watch as the Tigers took on Illinois. The number, after all, is the same as was worn by Derrick Washington, the running back permanently suspended from the team after he was charged Aug. 30 with deviate sexual assault. But after mulling the issue and discussing it with friends on Facebook, Lanier said he decided in favor of the jersey.

The jersey Lanier wore did not have Washington’s name on the back. If it did, he said he would not have worn it.

“I had many other things to wear,” he said. “But it is a jersey only. I don’t associate the name with the number.”

On opening day, few of the traditional downtown hot spots for watching out-of-town games were busy. Part of it was the proximity of the game, played in St. Louis, and part of it, managers said, was the result of the Labor Day weekend.

The fans on hand, however, had plenty to say when asked about the legal troubles facing Washington and other members of the team and coaching staff. Those troubles include:

- Driving while intoxicated charges against linebacker Will Ebner and long snapper Beau Brinkley.
- The Aug. 3 DWI arrest of offensive line coach Bruce Walker outside the Mizzou Athletic Training Complex.
- Trespassing citations issued Aug. 2 to defensive tackle Dominique Hamilton and safety Jarrell Harrison when they and three female MU students allegedly were found in the pool in the early morning at Brookside Townhomes.
- A June shoplifting arrest of Harrison at Columbia Mall.

Ebner and Brinkley were not on the roster as the Tigers won 23-13 yesterday. Hamilton and Harrison did play. Walker was disciplined after his arrest and was on the sideline yesterday.

Coach Gary Pinkel has stuck to his policy of not publicly discussing specifics of disciplinary actions.
Some who spoke yesterday drew a distinction between felony and misdemeanor charges for the athletes.

"Those other issues" aside from Washington "are the result of them being young people in college," said Mike Vannoy, who was watching at Shiloh with his friend Gene Kingsley and their wives.

As he nodded in agreement, Kingsley added that Walker’s discipline should be harsher than that meted out to the athletes facing DWI charges. Walker was arrested as he sat in his parked truck with the engine running after returning from a trip with other coaches and their wives to the Lake of the Ozarks.

“He is supposed to be setting an example,” Kingsley said. “That doesn’t send a very good message.”

But MU freshman Tad Schmidt, watching the game with a group of friends at Bengals Bar & Grill, 227 S. Sixth St., said the DWI against Walker was a minor matter. “The fact he has a DWI doesn’t make him any less of a coach, that’s why he’s there,” Schmidt said. “If he was the team bus driver, it might make more of a difference.”

Overall, the fans interviewed yesterday expressed support for Pinkel during a difficult time and said their support for the football team would not be diminished.

“I bleed black and gold, so I support MU,” Kate Chizek, a senior journalism student, said as she watched the second half with a group of friends at Harpo’s, 29 S. Tenth St. “I have the utmost respect for Gary Pinkel.”

Reach Rudi Keller at 573-815-1709 or e-mail rkeller@columbiatribune.com.
COLUMN: MU touts campus diversity, but seeing isn't believing

Tuesday, September 7, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT
BY Jennifer Wilmot

COLUMBIA — At a time in our country when a considerable number of Americans are vehemently opposed to a Muslim center being built around the corner from ground zero or when a rural middle school in Mississippi will only allow a white student to hold the class president position, it is not difficult for one to question what exactly is diversity.

As classes are under way here at MU, the university’s website splashed the headline “MU Experiences Large Increases in Freshmen, Diversity” on Aug. 23. Likewise, this time a year ago the main page contained a similar headline, “Freshman Diversity, Total Enrollment at MU Break Records.” In August of 2009, MU welcomed a total of 785 minority freshmen, including “484 African-American freshmen, up 14.7 percent from 422 last year, and 152 Hispanic freshmen, up 16 percent from 131 last year” in the midst of a total of 5,620 freshmen.

Regarding this year’s numbers, MU issued the following disclaimer, “Due to changes in federal reporting requirements, counts for specific minority groups, including African-Americans and Hispanics, cannot be compared to last year’s numbers.” Fair enough. I won’t attempt to compare them, though I reserve the right to remain wary.

This year we welcomed a total of 1,042 minority freshmen, with no specific breakdowns for any group. Ann Korschgen, vice provost for Enrollment Management, simply stated “certain minority student groups” increased their enrollment by “more than 77 percent.” Wow, 77 percent! That sounds like we have made leaps and bounds from the previous year. However, let’s not only give half the story.

This year’s total enrollment for first-time freshman is a massive 6,160. Roughly, minority freshmen make up about 17 percent of the total freshman class. Are we serious about diversity, or does it just sound nice?

You see, on the university’s main page you can find “Diversity Resources” somewhere in between “University Bookstore” and “MU Alert/Emergency.” Once there, you can scroll through the various actions and activities the Chancellor’s Diversity Initiative has taken and continues to implement, such as the MU Difficult Dialogues Program and MizzouDiversity Summit.

MU has taken a pledge to increase inclusiveness and diversity that I honestly believe it is working to uphold. I commend countless administrators and faculty members such as Assistant Deputy Chancellor for Diversity and Chief Diversity Officer Roger Worthington, and professors
such as April Langley, across campus making sure “difficult dialogues” are happening in their classrooms consistently. Yet, we still need to move diversity from the back seat and place it up front. These serious, important strides MU is making pale in comparison to, let's say, the recent string of troubles plaguing the football team or people stealing the new MU-themed street signs.

More so, I question where exactly is all this diversity? The numbers look good reflected on paper, but in the classroom those numbers don't look as apparent. Granted, I have not visited every classroom on campus or walked through every dorm. But I am fully aware that if I just happen to be that average student who doesn't look at MU’s main page everyday or calls the admission office for current student enrollment statistics, I may not know about that 17 percent of students of color.

If I just happen to be that student who walks through Lowry Mall every day, grabs a bite to eat from Memorial Union, stops in Ellis library, or makes a long (stressful) trek to either north, south, east or west campus, my very own eyes wouldn't believe that 17 percent statistic.

So MU, how do you define diversity? Is our “diversity ... reflective of a community of people of differing genders, racial-ethnic backgrounds, languages, religious beliefs, sexual orientations, abilities and disabilities, national and geographical origins, socio-economic class, veterans’ status, and political views” as obvious as we may think? Are we content with what the numbers show and the fact we have “students from every county in Missouri, every state in the nation and 100 countries”? Or, can we just accept in some instances, such as this one, that the old saying “perception is reality” really holds some weight?

As Albert Einstein once said, “not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.” Let's take heed to his wise words.

Jennifer M. Wilmot is a graduate student at MU and a Columbia resident.
MU notebook: Did Pinkel make decision on Washington?

9/4/10

It seemed out of character for Missouri coach Gary Pinkel — a man who prides himself on sticking by his players — to have unilaterally decided that starting tailback and captain Derrick Washington be permanently suspended before his charge of deviate sexual assault was adjudicated.

But does that mean the decision was made above Pinkel? It was a question asked of University of Missouri president Gary Forsee and MU chancellor Brady Deaton on Saturday.

Forsee said: “We’re there for wisdom and advice. But that’s a coach’s decision.”

Deaton said: “That’s right,” adding, “We’re very supportive of that decision.”

Athletic director Mike Alden would not answer one way or the other.

“We’re not going to talk about that,” Alden said after Missouri’s 23-13 victory over Illinois. “We’re not going to talk about that. That issue’s over for us.”

•First-year players making their debut on Saturday included defensive back E.J. Gaines, tailback Henry Josey, tight end Eric Waters and receiver Marcus Lucas.
New MU Student Center gets more than $3 million in furniture

Monday, September 6, 2010 | 12:01 a.m. CDT; updated 10:07 p.m. CDT, Monday, September 6, 2010
BY Michelle Markelz

COLUMBIA — More than 1,500 pieces of furniture have began rolling into the new MU Student Center, according to MU Student and Auxiliary Services.

They represent the bulk of the $3.4 million in furnishings that will help fill the newest portions of the center, said Michelle Froese, public relations manager for MU Student and Auxiliary Services.

The largest and most expensive of these is the $60,000 custom-built information center, Froese said, which is already the subject of discussion across campus.

It will be placed in the southwest corner of the food court and function as a go-to place for student tech needs, from laptop plug-in to printing, she said.

Other items on the list of furnishings include:

- 445 sofas.
- 235 lounge chairs.
- 280 desk chairs
- 155 conference chairs.
- 98 guest chairs.
- 244 meeting room chairs.
- 730 dining chairs.
- 267 dining tables.
- 57 L-shaped desks.
- 4 pool tables.
- 1 foosball table
- 100 computers and a central printing station.

Froese said the $3.4 million to pay for the information center and other furnishings came from a combination of student fees, campus organizations and profits from the sale of athletic merchandise, textbooks and supplies, and other enterprises operated by MU.
These profits made up slightly more than $2.2 million of the cost, she said. Contributions from student organizations such as the Missouri Students Association, the Office of Greek Life and The Maneater — all housed in the Student Center — made up $580,166 of the total.

Tim Noce, president of MSA, said it was important to have a plan to fund the furniture so that money would not have to be taken away from student programming.

"Hopefully, at the end of the day, it saves some money for students," Noce said.

Student fees kicked in $281,000, which came out of the capital improvement budget over a four-year period, said Alysha O'Neil, administrative manager for Student Affairs. This is a subcategory of the activity fee students pay each semester, she said.

A joint committee of professors and students have jurisdiction over the use of this money, O'Neil said.

The fees allocated to furnishings are separate from the $64 million dedicated to construction of the center, Froese said. In 2004, students agreed to pay $35 per semester, beginning in 2009, to repay the bond over 30 years.

Another $304,368 is still needed to finish paying for the Student Center furnishings, she said. The plan is to split that amount nearly 50-50 between Student and Auxiliary Services funds and the student capital improvement fee for the next three years.

Installing the furniture should be completed in six weeks, said Tracy Schultz, coordinator of interior design for MU Student Services.

Because of its size and complexity, the information center is one of the biggest projects. The oval-shaped desk will occupy space west of the food court on the middle level.

The desk looks much like the one that sits in the lobby of Jesse Hall. It stretches just over 23 feet long and 19 feet wide, according to a diagram provided by Froese. The top is black quartz with tiger-striped panels around the exterior.

It is outfitted with an array of custom features, she said. These include built-in pamphlet displays, storage for 100 laptops, six laptop stations around the perimeter, a print station and a three-screen plasma information display.

Students also will find a selection of board games, playing cards and poker chips stored inside the desk, Froese said. The games can be used in Mort's, the restaurant on the first floor that pays homage to MU alumnus Mort Walker, creator of the Beetle Bailey comic strip.

The remaining space in the new Student Center is largely divided into lounges and offices.
The basement of University Bookstore occupies the east end of the lower level. The west end is devoted to a student lounge, meeting rooms, private offices for student organizations and work stations for other groups.

The work stations will vary in style and use, but a typical L-shaped cubicle costs between $3,000 and $4,000, Schultz said. They include a task chair, desk, light, privacy panels, outlets, overhead storage, bookshelf and, in some, cushioned file cabinets for extra seating.

Office furnishings cost about $2,500 per office and generally include an L-shaped desk, task chair, guest chair, lateral file, bookshelf, tack board, overhead file, pedestals and a light, she said.

The middle level, which has the food court and University Bookstore, is already partially open for use. The west end will be filled with seating for Mort's and pool tables, as well as meeting rooms and the Tiger Den lounge space.

On the upper level of the Student Center are three central lounges and the offices of Student Life, situated on the west side, which opened last year during construction.

The lounges are themed — the Traditions Lounge, Bridge Lounge and Leadership Lounge.

The Bridge Lounge runs along a walkway connecting the east and west ends of the upper level and allows students to peer into the food court below. It has a series of chairs and tables for study and conversation.

The other two lounges anchor the sides of the walkway. Froese said MU alumni contributed to the Traditions Lounge, while the Leadership Lounge celebrates student leaders.

The chairs in the lounges cost about $800 each and maintain the center's black-and-gold color scheme, Schultz said.

Currently, students have restricted access to the middle level and upper levels but will have full access by April 2011, she said.

In addition to its utility for current students, MSA Senator and MU Summer Welcome Leader Matt Sheppard said he thinks the new center will help attract prospective students.

"When you are thinking about that full college experience, the Student Center works as that selling point," he said.