Departments at MU recovering from federal government shutdown

BY Morgan Denlow

COLUMBIA — **Federal government employees weren’t the only people in limbo for the past 16 days. MU senior Calvin Irwin is one of many students left in the lurch because applications for federal fellowship programs were unavailable.**

Applications were stalled because the National Science Foundation, which provides federal funding for numerous fellowship programs, was closed. This is one example of several ways the university was affected by the federal government shutdown, including stalled military exercises and hampered research projects.

Irwin, who planned to apply for one of those fellowships, said he is frustrated that the government plays such a huge role in academia.

“It’s a pretty big inconvenience,” Irwin said. “The shutdown set me back a few weeks. Right now is the time people are figuring out where they want to go and what materials they need to apply. In general, you want to get these applications done as soon as possible. The more rushed you are, the less quality your application will have.”

Irwin, a biological engineering major, is also a teaching assistant for Introduction to Biological Engineering. While preparing a lesson plan he discovered that the U.S. Department of Agriculture website was down and so he could not share research material with his class, adding to his frustration.

Irwin’s application isn’t due until November, he said, but incoming graduate students applying for the Graduate Research Fellowship Program need to turn their essays in immediately.

“Because the funding of a lot of programs are dependent on NSF, a lot of people I know were unsure they would be able to do a summer research program.”

The National Science Foundation website is essentially a search engine for research opportunities. With the website down, students could not plan or prepare to apply to these programs.
“I just put my application off with hopes that the government would reopen soon." Irwin said. "If the government had been shut down any longer, a lot of people would’ve been scrambling."

Military students

Richard Saltzman, a senior in forestry at MU and a member of the Missouri National Guard said he is glad the government came to a compromise and avoided hitting the debt ceiling.

The Missouri National Guard’s monthly drills were indefinitely cancelled during the government shutdown.

Units meet every month for their National Guard drill, which can involve either administrative work or going into the field to practice military maneuvers. Saltzman's unit was scheduled to take the physical fitness test in October.

“My unit is supposed to meet during the first weekend of every month, but because we missed our drill this month, we might have to reschedule ours to the end of October because we’re required to take the physical fitness test twice a year,” Saltzman said.

Saltzman, who relies primarily on income from the federal government, said he managed easily enough without his drill paycheck for the past 16 days.

“I planned ahead. I have some savings in case something happens to last me for a little bit," he said. "Hopefully this isn’t going to happen again for a while. As far as I know, this is the first time drills have been canceled since the '80s. The last time the government shut down 17 years ago, they continued drills, so I wouldn’t really change where I work because of this."

Federally funded research

Three research labs were closed during the shutdown, causing delays in experiments and delayed grant submission deadlines.

Marc Linit, associate dean for research and extension at the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, said the biggest impact was that the federal scientists the college collaborates with were unable to work.

“Many projects are time sensitive," Linit said. "If certain things don’t get done, you would have to throw out the entire experiment. Often you can’t wait two and half weeks for data collection. For example, insect and animal colonies need to be checked on a regular basis, which is impossible when the scientists are on furlough," Linit said.

Linit said he was somewhat disheartened that the government shutdown happened in the first place but isn’t currently aware that any MU grants expired during those 16 days. Although the shutdown did take its toll on various research projects. Three labs at MU are run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service.
Linit said he doesn’t know if any experiments have been or will be thrown out at this point. As of today, the labs are back up and running.

“I just saw one federal colleague on campus today, and I told him welcome back, and he just had a big smile on his face,” Linit said.

*Supervising editor is John Schneller.*
October 18, 2013

After the Shutdown, Academics Have a Lot of Catching Up to Do

By Kelly Field

NO MENTION

The federal government is back in business, and researchers are returning to government buildings and labs shuttered during the 16-day federal shutdown that ended late Wednesday.

But the standoff, which cost the economy billions and disrupted research projects and education plans nationwide, is likely to have lingering effects on academe. It could be weeks before government workers get through the backlog of civil-rights complaints and tuition-assistance claims, and grant making could be delayed.

In Washington, academics flooded the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian museums, eager to resume their research after a two-week delay. Research rooms at the National Archives remained closed, "to give staff time to ensure the proper protection of holdings," according to the agency’s Web site, but were scheduled to reopen on Friday.

Scientists who were locked out of government-run labs during the shutdown were back at work, along with thousands of furloughed employees of the U.S. Department of Education and the science agencies. Some branches of the military were again accepting claims for tuition assistance for active-duty service members, though the Marine Corps said it wouldn’t process any new applications until January 1, when the second fiscal quarter starts.

The Merchant Marine Academy reopened, with classes set to resume next week, after fall break.
Farther afield, in Antarctica, scientists whose work was suspended got word from the National Science Foundation that the summer research season was a go. James R. Collins, a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology whose research was disrupted by the shutdown, reported in an e-mail that "everyone is running around setting up their labs" and would "move onto the ship this afternoon. We feel like we've been at the end of a very long yo-yo down here," he wrote.

For the most part, academics whose work is financed by the federal government were able to continue their research during the shutdown. But scientists like Mr. Collins, who work out of government facilities, often alongside government employees, found closed buildings and furloughed colleagues.

For the first week of the shutdown, Jeff Mayse, a doctoral student at the Johns Hopkins University who collaborates with scientists at the National Institute on Aging, couldn't enter the government building where he studies how rats make decisions as they age. He spent the second week fixing a piece of equipment that had malfunctioned while he was gone.

Now, with nearly two weeks lost, he said he won't know if any declines in his rats' performance are attributable to aging or to the lapse in training.

"We're happy to be back at work, but definitely our projects are suffering," he said.

Susan Jarvi, an associate professor of pharmaceutical sciences at the University of Hawaii at Hilo who was locked out of the Department of Agriculture lab where she is testing a vaccine for rat lungworm disease, is scrambling for money to pay for another month of rat care. Two years into the project, "we have too much invested in this study to let it go," she wrote in an e-mail. "Any suggestions for funding welcome!"

Because a round of grant applications to the National Institutes of Health were due on October 5, when it was still closed, the NIH will have to set a new deadline. It must also reschedule review meetings and conferences, a process that will take "a few days," according to an e-mail sent to researchers by Sally Rockey, deputy director for extramural research.
Carrie Wolinetz, president of United for Medical Research, an advocacy group that represents universities and other research organizations, said the grant backlog would most likely be greater due to the old deadline.

"There's going to be, I suspect, a mad rush to submit grants because everyone has been sort of holding them in limbo," she said. Harold E. Varmus, director of the National Cancer Institute, wrote in an e-mail to researchers that they should help alleviate the backlog in grants by participating in the peer-review process, though it may require them to cancel "longstanding plans." Such participation may be the only way to avoid "a major crisis in grant making and program development," he wrote.

**Backlogs for Bureaucrats**

At the Department of Education, thousands of employees were returning to a mountain of e-mails and voice messages and a backlog of work. The department continued to award student aid during the shutdown but suspended federal audits and investigations and did not process any new sexual-assault complaints. Its Office for Civil Rights receives about 9,000 complaints a year, according to Cameron French, a department spokesman.

Arne Duncan, the U.S. secretary of education, sent a message to employees on Thursday acknowledging that "these next few weeks won't be easy."

"I know that you're coming back to even more work than you already had on your plate before the department had to shut down," he wrote. "Projects are falling behind schedule. It may be hard to prioritize what needs to get done first."

Asked how long it might take the department to work through the backlog of student complaints, and whether grant-making competitions could be delayed, Mr. French said he wasn't "in a position to summarize what remains outstanding across the department today."

One meeting the department will have to reschedule is the second session of its controversial "gainful employment" rule making. Negotiators were supposed to meet in Washington next week to discuss alternatives to the department's language, but the meeting was postponed. The delay is yet another setback for the rule, which would link federal student aid to students' ability to repay their loans. A court overturned an earlier version last year.
At the National Endowment for the Humanities, officials were rescheduling peer-review meetings in an effort to keep to the agency's three-times-a-year grant-making schedule. Judy Havemann, director of communications, said the NEH was relieved that it could "begin to make promised payments to scholarly and other grantees who would normally have received them during the past two and a half weeks." She said that while peer-review panels could be rescheduled, "some sessions cannot easily be reconvened in a period of limited resources."

"We'll be working long hours to make up for lost time," wrote Brett Bobley, director of the agency's Office of Digital Humanities, in an e-mail. "But we feel we owe it to our researchers to do everything we can to make this right."

*Andy Thomason and Jennifer Howard contributed to this article.*
New UM System administrator Hank Foley visits MU Faculty Council

BY Molly Duffy

COLUMBIA — A new face in the UM System, Hank Foley, introduced himself to the MU Faculty Council on Thursday.

Foley started as UM System executive vice president for academic affairs on Aug. 5. He spoke with Faculty Council members about academic values, research and innovation.

Foley said that while academia is the heart of the university, research is very important, especially to MU.

"It's really baked into the DNA of a land grant university," he said.

Research is in a "new era" in regards to the amount of scrutiny it receives, Foley said. In response to environmental changes like a weaker economy and a lack of research investment from major corporations, research should turn to innovation instead of invention.

Foley suggested several strategies to accomplish that goal. He said faculty across the UM System should look for opportunities for synergy.

Foley is also interested in reevaluating intellectual property practices. Foley said that while he was at Pennsylvania State University he improved the process by putting faculty in charge.

Foley also said he'd like to see MU encourage more students to become entrepreneurs.

"I would love to get to a place where we grow our own entrepreneurial community in our own backyard of faculty members, graduate students who stay, and a few undergrads a year who like Columbia and stay," he said.

Foley said he'd also be interested in co-hosting town hall meetings and faculty forums with the council.

"I'm trying to get the vibe of the place and really figure out what people are about," Foley said. "I think what's exciting here is tying together research, tying together humanities with science, with engineering ... we're really trying to produce young people who are extraordinarily well-rounded."
Faculty Council members reacted warmly to Foley's comments. Nursing professor Rebecca Johnson said the discussion was "very uplifting."

**OTHER BUSINESS**

- The council passed a motion in support of the [College of Arts and Science pursuing a supplemental fee](#) in an 18-3 vote.
- Psychology associate professor Dennis Miller, who represents MU on the Intercampus Faculty Council, presented an open letter to the chancellor requesting "an active and respected faculty voice" in the hiring process for the new provost.
The goal of the University of Missouri System is to touch every person in the state every day, said President Tim Wolfe.

The system includes four campuses — the University of Missouri-Columbia, St. Louis, Kansas City and the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla.

It aims to meet its goal serving people through its health care offices, extension centers, through the education of students, work of alum, service to livestock producers and farmers, agricultural research stations and through other outreach programs.

County Impact

President Wolfe spoke with The Missourian about the campus system’s impact statewide, and specifically in Franklin County.

In 2012, about 380 patients from Franklin County were treated by University of Missouri Health Care.

The county’s extension office, located in Union, made nearly 30,000 contacts with county residents over the same time period.

Additionally, 688 Franklin County students were attending a University of Missouri campus in 2012, while 3,316 alumni were living in the county.
Twenty-three percent of all county teachers and 31 percent of all school administrators were University of Missouri alumni as of 2012.

“An investment in higher education is an investment in Missouri,” said Wolfe, adding that education helps play a role in the economic development of communities.

Economic Development

Wolfe said education has a huge impact on the state’s economic development.

“Education is a prerequisite for economic development,” he said.

Businesses will move to the state or to Franklin County based on the quality of its schools.

“We need to make sure we have an educated work force that is engaged and involved in the community and in children’s academics,” Wolfe said.

Raising the level of education awareness will lead to economic development in Missouri being more competitive on a global scale, he noted.

Wolfe, who has children in college, said he takes “great satisfaction and joy” in spreading the message of education to others.

And while he’s thankful that higher education is a part of his children’s plans, he said it’s unfortunate that some kids are tuning out or deciding that college is unaffordable.

“We need to keep them inspired and motivated on their graduation from high school,” he said, and educate students on financial aid that is available after high school.

Students need to understand that if they have the credentials and work hard, they can overcome any financial hurdle, Wolfe said.

To achieve that goal, Wolfe launched the “Show Me Value” tour, in which he and others speak to middle and high school students, as well as community members, about the value of education and how education improves quality of life.

Wolfe cited national statistics that say college graduates earn an average of $540 more per week than nongraduates and that college graduates live longer because they’re making better decisions about lifestyle and other factors.

“Through the Show Me Value Tour — if one or two (students) take hold, then our mission is certainly accomplished,” he said.

Extension Centers

The University of Missouri system has an extension center in each of the 114 counties in Missouri.

Wolfe said each individual campus and extension center helps high school dropouts get degrees, helps people create business proposals and helps with many other tasks.
The extension center also provides soil testing service, pesticide application training and vet lab services.

“We work closely with the extension leadership to develop services pertinent to those we serve,” Wolfe said.

The system also educates through its Missouri Research and Education Network (MOREnet) program, which is one of the nation’s first and largest statewide research and education networks that link nearly 800 Missouri schools, public libraries, higher education institutions, telehealth sites and state agencies across a private integrated network.

As a public research institution for the state, Wolfe said, serving communities like Franklin County “is what we’re supposed to be doing.

“We are responsible for educating all 6 million Missourians,” on the benefits of higher education, he said.

The system mission statement says that it “promotes learning by its students and lifelong learning by Missouri’s citizens, fosters innovation to support economic development, and advances the health, cultural, and social interests of the people of Missouri, the nation, and the world.”

The system will continue to move research from its labs to the community, to educate and foster innovation.

“And we’re excited about that,” Wolfe said.
People Genetically Predisposed To Be Anxious May Be Less Likely To Help Others

People with a genetic predisposition for anxiety might be less likely to help others, a new study suggests.

Researchers found that lower engagement in prosocial behavior -- such as volunteering -- and higher social avoidance are associated with a variation in the serotonin transporter gene regulatory region.

"Previous research has shown that the brain's serotonin neurotransmitter system plays an important role in regulating emotions," study researcher Scott Stoltenberg, an associate professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said in a statement. "Our findings suggest that individual differences in social anxiety levels are influenced by this serotonin system gene and that these differences help to partially explain why some people are more likely than others to behave prosocially. Studies like this one show that biological factors are critical influences on how people interact with one another."

Of course, researchers noted that it's not just genes that influence whether someone is likely to help others; environment likely also plays some role. "The nature-versus-nurture debate is always interesting," study researcher Gustavo Carlo, a professor in the College of Human Environmental Sciences at the University of Missouri, said in the statement. "However, I think that in our contemporary models of human behavior, we are beginning to understand the interplay between biology and the environment."

The new findings are published in the journal Social Neuroscience and are based on gene analysis and self-reports of certain tendencies -- such as social avoidance and prosocial behavior -- of 398 undergraduate college students.

Recently, a study in the journal Neuron showed that brain gray matter may also be linked with how generous a person is. That study, conducted by researchers at the University of Zurich, showed that altruistic people may have more gray matter in the temporoparietal junction brain region.
Is Being a Good Samaritan a Matter of Genes?
Oct 17, 2013 01:00 PM ET // by Patrick J. Kiger

The Biblical parable of the Good Samaritan, a traveler who stops on the road to help a badly wounded robbery victim that others had passed by, is a story that we see repeated again and again in the news.

In Fort Lauderdale, Fla., after a woman lost control of her car on an Interstate freeway and flipped into a water-filled ditch, a man jumped in to rescue her from drowning. In Arizona, after a community college student lost a wallet containing her cash, credit cards, student ID and immigrant work permit, an unidentified person found it and dropped it off at her school’s office. In Oklahoma, after a teenage skateboarder tumbled from his board and suffered a concussion, a man he didn’t know found him by the side of the road and took him to get help.

What motivates people to stop and help others that they didn’t previously know, with no apparent benefit to themselves?

Traditionally, we’ve viewed people who engage in prosocial behavior -- that is, voluntary acts performed to benefit others or society as a whole -- as being motivated by moral character or spiritual beliefs. But in recent years, increasing evidence has emerged to suggest that the tendency to be a do-gooder may be influenced by genes.

In a newly-published study in the journal Social Neuroscience, for example, researchers found that a single variation in a genotype seems to affect whether or not a person engages in prosocial acts. Individuals who have one variation of the genotype have a tendency toward social anxiety -- that is, unease around other people, and are less inclined to help others in ways that involve personal interaction.

Those who have another variation, in contrast, not only were less anxious, but also were more likely to be helpful. The genetic region involved is 5-HTTPLR, which regulates transport of serotonin, a neurotransmitter chemical in the brain. The researchers studied the genomes of 398 college students, and asked the subjects to fill out a questionnaire to provide information about their behavior and anxiety levels.
University of Missouri social psychologist Gustavo Carlo, one of the study's co-authors, said that the genotype variation is just one "indirect pathway" that could lead a person to being a Good Samaritan. Another potential influence, he said, is the brain's ability to use dopamine, another brain chemical. Other genetic variations in brain chemistry may play a role as well.

"This is a really exciting area for research," Carlo said. "There are a lot of studies being done right now that focus on the micro-level biological processes associated with altruistic behavior."

Co-author Scott F. Stoltenberg, a researcher at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Behavior Genetics Laboratory, says the findings build on previous studies that suggest a link between relative levels of anxiety and prosocial behavior.

"It makes sense that people who have less social anxiety are more likely to help out," Stoltenberg explained. "When they're confronted with a situation where another person needs help, they don't have a problem going over to them and engaging." A person with social anxiety, in contrast, might experience so much discomfort that he or she would avoid the encounter.

Both serotonin and dopamine are neurotransmitters related to the sensations of pleasure and satisfaction, which may explain why people who perform selfless acts of generosity report that they feel good as a result.

BLOG: Can Cheating Make You Feel Good?

Carlo cautioned that the study's findings don't necessarily mean that people with a genetic predisposition toward anxiety also lack empathy, the ability to care about others. While it may be more difficult for them to engage in public acts of prosocial behavior, they may instead make anonymous contributions to a person in need, or help in some other way that doesn't require personal interaction.

Why humans developed the capacity to be Good Samaritans is another widely-debated question. In the 1970s, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, a believer in the notion that "genes are selfish," argued that prosocial behavior existed to ensure genetic continuity. His view was influenced by studies suggesting that organisms were most likely to help their own kin.

But as Ohio State University psychologists Baldwin M. Way and Kyle G. Ratner wrote in an essay that appeared in the same journal as Carlo's and Stoltenberg's study, Dawkins' view fails
to account for the many instances in which humans have helped others to whom they were not closely related, and have done so with no apparent genetic benefit to themselves.

Previous studies have indicated that the tendency toward prosocial behavior may be at least in part heritable -- that is, passed on from generation to generation genetically -- rather than totally the result of the moral influence of parents or teachers. A 2007 study of Korean twins, for example, found that about 55 percent of the variance in prosocial behavior seemed to be due to genetics, and that the genetic link seemed to increase as the children got older.
MU students printing less in digital age

BY T.J. Thomson

COLUMBIA — MU students are printing less now than they were five years ago, despite the university adding about 3,300 more user accounts since then.

Some faculty attribute this trend to better information accessibility, while some students say their decreased printing use echoes their concern about the environment.

Printing quota issues

In 2009, students printed about 13.4 million pages. Four years later, they printed about 12.3 million pages, a decrease of about 9 percent, according to reports generated in September by the MU Division of Information Technology.

Color printing has always been the minority, according to the reports.

In 2009 and 2012, color printing accounted for about 1 percent of total printed output.

At MU, students are awarded printing quotas based on their status; undergraduates receive $35 in printing for the academic year, while graduate students receive $50 for the same time frame.

So far this year, 4,834 students, or about 15 percent of users, have exceeded their print quotas, generating $90,956.14 in revenue for MU.

MU sophomore Ymani Wince of Florissant, who went over her printing quota in fall 2012, said $35 isn't enough to cover her yearlong printing needs.

"I don't think $35 is enough for a student who takes classes that requires an extreme amount of printing," Wince said. "For example, I had a professor who required students to print every online reading and bring it to class. The readings were an average of five to 10 pages, and we had these readings twice per week. Also, I took an English course that required the students to print out copies of their work for each student in the class. It was too much."

Some students have barely scratched the surface, though.

"So far this semester, I think I’ve used maybe a dollar’s worth of printing," said first-year graduate student Laura Miller of Columbia. Miller also prints at home but said she does this more for personal rather than academic uses.
One student suggested a printing quota tailored to students' majors.

"I feel that the amount is sufficient for an average student, but for some journalism students or heavy writing (and) communications majors, I feel that the amount could be raised slightly," said junior Ebony Francis of McKinney, Texas.

Miller said she’s noticed students seem to be printing less in the past five years and attributes the decrease to more developed technology.

"I definitely have noticed that (a decrease in student printing) since my freshman year in undergrad until now," she said. "My professors just want me to email assignments instead of printing them out and handing them in."

Harry Tyrer, a former MU Faculty Council chairman and a professor in the College of Engineering, said he's observed somewhat of a trend in student printing in the past five years.

"Students printed out course Web pages a few years ago," Tyrer said. "That is being phased out now. Also, most of my handouts are available electronically, and except for quizzes and exams, there is little that needs to be handed out to class."

**Environmental impact**

Faculty Council member Anthony Lupo said that although more professors are posting course materials online, he doesn't think students interact with them there.

"I noticed students are doing a lot more printing as more and more instructors have their notes online," said Lupo, a professor in the School of Natural Resources. "This is especially true in the last five years."

Students' impressions of printing's impact on the environment ranged from concern to apathy.

"I am concerned about the environmental impact of printing," Wince said. "Although we are in a digital age where many things can be done electronically, professors still require their students to print everything out. To save money as well as the environment, I try to do my assignments online."

Francis said she wasn't too concerned about the environmental impact.

"However, I am sure the Mizzou campus makes a large impact with all students constantly printing," Francis said.

A tree can produce about 8,333 sheets of paper, according to an estimate by Sanda Kaufman, a professor of planning, policy and public administration at Cleveland State University.

Based on this figure, MU's student printing so far this year has claimed 1,350 trees.
About 40 percent of a tree can be used for paper production, but the rest isn’t wasted, said Alan Rudie, supervisory research chemist in the Fiber and Chemical Sciences Research unit for the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

"Everything else is used as the source of energy that runs the mill," Rudie said.

**Future printing plans**

Kevin Bailey, MU director of customer service and support for the Division of IT, outlined several printing-related changes that are scheduled or in the works, including:

- Changing the printing allowance structure from an annual to a semester-based schedule in December.
- Creating a Web page by August 2014 to handle printing refund requests and report printer issues.
- Adding capability to print from phones and mobile devices in the future. "Plans for this change are being developed, but no timeline has been approved yet," Bailey said.

Students at MU are printing fewer pages than they did five years ago. Despite an increase in the number of students who printed pages, the overall number of printed pages decreased by 17 percent since 2009. (JOEY FENING/Missourian)

**Supervising editor is Elizabeth Brixey.**
Arrowhead may go quiet on big college game days

Arrowhead Stadium plays host to a big Division II football game on Saturday, but its future as the site of major-college games is much more uncertain, KCUR reports.

The University of Missouri’s move to the Southeastern Conference and the University of Kansas’ subsequent rejection of continuing to play football games with MU meant the end of big-college games, the report says.

And now, even the game between DII powerhouses Pittsburg State University and Northwest Missouri State University has no home for next year, KCUR reports.
Crews from Fenton-based Kaiser Electric completed the electrical work on a $9.75 million project to renovate the west side press box and suite area at Faurot Field at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Kaiser’s crews wired and installed new lighting and a backup generator, plus expanded electrical distribution to the renovated area.

The renovations included approximately 42,000 square feet of club, suite, fan amenity, game operations and support spaces within the press box structure.

A portion of the press area was also relocated to the upper deck by building an additional enclosed space.

The architect on the project was Kansas City-based 360 Architecture, and the general contractor was Jefferson City-based Sircal Contracting Inc.
The case of a 14-year-old girl who says she was raped by an older boy from her Missouri high school and left passed out on her porch in freezing temperatures is expected to get a fresh start under a special prosecutor.

A special prosecutor will be able to launch his own investigation, interview witnesses and work independently from the local prosecutor who's faced intense scrutiny for dropping felony charges in the case last year, experts said Thursday.

"The idea is really to have a third party who is removed from the process, who can bring the appearance of objectivity and neutrality," said Richard Reuben, a professor at the University of Missouri School of Law. "At the end of the day they would look like a prosecutor who is truly independent."

The new prosecutor's final decision carries high stakes: It could settle the debate over whether Rice was right to drop the charges, or validate the accusers' outrage by pushing the case toward a trial.

Nodaway County prosecutor Robert Rice filed a motion Thursday for a judge to appoint a special prosecutor in the case, which has gained new attention and an outpouring of responses of social media following a Kansas City Star investigation. The girl's family also spoke out this summer to Kansas City radio station KCUR.

The case and the publicity has shaken the small college town of Maryville, where the girl's mother, Melinda Coleman, said her family was forced to move after being harassed over the allegations. Her house in Maryville burned down while the family was trying to sell it, but a cause hasn't been determined.

Coleman, was outraged when Rice dropped felony charges in March 2012, two months after she says her daughter was plied with alcohol, raped, then dumped on the family's front porch. She said her daughter's 13-year-old friend was raped by another boy the same evening.
"I think it's really good that we have a chance to have someone listen objectively," Coleman said Thursday. "That brings a lot of healing in itself."

Rice insists the initial investigation collapsed after the Colemans became uncooperative with investigators — something Coleman has denied.

Anchored by Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville may be best known as a football town, illustrated by the giant “bearcat” paw prints painted on Fourth Street and leading the way to the university’s football stadium. Signs in the windows of local shops and bars support the Bearcats, whose annual game against rival Pittsburg State University is so big it’s played at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City and dubbed the Fall Classic.

Since the Star's story was published, the town has been deluged with negative reactions, most of it coming from people on social media who have condemned the town for seemingly abandoning sexual assault victims. The case now is the talk of the town, and locals are anxious for a resolution.

"I have some friends who get together, but since this has been going on, they have to sit and argue their opinions," said Kyle Ponder, a 22-year-old lifelong Maryville resident. "This is splitting the town in two."

Few have disputed the central facts of the case. Daisy Coleman was 14 on the night in January 2012 she and 13-year-old friend drank alcohol they stashed in a closet, sneaked out of the Colemans’ Maryville home and met with three boys, including two 17-year-olds.

Daisy's mother says one of the older boys sexually assaulted her daughter while the girl was passed out, while the 15-year-old boy forced the 13-year-old to have sex in a different room. The second 17-year-old was accused of recording the incident involving Daisy Coleman on his cellphone.

The two older boys were initially charged as adults with felonies, while the younger boy's case was handled in the juvenile system. Months later, Rice dropped all the charges against the older boys, saying the victims had invoked their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. The boys have insisted the sex act involving Daisy Coleman was consensual.

Authorities say the cellphone video had been deleted and investigators at the regional forensics lab in Kansas City could not recover it from the cellphone.

The Associated Press does not generally name victims of sexual assault but is naming the Colemans because they have been granting public interviews about the case. The AP is not naming the accused boys because there are no active charges against them.

Rice says he's asking for a special prosecutor only because media stories have questioned the integrity of the county's justice system. He stands by claims that the case fell apart only after the Colemans and the other girl refused to answer questions.

A special prosecutor could seek to interview the original prosecutor as a witness in the case but would conduct an entirely separate investigation. A special prosecutor would investigate if there's been a crime and would have the authority to bring charges, said Reuben, the professor at the University of Missouri.
Platte County Prosecutor Eric Zahnd said special prosecutors are used often in Missouri. Zahnd, who has asked for special prosecutors and has also served as a special prosecutor, said the designation in Nodaway County could be given to any other lawyer in the state, including another county prosecutor or someone from the Missouri Attorney General’s Office.

About a block off of Maryville's town square, Fred Robertson was cutting hair Thursday at his barbershop when the case came up. Robertson said it's sad that the town has been caught up in the media spotlight for something most people had nothing to do with.

"You can work all your life to have something good, and something like this can tear it up in a short time," he said. "There are no winners."
League of Women Voters forum tackles teacher tenure

By Catherine Martin

Although some issues, such as school transfers, might overshadow the topic of teacher tenure in the upcoming session of the Missouri General Assembly, Stacey Preis, executive director of the General Assembly Joint Committee on Education, said she doesn't think the topic of tenure is going away.

"There are very strong feelings on both sides of the issue," she said last night at a forum on teacher tenure organized by the League of Women Voters.

Panelists included Preis; Otto Fajen, legislative director for the Missouri National Education Association; Michael Podgursky, a University of Missouri economics professor; and Scott Summers, attorney for the Missouri School Boards' Association. Fajen and Summers spoke positively of tenure while Podgursky was more critical.

Missouri law grants teachers tenure, or permanent status with a school system, after they have been employed in the same district for five years.

Podgursky said tenure makes it hard to remove inadequate teachers and allows them to bring the rest of the group down. "I think we've got to address the bigger picture, moving ineffective teachers out and developing a system that reviews performance," he said.

Summers argued that tenure does not prevent ineffective teachers from being terminated and said there are processes in place "to weed out or get rid of teachers that are not effective."

Podgursky countered that while there are processes in place to remove underperforming teachers, it can be costly to do so. "It is an elaborate process," he said.

Summers admitted the process for removal can be complicated and costly, but he said he doesn't think the time or the cost would make a district back off of a case if a teacher really needed to be removed.
Fajen said tenure is important because it protects public employees. For example, if a teacher also is a coach, he or she shouldn't have to worry that backlash from parents who think their kids aren't giving enough time on the field could cost them their teaching job. Teachers should feel comfortable doing the right thing, he said.

He also said tenure discussions are a distraction from "the real issues." Summers said he thinks the legislature should instead focus on areas such as how to attract quality people to the teaching profession.

The panelists all seemed to agree, however, that the topic of tenure isn't going away.

**Podgursky, a tenured professor at MU, said tenure for college professors is merit driven, which he said he thinks is the important difference.** He said he would like to see data, such as test scores and other measures, used more in evaluating teachers.

While Preis said she thinks discussions will continue, she said those discussions are "moving away from should we have tenure or not have tenure" to focus on "the system underneath." Some discussions also have focused on other options, such as having multi-year contracts instead of permanent tenure, Preis said.

Peggy Placier, chairwoman of the education committee for League of Women Voters, said she thought the conversation went well. The group tries to have a forum about education issues each fall, she said, and tenure seemed to be an important topic to discuss.

"I think when a lot of people hear that teachers have tenure, they have a job for life no matter how lazy they are. That's not really true," she said. "Tenure … is a complicated issue."