House panel cuts proposals for new education funding

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — The House Appropriations-Education Committee on Wednesday cut deeply into Gov. Jay Nixon's proposals for new spending on public schools and higher education in the coming year.

The University of Missouri would receive $21.3 million in new state funding next year, less than half the new funding proposed when Gov. Jay Nixon recommended an 11.2 percent increase. The public school foundation formula, which received $3.08 billion this year, would receive an extra $100.4 million in year that begins July 1.

Nixon had proposed a $278 million increase.

Chairman Mike Lair, R-Chillicothe, said after the vote that the state did not have enough money for everything Nixon proposed. He compared it to a parent who asks their child if they would rather have a $50 bicycle or a $250 bicycle.

"Hell yes, you would rather have the $250 bicycle, but what if you don't have $250 million?" Lair said.

Overall, the university would receive $428.8 million in the coming year, up from $407.5 million in the current year. The appropriation is the largest since fiscal year 2009, when lawmakers approved $461 million for the university.

Lair's plan includes a 5 percent average increase for all higher education institutions. Nixon had proposed an average of 4 percent base increase for community colleges and 5 percent for four-year universities. Lair said that slighted the community colleges, which have about 40 percent of the post-secondary students.

"We felt it needed to be the same," he said.

The proposal retains the distribution of funding based on performance, as proposed by Nixon.
The plan, which now goes to the House Budget Committee, does not include Nixon's proposed funding for training mental health professionals and cuts back sharply on an initiative for science, technology, engineering and math education.

Instead of permanent funding, including $12.2 million for the UM system, Lair's committee proposes $5.2 million for grants limited to $220,000 for each qualifying school. Lair said he felt it was "money with no focus" and little accountability.

Today's action was the first step in a process that will produce a final budget by early May.

Nixon proposed a $27.7 billion operating budget, which included $9.08 billion from the general revenue fund. House Budget Committee Chairman Rick Stream, R-Kirkwood, cut $310 million from Nixon's estimate for general revenue and set limits for new spending for each appropriations committee. The education panel had $317 million to divide among all programs.

The first spending bill that will be debated is the supplemental appropriations measure for the current year. The budget committee yesterday cut $54 million from Nixon's general revenue request, including $44 million to cover shortfalls in public school aid because of expected shortfalls in gambling and lottery revenue.

The committee also decided not to spend $14 million to support bonds to rebuild Fulton State Hospital. Nixon wanted the money to show lawmakers were committed to his plan to borrow $200 million for the hospital construction.

Nixon wants to use bonds backed by a promise that future lawmakers will pay the debt. He has been criticized by Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, who wants to ask voters for a larger bond issue that includes Fulton State Hospital and others who want to pay for construction out of current revenue.

"We are going to do it a different way," Stream said. "Even if we go with revenue bonds as the governor proposed, there is no reason for it to be in the supplemental."

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Speakers talk UM System funding at Legislative Day panel

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at 2:00 pm
JEFFERSON CITY — Topping off a day of advocacy, the University of Missouri hosted a series of speakers Tuesday, including lawmakers and others involved in higher education policy, to talk about legislative priorities for higher education.

University of Missouri System staff and representatives from all four campuses, with a large presence from MU Extension, attended the panel, which was part of the UM Legislative Day at the Capitol.

The event started with a rally where Gov. Jay Nixon and UM President Tim Wolfe spoke about issues related to higher education, primarily the state budget. Wolfe also spoke about infrastructure needs on the four campuses. Many of the subjects Nixon and Wolfe discussed in the morning came up again in the panel.

“We do know that the governor’s proposal will probably not move forward as it was,” said Rep. Mike Thomson, R-Maryville. Thomson is the chairman of the House Higher Education Committee.

Thomson’s budget comments come after House Budget Chairman Rick Stream, R-Kirkwood, said he plans to use the budget approved by lawmakers for the current year as a starting place for the coming year’s planning instead of using the governor’s proposal. The current year’s budget spends $2.4 billion less than Nixon’s recommendation for the upcoming fiscal year.

House budget writers will allow the Appropriations-Education Committee $317 million for increases to public schools and higher education, programs that received $3.76 billion from general revenue in the current year. House appropriations committees continue to meet and discuss how they will propose to allocate that money. Nixon has recommended $128.2 million in new higher education spending and $336.1 million in new K-12 spending.

Thomson spoke about a bill he filed earlier in the session that would expand the Bright Flight scholarship to include a loan program. Under the measure, 25 percent of the loan would be forgiven each year the recipient lives and works in Missouri after graduation. This bill is a priority for legislators and UM administrators.

David Russell, Department of Higher Education commissioner, also spoke to the group, emphasizing that although higher education is accustomed to restricted budgets, there are still “champions of higher education” in the Capitol. He named Thomson and Sen. David Pearce among those “champions.”

“After 25 years of doing this, I can tell you we have probably never had a more positive atmosphere in the building favoring what we’re trying to accomplish,” he said. Russell was appointed as commissioner in 201, and worked for the UM System before that.

Russell also spoke about his support of a performance-based funding formula. Performance funding gives universities the chance to receive 90 percent of any new money based on how they meet performance criteria.
Senate Bill 492 was perfected yesterday, meaning the wording won’t change. The Senate will take a final vote before the bill heads to the House. SB 492 is sponsored by Pearce, R-Warrensburg, who also spoke yesterday. The next read and vote will likely happen tomorrow, he said.

This was the first “legislative panel” UM has hosted in the 40 years of its Legislative Day, UM lobbyist Marty Oetting said. He said the idea came from watching how other organizations conduct their days at the Capitol and in hopes of keeping the hundreds of attendees engaged through the end of the day.

Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin begins term at MU

By Crystal Duan

**Before he officially became MU’s chancellor Feb. 1, R. Bowen Loftin’s voice was already heard on Twitter.**

The social media-savvy chancellor, who tweets from the handle [@bowtieger](https://twitter.com/bowtieger), responds to mentions, direct messages and even silly questions about his signature bow ties.

But behind Loftin’s easygoing Twitter persona is a man who has intentionally mastered social media.

When he set foot on campus to speak with his actual voice, which is deep and laced with a southern lilt, he spoke of beginning, and continuing, relationships as his first priority for learning about the university.

“(Relationships) are key to success in anything that you want to do,” Loftin said. “That’s priority No. 1. That’s ongoing and won’t ever stop.”

**Texas A&M**

A native of Hearne, Texas, Loftin graduated from Texas A&M University — which he would eventually lead as president — with a bachelor’s degree in physics in 1970.

Loftin said his background in physics taught him to be analytical and work objectively to solve issues, especially as a leader.
“That background has prepared me very well for how I want to do business, so I’m not limited to seat-of-the-pants kinds of guesses about what to do,” Loftin said. “You develop instincts, you develop feelings for how things should be, but nothing beats good data and using that data effectively to make a good decision.”

Loftin started as vice president and CEO at his alma mater’s Galveston campus from 2005 to 2009, and subsequently served as interim president of Texas A&M for eight months before beginning his presidency in February 2010.

At the time, he gained attention from Aggie students as @aggieprez on Twitter, which showed his love for being with students, said Amanda Hatheway, A&M Student Government Association chief of staff.

“I cannot stress enough how much students loved Dr. Loftin,” Hatheway said. “He would walk across campus and say ‘Howdy’ to every student he saw. He was extremely accessible to students and the mostly friendly and warm administrator that I had met.”

**Coming to MU**

Loftin announced his retirement from the Texas A&M presidency in July 2013, and he initially planned to stay as a faculty member with the possibility of leading a research institute.

Then he had a conversation with the MU chancellor search committee about the possibility of succeeding Brady Deaton, and he had to make a choice.

“It came down to, do I want to continue down a pathway where I’d be able to touch the students in my classes and laboratories, or do I want to continue dealing with students in a larger number,” Loftin said. “And that just came back to me as something I still probably had the energy and desire to do.”

Now that he is at MU, Loftin’s first priority is to begin the search for a permanent provost, along with replacements for the School of Medicine dean and vice chancellors of university affairs, administrative services and research.

“There are a number of executive positions vacant here at the present time being occupied by interim individuals,” he said. “That search (for a provost) will be announced fairly soon.”

Loftin will also begin the search to replace Dean Mills, the School of Journalism dean, when the provost search begins moving along.

**Twitter famous**

Loftin uses Twitter to best understand how to manage the campus, and he views it as a better way to stay connected with what is going on.
“Social media is very important to me to give me a chance to do two things: One is to allow people to get to me,” Loftin said. “So if I get a tweet directed at me, either I respond to it, or I send it to somebody who can respond to it if there’s a question or concern that’s raised there. Secondly, I follow several hundred students myself ... from different backgrounds. That gives me a way to look at the campus through their eyes day by day.”

In the two weeks he has served as chancellor, tweets have already helped Loftin perceive issues ranging from dangerous facility-oriented matters to students’ struggles with financial aid.

“Much of what is tweeted out there is none of my business, but there are nuggets all the time,” Loftin said. “There can be a fast reaction there if you pay attention to (them).”

Freshman Chase Newman said he thinks Loftin’s larger-than-life Internet personality has helped his impression of the chancellor as an accessible authority figure.

“It makes him seem less like an Oz-type character and more of an actual human being,” Newman said.

Loftin said Twitter is an invaluable resource for managing MU, and he will glance at his feed as he walks across the campus between meetings to see what is happening.

“It’s really important to me to pay attention to the campus from the students’ perspective,” Loftin said of being accessible to students. “People are going to be brutally honest about their observations.”

**Going forth**

Loftin said his hands-on approach to managing campus will entail more task delegation to the chancellor’s office staff.

“Any leadership transition is about people getting to learn about each other,” Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs said. “In terms of this particular transition, Chancellor Loftin is very student-centered, so it’s been a very good and comfortable transition for student affairs.”

Interim Deputy Provost Ken Dean said each time a new leader comes in with new ideas, it reinvigorates the rest of the administration.

“He comes with a wealth of information,” Dean said. “He’s done this before, so he doesn’t have a steep learning curve. He’s hit the ground running. It’s an exciting time to think about what we can be doing better and differently and improve upon.”

For the students, however, just being able to interact with a prominent university authority is exciting.

“Having him be so involved with the students here at the university is something that I really admire,” freshman Lexie Henning said.
Junior Emily Klaus said the chancellor’s tweeting habits have made him a campus celebrity. She said he excites students with his cleverly crafted responses.

“I think it's awesome he's so active on social media,” she said. “It's the platform college students get most of their news and information from, so it makes him seem much more approachable and active around the university.”

Loftin’s casual informal tweets also show he cares about MU students, senior Mallory Williams said.

“I think it shows that he truly wants to get to know us,” she said. “It makes Mizzou feel much smaller and friendlier.”

Showing how it's done

Mizzou students protected Michael Sam from seeing church protesters

Updated: February 18, 2014, 6:14 PM ET

By Rick Reilly

I love this latest generation of Americans, this Generation Y. Maybe when you're born with a computer in your hand, solutions come easy. They're givers, joiners and fixers. I wish I were one of them.

Nothing proves it more than what happened Saturday in Columbia, Mo.

It all started with the people I'd most like to see thrown into a wheat thresher -- the vile members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kan.

These are the snakes who picket the funerals of U.S. soldiers, holding up their "God Hates Fags" signs as a sick protest against gays in the military. They're the scum who post things like, "Thank God for 10 more troop deaths. We're praying for 10,000 more." They're the soulless who threatened to picket the Sandy Hook funerals.
Westboro announced it was coming to Columbia to picket Michael Sam, the Tigers’ star defensive end who recently told the world he was gay. He was scheduled to pick up Mizzou's Cotton Bowl trophy at halftime of Saturday's Missouri basketball game against Tennessee, along with his teammates.

"GOD H8S FAG FOOTBALL PLAYERS & THEIR ENABLERS," the Westboro yelled, in caps on its website, in announcing their plans to picket.

The idea inflamed the campus. "We were angry," says Sam's teammate, senior left guard Max Copeland. "We're football players. We're protective. That's our brother."

And it all just made you want to hurl -- until two Missouri coeds had an idea.

"We wanted to do something to stand up to the hate," sophomore Alix Carruth said.

"We're both Christians," sophomore Kelaney Lakers said. "We know that's not God. God is love."

Their idea: Make a human wall to block out Westboro, a huge line of solidarity between their classmate and the Westboro stench.

"A single line, arm-in-arm, a sign of One Mizzou," they wrote on Facebook. They called it #StandWithSam. And they made up 1,000 buttons to give out.

It wasn't nearly enough.

By 1:30 p.m. Saturday, along Stadium Boulevard, an estimated 2,000 people had come, forming a line that stretched almost half a mile long.

Imagine that: 2,000 people -- students, parents, kids, the elderly, the straight and the gay -- willing to stand in the freezing Missouri winter to support a young man most of them had never met.

"We turned our backs on [the WBC]," Copeland said. "That's how we stood -- a huge line with our backs to them. It was brilliant."

It was peaceful and powerful and ... fun? People wore homemade "Stand With Sam" shirts. Two girls wore sweatshirts that said, "My God Likes Tigers Of All Stripes." Drivers honked, held up fists and thumbs-up. There was a can-can line, a guy in a Wookie costume, and a guy in a full-body tiger suit.

"I was just so proud of them," Carruth said.

Across the street, the 14 Westboro protesters looked very small indeed.

Final score: Love 2,000, Hate 14.
Copeland texted Sam a picture of the line, with the caption: "You're very loved today, brother."

And what did Sam text back? "OMG!"

It got better. At halftime, he got a standing ovation, more hugs than One Direction, and even a request from Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon: "Could I get a picture with you?"

"Sam was just so moved," says a spokesman for Sam, who has asked out of interviews while he prepares for May's NFL draft, which will almost certainly make him the first openly gay active player in the league. "It was a huge day for him. A wonderful day. A life-changing day."

"Sam seems so happy," says Copeland, "like a man who's cast off this huge weight."

So how do two devout Christians reconcile helping a man they consider a sinner? "Yes, practicing homosexuality is a sin," Lakers says. "But so is lying, so is cheating, so is coveting. I sin every day. God hates the sin, not the sinner. If God hated all the sinners, he'd hate me!"

What does it all mean? It means this sport is ready for this. At the start of the 2013 season, Sam told his 105 teammates he was gay, then went out and became the SEC Co-Defensive Player of the Year and led his team to a 12-2 record. If a gay man ruins the camaraderie of a locker room, I shudder to think how good Missouri would've been.

It means this new generation is ready for this. It has found the way through. It's with respect and honor and love. Why didn't we think of that?

It means the NFL better be ready for this. ESPN just surveyed 51 NFL players and seven of them said a player's sexual orientation matters to them. They worry too much. "It's not weird [being in the locker room with him]," Copeland says. "His new teammates are going to find out that (1) he's a great person and (2) he gets the job done."

What happened in Missouri should sound very familiar to NFL commissioner Roger Goodell. According to a Time magazine profile of Goodell in 2012, the commish would often form a one-man wall between bullies and his gay brother, Michael, when they were growing up.

"Roger is very much a hero figure for me," Michael Goodell told Time.

Now Goodell needs to build a much bigger wall in his NFL to stop the kind of gay-bashing, bullying and blackmail that went on in the Miami Dolphins' locker room last season. He needs to make a new league -- a safe and sane place to work -- and Michael Sam can be the symbol of that.

And to think it took two sophomore Christian women in a red state in the middle of the country to show us how easy it could be.

Thank you, Missouri. You showed us.
An app can to fix abusive boyfriend

NEW YORK: Are you a victim of dating violence or want to get out of an abusive relationship? Here comes an app that helps you clarify your priorities and customise personal safety plans.

In an effort to connect more young women with safety information, researchers at University of Missouri (MU), along with Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and non-profit One Love Foundation, have developed 'One Love My Plan' smartphone application.

This interactive tool helps young women in abusive relationships decide safety measures for themselves via various features embedded in it.

"Women between ages 18-24 are at the highest risk for dating violence. However, these women are less likely than older adults to seek formal safety resources and instead look to peers or technology for help and advice," said researchers. At some point, almost everyone knows someone in an unhealthy relationship.

"The purpose of the 'My Plan' app is to quickly and confidentially provide women and concerned friends with information and available resources. Our goal is not to replace existing services but to better connect students with them," explained Tina Bloom, an assistant professor at the MU's Sinclair School of Nursing.

To ensure that young women would find the app helpful, Bloom and her team conducted focus groups with college-age women who identified themselves as survivors of abusive relationships.

One student told the researchers that she really liked the app because it provided strategies she could use immediately to help herself or a friend. The 'My Plan' app gives students tools to examine their relationships, set their priorities and privately access resources when they are
ready.

The free app is filled with helpful features including information on healthy relationship dynamics, common relationship violence myths and potential behavioral red flags.

It has personalized safety plans based on users' priorities and backed by scientific research.

It also provides an option to do live chat with trained peer advocates, said the study published in Journal of Technology in Human Services.

MU Payroll Office mails new W-2 forms after originals contained wrong information

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 | 3:41 p.m. CST

BY DOMINIQUE FELDMAN

COLUMBIA — The MU Payroll Office mailed corrected 2013 W-2 forms to employees and staff earlier this week.

The original forms were mailed on or before Jan. 31 and displayed the recipient's alternate ID number in the box meant for the Social Security number, according to an email sent out to MU faculty and staff. New W-2's were mailed in the few days following the email dated Feb. 3.

The Payroll Office suggests destroying the original copy. In the meantime, the correct W-2 is also available electronically at myhr.umsystem.edu.
New multicultural sorority arrives to MU

By Stephen Daw

The sorority is not a part of PHA or NPHC.

**Delta Xi Nu, a multicultural sorority based out of Texas, was recently chartered at MU in January.**

The sorority began at Texas A&M, when five women decided they wanted to have a sorority that was accepting not just specific groups, but everyone. So, they started Delta Xi Nu, the multicultural sorority focused on promoting cultural awareness to all people.

Senior Julie Dimas, the secretary of the Delta Xi Nu colony at MU, said she and her friends wanted a sorority that felt comfortable for everyone.

“We grew attached to the idea of a multicultural sorority and started looking, and that’s when we fell in love with Delta Xi Nu,” Dimas said.

The initiative to get a multicultural sorority on campus started with Ladies Empowering and Advocating Diversity, a group focused on strengthening and educating women on campus about diversity.

Senior Jessica Hoyos, the president of Mizzou’s Delta Xi Nu colony, said that LEAD was a step taken in order to get a diverse sorority on campus.

“We started LEAD to get our message out there, but the goal was always to get a sorority on campus,” she said.

Another step to get a more diverse sorority on campus was by bringing back Sigma Lambda Gamma, a Latina sorority. The sorority became inactive at MU in 2010.

When making their decision about bringing a multicultural sorority to campus, the current officers of Delta Xi Nu decided that a Latina sorority would be too selective, so they decided to find a multicultural sorority.

After a voting process, the girls decided on Delta Xi Nu and had it chartered at MU on Jan. 18.

Senior Tiffany Melecio, the historian of the Delta Xi Nu colony, said that Delta Xi Nu is hoping to help MU become a more diverse campus.
“When I came here as a freshman, I thought that there was no diversity at all, but our campus has improved tremendously since then with the One Mizzou campaign and all of the resources being offered,” she said. “But we still have a long way to go before we become truly diverse.”

Delta Xi Nu, unlike most sororities on campus, is not a member of any council, such as the PHA, IFC or NPHC. One of Delta Xi Nu’s goals is to promote unity within the Greek community, and to try and create a middle ground between the different councils.

“Our goal is to get to work with as many people as we can before we put ourselves into a category,” Hoyos said. “We want to be the bridge between the councils.”

The new sorority is currently recruiting members.

Delta Xi Nu had an informational meeting last Tuesday in the Multicultural Center to stimulate its recruitment process. The meeting consisted of an informational presentation along with some games and bonding exercises.

“Recruitment is going well,” Melecio said. “We’re new and small, and our main goal is to grow and evolve as a sorority.”

Dimas said culture is a mixture of factors about a person, including ethnicity, background and personality.

“It’s not just the color of your skin, and we don’t want people to think that they have to be a minority to join us,” Dimas said.

Kim wins short program, former MU High School attendee Gracie Gold places fourth

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 | 7:19 p.m. CST

SOCHI, Russia — Anxiety and energy. Conviction and courage.

They all combined Wednesday — along with one stunning fall — to set up an unpredictable race for the Olympic gold medal in women's figure skating.
Nerves almost got the best of Yuna Kim in the short program Wednesday night. Then she showed she is still the favorite to win another title.

Her lead is almost as slim as it could get, .28 points over a woman from the host country — no, not Julia Lipnitskaia. Russia's Adelina Sotnikova, with a snappy routine that had the crowd on its feet before she finished her final spin, was second, while Lipnitskaia plummeted to fifth after her fall on a triple flip.

Italy's Carolina Kostner, whose "Ave Maria" program is almost a religious experience for her, was .80 back. Chicago's Gracie Gold was fourth, within striking distance after overcoming a sense of stage fright.

Kim, 23, would become the third woman to win consecutive Olympics, following Sonja Henie and Katarina Witt. But she'll probably need to calm down to step up to the top of the podium.

"I am a human being," she said. "I get nervous all the time. It just doesn't show on my face."


Q&A with Gracie Gold

By Joe Walljasper

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri isn't known for cranking out Winter Olympians, but there is one notable MU High School online student in Sochi, Russia. Gracie Gold will try to add to the bronze medal she won in the team figure skating competition when she competes individually today and tomorrow.
The 18-year-old Gold has lived in Newton, Mass.; Springfield, Mo.; Springfield, Ill.; and currently Los Angeles. Her schedule of national and international competitions would cause her to miss too many classes at a regular high school, so she and her twin sister, Carly, are getting their degrees online at MU High School.

Gold has come on strong since switching to Coach Frank Carroll in September. She won the U.S. Championships in January to qualify for the Olympics. She continued her surge in the team competition in Sochi, scoring a personal-best 129.38 in the free skate to help the United States earn bronze.

From Russia, Gold conducted an email interview with Tribune sports editor Joe Walljasper.

Q: What made you decide going to Missouri’s online high school would work best for you, and what has it been like vs. attending a regular high school?

A: We made the decision to switch to online school when the challenges of balancing the travel required for coaching, ice and competitions made regular high school too stressful to continue. The hours and schedule of an elite figure skater are demanding and chaotic. **MU High School has provided the perfect solution for my sister and I. The classes are interesting and challenging. The flexibility works well with our crazy schedule.**

Q: How much time, if any, have you spent in Columbia?

A: I haven't really spent time in Columbia. My dad (Carl Gold, an anesthesiologist) went to college and med school at the University of Missouri.

Q: What would constitute a successful Olympic experience for you?

A: I think just participating in the Olympic Games and representing the United States of America is a huge achievement for me. I hope to put out programs that show what I can do. Regardless of the outcome, that will be satisfying for me.

Q: What do you do in the time right before taking the ice for a big competition to prepare or relax, and will that routine change for the Olympics?

A: I do a physical warmup while listening to music. I also juggle to both relax and focus. I work on remaining relaxed and in the moment.

Q: Do you anticipate continuing to skate competitively through the next Olympic cycle and what are your plans in terms of college or professional goals?

A: Right now, I do see myself continuing through the next Olympic cycle. I will only be 22 in 2018, and that is a prime age in my sport. I plan on pursuing college. My skating career has taken me many places and opened doors to worlds I knew nothing about. I see that there are many opportunities out there, and I feel excited about my future.
MU professor studies protesters, predicts Ukraine's future

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 | 10:12 p.m. CST

MU political science professor Mark Nieman and his wife, Olga Chyzh, studied protestors in Kiev's Independence Square two months ago. They found that the average age of protestors was in the mid 30s. PHOTO COURTESY OF MARK NIEMAN

BY CASSA NIEDRINGHAUS, VERONIKE COLLAZO

COLUMBIA — The sight of Ukrainian protesters in Kiev's Independence Square is a familiar one for MU political science professor Mark Nieman.

Two months ago, he was in the same square where at least 26 people died Tuesday. He wasn't there to join the protesters; he wanted to study them.

Nieman and his wife, Olga Chyzh, a post-doctoral fellow studying international relations and political methodology at Washington University in St. Louis, were visiting Chyzh's family in Ukraine in December when violent protests broke out. Nieman and Chyzh braved freezing temperatures to find out why protesters in Independence Square were risking their lives. The answers were interesting, he said.
“We typically think of protests involving young people, especially violent protests,” Nieman said. "But it’s actually a rather high average age. There are quite a few older members of the protests."

What brought the protesters to the streets was Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych’s unexpected and unpopular rejection of a deal with the EU on Nov. 21. The protesters were angry, not only about the rejection of the EU alliance, but also with perceived rampant governmental corruption and the negative impact it has had on the economy.

Outrage brought protesters from around the country to Kiev. Some sold their belongings to finance train tickets to the capital. Many did not have food. Many camped in tents and slept outdoors in the freezing temperatures. Many protesters told Nieman they came out of a sense of duty.

"I was surprised by the number of elderly people who would give up work or just leave their homes to go (to Kiev) with no place to stay, no expectation of where they were going to stay, just knowing they feel their country needs them,” Nieman said.

The average age of the protesters he and his wife surveyed was in the 30s. The average age of protesters who stayed at night — when the square is most dangerous — was in the 40s.

Nieman said some of their findings were contrary to popularly held beliefs about protesters, as well as the Ukrainian protesters specifically. His findings included:

- The group was largely composed of fairly well-educated adults, rather than young people or students.
- There was not strong support among the protesters for any one person as a preferred new leader.
- Language and geography were not significant indicators of whom the protesters supported. Russian-speaking people from eastern Ukraine were among the protesters, contrary to the idea that all of eastern Ukraine supports Yanukovych.
- Ukrainians have loose affiliation to political parties. They are much more personality-driven when supporting political figures.
• Males were more likely to participate in nighttime protests.

• People who participated in the country’s Orange Revolution in late 2004 and early 2005 were no more likely to protest than anyone else.

Nieman said the protest seemed largely organic and there was no central leadership directing the protesters when he was there. Since December, however, people have begun to look more to former heavyweight boxing champion Vitali Klitschko as a leader.

Nieman said he thinks that, in part, the violence escalated because parliament took a step backward in refusing to place any restrictions on the president.

Skeptical hope

MU graduate student Roman Kolgushev is an international student from eastern Ukraine. His parents and younger sister currently live in Donetsk, Ukraine, about 450 miles east of Kiev. He said his family does not support the recent violence but supports the spirit of the protest.

“I think our desires for the change are rather similar to those that are expressed by the majority of the protesters, which are the desires to go to a much more transparent society with less bribery, with more democratic values, with more freedom of speech and independence,” Kolgushev said. “(We want) the ability to live and not survive.”

The oligarchs — rich members of society who support certain politicians — in the country have a lot of power over Yanukovych and parliament members, both Nieman and Kolgushev said. As long as they support the president, Nieman is pessimistic about the potential for change.

"If the oligarchs lose faith in Yanukovych, then I think there’s a very real prospect that you’ll see change in Ukraine," Nieman said. "If the oligarchs don’t feel that level of threat, then nothing will really happen."

The EU is meeting Thursday to discuss potential economic sanctions against Ukraine in response to the violence Tuesday, according to The Associated Press. The U.S. has already imposed visa sanctions on 20 Ukrainian officials, according to Washington Post reporting.
Kolgushev said he believes economic and visa sanctions on the wealthy who have had control over the politicians in parliament would positively impact Ukraine. Without the pressure from the EU, he said, the oligarchs will not be brave or certain enough to withdraw support from the current president and regime. Sanctions would be more beneficial than harmful, Kolgushev said.

"I sincerely, truly believe it (sanctions) should have been done a long time ago," Kolgushev said. "Maybe the deaths would have been avoided. I don’t know. It’s hard to say right now, but I think so."

Moving forward
The protesters have made progress that has given them hope, however, Nieman said. While he and his wife were in Kiev, the protesters forced the police chief to resign because of corruption. Then they called for the resignation of former Prime Minister Mykola Azarov, who resigned Jan. 28. The protesters were also invigorated by their ability to maintain control of the square Tuesday.

Kolgushev said the protesters are not a group looking for power. Instead, they are just sick and tired of the way things are in Ukraine and want a better life.

"They're not looking to bring opposition to power," Kolgushev said. "They're looking to change the system from the ground up."

On Tuesday, Chyzh spoke to people she knows in Ukraine who said the government and interior ministry don’t seem to have the level of power that they have claimed to have. Yanukovych’s failure to retake the main square has hardened opposition and given it hope for success, Nieman said.

Nieman said that though his wife is concerned for her family in Ukraine, she’s mostly hopeful that the opposition will be able to succeed. She would like to see her country grow and advance economically and politically, he said.

"She sees hope with the opposition that they might be able to achieve some of that," Nieman said. “But without structural changes, she would have no expectation that anything real would change. You can’t just replace the people in power. You need real changes to the rule of law."
Tourism group plans to create scholarship

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The Mid-Missouri Tourism Council has initiated plans to create a scholarship for top hospitality management majors in the University of Missouri's College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

The council has established an account that will be increased until the scholarship can be perpetuated annually to help future students with their college costs, the council said in a news release. The goal is to award one student a $1,000 scholarship each year.

or more information about the council, visit www.midmotourism.com or call 573-443-4388.

Why do scientists like weeds?

By CADE CLEAVELIN MU Undergraduate Research Office

Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at 2:00 pm

Have you ever pulled a weed? They're tough, hard to get rid of and nobody seems to like them. Scientists understand, though, that even the lowliest of plant species can play a significant role.

A wide variety of plants and animals is called biodiversity, and it's an important part of any healthy ecosystem. Biodiversity lets researchers such as University of Missouri senior biochemistry student Che-Min Su understand all the creative and complex ways plants survive in nature. Su decided to look closely at the eastern red cedar, a native Missouri tree that's highly abundant but looked down on as a pest — a weed of the tree world.

It turns out that this species can help people in a big way. With Chung-Ho Lin of the MU Department of Forestry, Su isolated hundreds of different chemicals produced in the red cedar's
leaves and fruit. After testing groups of these compounds in a petri dish, Su found that one of them happens to be a spectacular antibiotic. "We've identified a compound in this tree that kills lethal pathogens like MRSA, and it kills them very efficiently," Su explained. "This was actually very surprising to us, and we're trying to understand how it works so well." MRSA is a deadly bacterium resistant to most antibiotics — except that of red cedar.

So, the next time you yank out a weed, remind yourself that it still has purpose, even if it's not in your garden!