American-Islamic group, others speak out against hiring of Larry James at MU

COLUMBIA — Jan Eddy held up an article printed from the Internet. The headline read "Psychologist accused of war crimes opposes torture investigations."

"A simple Google search turns up all kinds of stuff about this man," Eddy, an MU engineering student, said. "Do we really want someone that comes up with this headline working at Mizzou?"

Eddy chimed in at the end of questions at a news conference at the MU Student Center on Wednesday held by the St. Louis chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, or CAIR. The group opposes hiring Larry James for a leadership position in the College of Education at MU.

James, who led behavioral science consultation teams at Guantanamo Bay detention center in Cuba and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, is dean of the School of Professional Psychology at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

James has repeatedly said he did not have the authority to stop the enhanced interrogation techniques he witnessed and he worked hard to teach investigators not to use such techniques. He has been on campus this week interviewing for the job of division executive director.

Other groups represented were the MU Muslim Students Organization, the Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation and concerned MU faculty members.

The speakers repeatedly emphasized that hiring James would reflect poorly on MU.

"Mizzou has a high standard of ethics, and his possible hiring would put a black tarnish on that," Faizan Syed, executive director of CAIR-St.Louis, said.

"This is not a good person to represent the mission of the University of Missouri," Michael Ugarte, an MU Spanish professor, said.

Aamer Trambu, a graduate student and vice president of the Muslim Student Organization, cited several passages from James’ book "Fixing Hell: An Army Psychologist Confronts Abu Ghraib."
"There are statements showing he has a disturbing disregard and disrespect for people he disagrees with," Trambu said.

CAIR-St. Louis hopes to enlist faculty and students at other University of Missouri System campuses to actively oppose James, Syed said.

A CAIR petition opposing James's hiring had 289 signatures as of 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, but the organization will not present the petition to university officials until it reaches 1,000 signatures, Syed said.

James arrived in Columbia on Monday for his interview. He took questions from the community at a public forum on Tuesday and was scheduled to return to Dayton on Wednesday.

James is one of two finalists. The other, Matthew Burns of the University of Minnesota, interviewed on campus last week.

Ugarte and other faculty members drafted a letter to MU Chancellor Brady Deaton opposing James' candidacy. On Friday, protesters walked from the Islamic Center of Mid-Missouri to Hill Hall, home of the College of Education, and then on to Jesse Hall, where the chancellor's office is.

At the Wednesday news conference, Bradford Boyd-Kennedy, a member of the Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation, commended the College of Education for wanting to examine James' record for themselves but stood firm against James as a candidate.

"The vast majority of educators do so because of a deep desire to improve our society and the world," Boyd-Kennedy said. "The University of Missouri owes its past, present and future students the assurance that all university employees support and embody these life affirming values."
JEFFERSON CITY — The biggest issue facing a legislative committee considering a state bond issue is how much to ask voters to borrow and whether to combine building and highway needs in one large proposal, state Rep. Chris Kelly said Tuesday.

Kelly spoke after the committee he chairs, the House Appropriations for Infrastructure and Job Creation, held a public hearing on House Speaker Tim Jones' proposal for a $950 million bond issue for college buildings and other state construction projects. Kelly said he would prefer one large package of projects to put before voters.

"There is no way we can do everything we need to do," Kelly said. "Ultimately, we can have only one proposal."

The committee hearing on the borrowing plan lasted for about an hour and saw a parade of college, business and community leaders endorse it. Historically low interest rates and unemployment problems in the construction industry make now a good time to act, Jones told the committee. "Missourians will reap rich dividends from this investment in our future," he said.

If approved by lawmakers and voters, the proposal for building construction would provide $700 million for college and university construction needs and $250 million for other state projects.

The University of Missouri System would receive funding to build or overhaul four buildings, with a total cost of $238.5 million. Some of those buildings already have commitments of private funding, while others are likely to attract significant support once the state funding is secured, UM System President Tim Wolfe said after he testified in favor of the proposal.
"They would be very eager to step to the plate and invest, maybe earlier or invest more based on the state's commitment," he said.

Wolfe, the former president of the technology company Novell Americas, said a bond issue makes financial sense for the state.

"I can tell you that what they are asking is reasonable, and when you take a look at our backlog, it chips away at it, but by no means does it solve this," Wolfe said. "I think the return on this investment is quite obvious and the risk associated with it is very low."

The higher education projects expected to be funded with the bond issue are the top priority projects for each campus as approved by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education. For the University of Missouri, those priorities are LaFerrell Hall in Columbia, the School of Medicine building in Kansas City, the Chemistry and Biological Sciences building in Rolla and Benton & Stadler Hall in St. Louis.

Those are the most pressing needs from UM's $1.3 billion backlog of maintenance, repair and renovation projects, Wolfe told the committee. The projects would create 3,800 jobs during construction, Wolfe said.

To repay the debt, lawmakers are promising to use general revenue. The state's debt load is low and on its way to being repaid in the next decade, making money available to cover new interest and principal.

Funding highways is a more complicated issue because any long-term proposal likely would require a tax increase. Sen. Mike Kehoe, R-Jefferson City, yesterday proposed a 1-cent sales tax.

Whether the bond proposal and a highway plan are part of the same package is up to the committee, Jones told reporters after the hearing. Jones opposes any plan that results in a net tax increase.

"I've left that as an open question for the committee to examine," he said. "I don't believe that all of our highway funding needs could be taken care of by a bonding issue. But I think bonding could provide for some of the immediate crisis needs."

Missouri has a credit rating of AAA, which means the markets consider lending to the state almost risk-free. Business leaders testifying last night said that rating will make borrowing money now especially cheap.

"We don't just put that AAA bond rating up on a shelf so we can admire it," said Ray McCarty, president of Associated Industries of Missouri.
Governor Withdraw Curator Nominee

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) - The tenure of a University of Missouri curator has come to an end after barely a month. But J. Michael Ponder could get a second chance at serving.

Gov. Jay Nixon withdrew his appointment of the Cape Girardeau lawyer to the governing board of the University of Missouri system on Wednesday night.

Nixon named Ponder to the board Jan. 4. Because the appointment occurred when the Senate was not in session, Ponder started serving immediately. But he faced a Thursday deadline to win Senate confirmation.

Senate President Pro Tem Tom Dempsey said some senators raised questions Wednesday about Ponder's involvement in certain policy decisions when he served on the State Board of Education.

Dempsey said senators would be willing to reconsider Ponder if Nixon re-appoints him.
Bill focuses on extension funds
Plan would allow levy of local taxes.

By MIICA PATTERSON Missouri Digital News

JEFFERSON CITY — The governing bodies of University of Missouri Extension districts might soon be able to levy local taxes to fund additional programs under legislation pending in the Missouri House.

A bill sponsored by Rep. Bill Reiboldt, R-Neosho, would allow individual UM System Extension councils to form a district of at least two counties, allowing the councils to combine money for Extension programs. The UM System operates the Extension programs as a part of a federally mandated mission to provide access to science-based research throughout the state.

Under the legislation, the new districts would have a governing body made up of appointed representatives from the individual councils and would have the authority to place Extension taxing measures on a ballot before residents. The governing body for a district would then determine the tax rate needed to create enough revenue to fund Extension programs by Sept. 1 each year.

The additional revenue from the voter-approved tax would help fund staffing needs, supplies, equipment and maintenance of the county's property. State Extension Council Chairman H.C. Russell said in past years, some Missouri counties have reduced Extension program funding by as much as 90 percent.

The House Agriculture Policy Committee approved the measure by a 13-0 vote yesterday. Reiboldt said there is no current formal way for Extension councils to work together across county lines so that resources and decisions can be shared. He said the Extension programs need the option to work together efficiently and place taxing measures before voters.

"Any kind of increase has to go to the vote of the people," Reiboldt said.

Reiboldt, who previously served on the Newton County Extension Council, said a similar process has been tried in 26 other states and has worked well.
Vice Provost and Director of Cooperative Extension Michael Ouart said it is fortunate in Missouri that most members of the Extension councils are elected, something that's not done in every state.

"The ownership of Extension at the local level is strong," Ouart said. "That's really what this bill's about."

Rep. Linda Black, D-Desloge, said she was concerned with the inconsistency that districts would be created after it's voted on by council members, but for a council to withdraw from a district, it would depend on a vote by residents. Black said she would like for the council members to vote on if a council can withdraw from a district or not.

Extension County Council Coordinator Tony Delong said that when a new district is created, there is funding that goes to that district. If a council wants to leave, then it must be determined which county gets those funds that were once shared.

"You have to have someone be sure that the money doesn't go to the wrong people," Delong said. "There's some legal issues from past situations of why you need to have a process for that to happen so that the citizens are protected."

No one opposed the bill during yesterday's hearing. A similar bill passed in the House last year but died in the Senate. Sen. David Pearce, R-Warrensburg, sponsored last year's UM Extension bill and said this year's is almost identical. He said a senator who was against last year's bill is no longer in the General Assembly.

"There were some people in the Senate who are no longer there who didn't appreciate Extension," Pearce said. "There was some anti-University of Missouri sentiment as well."

Sen. Dan Brown, R-Rolla, said when higher education funds "dry up," Extension programs usually end up losing money. Brown said he is usually against tax increases, but he supports the bill because counties will get to vote on whether to raise taxes.

Reiboldt's bill heads to the House for a full-chamber debate. Pearce said the Senate has its own version of the bill, which was heard in committee last week. Pearce said he hoped it would pass out of the Senate Education Committee today.
Why children resent their hovering helicopter mums: Pushy mothers create negative feelings in their children

Their children may be fluent in Mandarin and accomplished violinists, but pushy mums can expect little thanks.

A study found that ‘helicopter mothers’ who hover over and control their children’s lives are resented.

And the bossilier they are, the more the discontent builds.

Researcher Professor Jean Ispa, from the University of Missouri, said: ‘Children flourish when they have opportunities to make choices about what they do, particularly in play situations.’

The University of Missouri team studied videos of children playing with their mothers.

‘Mothers who are highly directive do not allow that kind of choice. In our study, the children were playing with some toys, and the very directive mothers were making the decisions about how to play, what to play and how quickly to play,’ the professor said.

More than 2,000 children were taped when they were aged one, two and three and again before they started school.

The pushy mothers tended to correct their children, rather than simply allowing them to have fun.

For instance, when a child tried to put a plastic cow into a toy barn through the window, the mother would show them how to put it through the door instead.

And if a child was playing with a pretend kitchen set, the controlling mother might not let the child touch the fake burners on the stove.
Professor Ispa, an expert in human development, said that while mothers might think they are helping their children by correcting them, they may instead be stifling their creativity.

Their interference may also mean their children find spending time with them less enjoyable.

However, warm and caring parenting cancels out some of the negative effects of bossiness, according to the report published in the journal Parenting: Science and Practice.

Professor Ispa said: 'Even if mothers were very directive, if they were also warm, the negative effects of high directiveness lessened.

'We know that children, regardless of culture, need to feel loved.

'Children take in the meaning of what their mothers are trying to do, so if a mum is being very directive and is generally a very warm person, I think the child feels, "My mum is doing this because she cares about me, and she's trying to do the best for me."'

'If that warmth is missing, then the child might feel, "My mum is trying to control me, and I don't like it."'

She added that as the children got older, the mothers tended to become less bossy, perhaps because they trusted them more.

British head teachers have warned of the peril of 'helicopter parents', saying that ambitious mothers and fathers are condemning middle-class children to years of stress and anxiety.

And some parents are still hovering over their children when they leave school.

Universities have complained about parents joining their sons and daughters for freshers' week, with some even sleeping in their children's dorms.
Teach for America at Mizzou hosts discussion on STEM education

By Daniela Sirtori Cortina

Teach for America at Mizzou recruiter Candace Potter opened a dinner and discussion about the lack of science, technology, engineering and math — known as STEM — skills in grade school education Tuesday night at Memorial Student Union.

The discussion, a part of MU's Teach for America Week, opened with statistics that showed the disparity in STEM education in the U.S. and touched on the main causes and consequences of the STEM issue.

This is the first time Teach for America at Mizzou has hosted a Teach for America Week, an initiative meant to raise awareness about the organization's impact in low-income communities across the United States.

About 41 percent of the 15.5 million students growing up in poverty may learn math from a teacher with no qualifications, according to TFA national data. Additionally, only 22 percent of fourth graders in the U.S. are proficient in math.

"Low income schools lack human capital to have math and science teachers who have either certification or a major in a math or science field," Potter said.

A great number of TFA's teachers teach STEM related subjects, Brittany Packnett, Teach for America's executive director for the St Louis area, said TFA teachers are meant to help compensate for the lack of qualified math and science teachers.

"Nationally, Teach for America is the largest single provider of STEM educators, Packnett said. "Here in St. Louis, out of our almost 200 teachers, almost 60 percent of them are teaching STEM in some form or fashion, from elementary all the way through the twelfth grade." Packnett said.

Packnett also emphasized the quality of the classes delivered by TFA corps members.

"When you look at data, our teachers often outperform new teachers and veteran teachers, specially in the areas of math and science," she said.

The U.S. ranks twenty-fifth in math and seventeenth in science out of 31 developed countries according to the International Student Assessment, a worldwide study on math, reading and science among 15-year-old students. Those numbers directly reflect test results from students who come from minority and low-income backgrounds, especially African American, Latino and Native American students, according to Teach for America.
Senior Steven Dickherber and junior Chelsea Tossing also talked about their experience with Teach for America. Both MU students were accepted as corps members and will be teaching in Oklahoma and North Carolina upon graduation.

Potter also talked about her experience with Teach for America, and encouraged students to apply to become corps teachers for the organization.

“Many Mizzou students have that fiery passion that could change the lives of kids living in low-income communities”, she said.

As an organization, Teach for America is committed to fighting education inequality by recruiting recent college graduates with strong backgrounds in different fields, including STEM majors. Students who apply for corps teachers are not required to have an education major, since Teach for America provides teaching training and support networks.

Corps members are required to teach in a low-income community for two years. They are paid a full teacher’s salary and have access to comprehensive health insurance and retirement benefits. TFA has corps teachers working in low-income areas in St. Louis, Mo. and the Kansas City region, but currently there are no corps members teaching in Columbia.

Students interested in social justice and education issues attended the dinner. Senior finance major Kyle Dickherber said he would like to teach students in low-income areas, especially those with disabilities.

“I’ve always thought about education, even when I was coming into college,” Dickherber said. “But, I don’t know, I guess I ended up in the finance area, heard about Teach for America through roommates and friends and thought to myself that it would be a great option for me career-wise if I’m going to try and spend the rest of my life influencing the lives of individuals with disabilities.”