MU News Bureau

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University responds to walkway collapse lawsuit

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COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — The University of Missouri Board of Curators is asking for the dismissal of several claims against it contained in a wrongful death lawsuit filed after a firefighter died in a walkway collapse.

Lt. Bruce Britt died in February while responding to a collapsed walkway at an apartment complex on the university campus. His wife filed the lawsuit, saying that the university did not properly maintain the University Village Apartments.

The curators say in their legal response that public entities are immune from damages under a rule that prohibits firefighters or police officers from obtaining damages in situations of "ordinary negligence."

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports (http://bit.ly/1kNKrXi ) an attorney for Leigh Britt says the rule includes exceptions if the negligence was "wanton and reckless."

Complaint unsealed in MU medical billing fraud case

By Ashley Jost

Thursday, May 29, 2014 at 2:00 pm Comments (7)

A recently unsealed complaint filed in federal court outlines details about a lawsuit involving two former University of Missouri radiologists.
Kenneth Rall and Michael Richards were both fired from the MU School of Medicine in 2012 after an internal investigation found they had committed billing fraud by allowing resident physicians to perform services Rall and Richards were supposed to do, violating Medicare and hospital rules.

The complaint filed by Ruth Brush, another radiologist physician and faculty member at MU who left the university within the last month, radiology staff said, outlines the concerns in greater detail.

Brush's complaint is against Rall, Richards and the UM Board of Curators and alleges that MU "acted in reckless disregard" about the documents that were submitted to the government for payment or that the university failed to investigate any issues by comparing documents that were filed by Rall and Richards against the work they were actually doing.

"As a direct and proximate result of the fraud the Government was damaged by paying millions of dollars to" MU, "and ultimately, Drs." Rall, "Richards, and others, in reliance on the false representations mentioned above," Brush alleges.

The complaint alleges the fraud took place from January 2009, when Brush started at MU, until December 2011. She added she believes the fraud occurred for three years before January 2009.

Brush's complaint was sealed when it was filed in February 2013 until May 16 of this year.

Earlier this month, the federal government filed a notice declining to join the case. Don Ledford, spokesman for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Kansas City, said there are a number of possibilities why the government decided not to get involved, but specific details are not available. Ledford said now that the government has backed out of the case, Brush can decide whether she wants to move forward with the suit.

Michael Berry, Brush's Jefferson City-based attorney, said that aside from what's in the complaint, there is very little he can discuss about the case.

He declined to provide information about the possible timeline or next steps in the case.

"I will say that I do believe Dr. Brush was very courageous in coming forward and bringing forward this information and has been very cooperative with the United States government," he said about his client.

A records request for documents related to internal or external audits from the MU radiology department was denied by the UM System because of ongoing legal action.
COLUMBIA — A draft of a plan establishing a center for teaching and learning excellence will be underway this fall as part of MU’s strategic plan, which was released in January. Jim Spain, the vice provost for undergraduate studies, will lead the development of the proposal.

On May 20, at MU’s fifth annual Celebration of Teaching conference, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin asked Spain to develop a proposal for the center. Spain said his office will determine what types of financial resources and space will be necessary for the center, which has no official name yet. His goal is to bring a plan to the chancellor before the end of the fall 2014 semester.

Earlier this week, Spain answered some questions about the center and his plans for putting a proposal together.

What’s the current status of this plan?

"Chancellor Loftin has asked us to provide him and our interim provost a plan. We’ll wait until our faculty get back this fall so that we can ask them for their input. We’ve got a number of faculty who are on nine-month employment contracts, so they’re not active and available over the summer, and we don’t want to exclude anyone from having an opportunity for input."

From whom else will you seek input?

"We’ll certainly get the input from Faculty Council, given that the council has endorsed the need for a center. We’ll get the input from the Graduate Faculty Senate, who also has endorsed the need for a center. In addition, we’ll be getting input from deans and chairs, as well, because they’re responsible for helping support faculty in their teaching roles."
We want to make sure we get their perspectives as to what types of things would be most helpful for their faculty. We'll also be inviting some input from graduate students.

**How will you gather this input?**

"We'll start with some research we have already completed and do some surveys. We may do a few focus groups where we'll invite some folks in to sit with us and give us their perspectives through a more qualitative research process. This will complement the information we collect through the quantitative process with surveys. The surveys will include some open-ended research questions for them to give us more specific feedback."

**What will be included in the plan?**

"The faculty will help us clarify what they need. The strategic plan identified some things the center should provide. We need to go back to the campus community and confirm that things like peer review are still important.

"What (Chancellor Loftin) wants is for us to provide him with a plan: How would it be administratively structured? What kinds of financial resources are required? What kind of space will be necessary? How does it meet the needs of the campus? He needs to see that plan before he can identify what pieces of that can we afford because we are undergoing a strategic planning process that involves the reallocation of financial resources."

**The strategic plan identified the responsibilities of the center as sponsoring workshops, an annual teaching conference, peer review and faculty development. Are those goals consistent with what you’re looking to create?**

"That’s really the question that we'll be posing to the faculty, administrative leaders, Faculty Council and the Graduate Faculty Senate. Are these still the things that we need the center to be doing in support of teaching and learning at MU? My guess is yes. But it’s not my guess that’s going to drive how the center is organized. It’s been a while since that strategic plan was put together and launched, and we need to go back and get fresher and more recent, more current input from our faculty."
What is the Teaching and Learning Center at Mizzou? Is that something that will be incorporated into the center?

"The Teaching and Learning Center was designed as a virtual center in the absence of a programmatic center. And so what the TLC was designed to do was just pull together all the resources around teaching and learning that the campus offers through central campus and this office. So TLC served more as a virtual center, sort of a clearinghouse or landing page. I would expect that as a programmatic center comes online that that website will be incorporated into, probably redesigned and relaunched — but it would become the responsibility of the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence for teaching and learning excellence."

What other programs does MU have that meet the teaching excellence goals outlined in the strategic plan?

"The Celebration of Teaching was established five years ago. It focuses on bringing nationally prominent and nationally recognized speakers in for keynote. We get faculty input by getting them to tell us: 'These are the kinds of things that we'd really be interested in learning more about as it relates to teaching.'

"Our Campus Writing Program sponsors brown bags and workshops and other opportunities for our faculty to collaborate with our staff and with their colleagues about teaching and learning and using writing. Educational Technologies, ET@MO, holds a whole series of workshops that help faculty learn how to better use technology to better support their teaching. Some of the departments and schools and colleges have their programs or events or activities that also help support faculty and their teaching roles and responsibilities."

Who will run the center?

"We would identify a director for the center. Depending on how the plan comes together and what resources are available, we could do a national search or an internal search. I suspect that the preferred process would be a national search to hire the very best person we could to run the center."

Will this be based off of programs at other universities?
"We’ve already done some of that as far as taking a look at how other schools are structured and what other schools do, and we’ll use that information. That’s not going to define what we will and won’t do because we need a center that meets the needs of our faculty at Mizzou. We need to design our center so that it reflects how Mizzou is organized and meets what the Mizzou faculty needs. At the end of the day, it’ll be our design."

*Supervising editor is Scott Swafford.*

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**Low adult supervision tied to injuries among kids**

By Genevra Pittman

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Young kids are more likely to get hurt when they are not fully supervised by adults, and especially when they are out of arm’s reach, a new study suggests.

Researchers surveyed parents of injured children and found kids were generally under less supervision at the time of the accident than earlier that same day. That was especially true for kids with more severe injuries.

“There’s always the dilemma of, kids can get injured even if you’re right on top of them,” said Amy Damashek, a psychologist at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

“Kids are going to still get some minor bumps and bruises and things like that, but what we really want to prevent are those more serious injuries,” she told Reuters Health. “If you’re not right there with young kids, they’re so mobile and curious that they’re going to find a way to get into things.”

Damashek studies caregiver supervision and childhood injuries but was not involved in the new research.

The study, led by Patricia G. Schnitzer of the University of Missouri in Columbia, focused on kids under five years old. All of the children had been treated in the emergency room or admitted to the hospital for unintentional injuries not caused by motor vehicle accidents.

In total, 222 parents answered questions about how closely supervised their child was at the time of the injury and one hour before.
Supervision was scored on a scale from zero to 10, with 10 reflecting full supervision and anything below 7 considered low supervision. The score included measures of how nearby the parent was to the child, how closely the parent was paying attention and how continuous the parent’s supervision had been.

Among kids treated in the ER, lacerations and bruises were the most common injuries, often caused by falls or being struck by or caught in something. For hospitalized children, swallowing something unsafe and getting burned were both relatively common, and more injuries involved a fracture or dislocation.

Children in the ER-treated group were three times more likely to have been beyond a caregiver’s reach at the time of the injury than earlier in the day, and hospitalized children were over 11 times more likely.

A parent not paying attention was tied to a higher risk of injury among inpatients, but not among kids who were able to be treated in the ER and released. Continuity of supervision did not factor into injuries in either group.

Across the board, more children had little supervision at the time of their accident than one hour before, according to the findings published in the journal Injury Prevention.

“This study is important research that adds to our understanding of the relationship of parental supervision of young children with the risk of unintentional injury,” Dr. Gary Smith told Reuters Health in an email.

He directs the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, and was not involved in the new research.

Damashek said the best way to prevent injuries among young children is through a combination of safety measures in the home and close supervision.

“Safety-proofing the home as best one can is one really important method, but that’s not enough,” she said. “You have to be supervising them pretty much all the time, which is challenging.”

She said the study also highlights the need to support parents on a societal scale, especially parents in low-income families and others who may be facing extra childcare challenges.
University of Missouri fund invests in Kansas City startup Knoda

A University of Missouri student-managed investment fund has invested $50,000 in Knoda, a Kansas City startup business that has developed an application that lets users make, track and rank predictions.

The funding came from the Allen Angel Capital Education Program, an investment fund that allows undergraduate and graduate students in the Trulaske College of Business to learn venture capital strategies and to invest in new companies that have high growth potential.

Knoda, which graduated from the SparkLabKC business accelerator program, has now raised about $400,000 and has five employees.

U. of Illinois leads Farm Bill education coalition

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (AP) — The University of Illinois will lead one of two coalitions announced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop online tools to inform farmers and others involved in agriculture about programs in the 2014 Farm Bill.

The Department of Agriculture announced Thursday that the University of Illinois will use $3 million and lead a group that includes Texas A&M University and the University of Missouri to develop new online tools and to train extension agents who can help farmers.

Another $3 million will go to state cooperative extension services. They will use the money to conduct educational meetings expected to begin this summer.
SAN DIEGO – At Ohio State University the number of undergraduate international students has skyrocketed in the last 10 years, growing from 1,360 to 3,345 students, with the majority of that increase involving students from China.

With that growth came growing pains. “About four years ago we began to hear what, for lack of a better word, I’m just going to call it a ruckus,” Gifty Ako-Adounvo, director of Ohio State’s international students and scholars office, said Thursday in a session here on creating an “international student-friendly campus.” The session was part of the annual conference of NAFSA: Association of International Educators. “All of a sudden, we were getting all of these calls from faculty saying I have all of these [international] students in my class and they’re not ready, etc., etc.”

“And then in addition we were hearing from students that they were not feeling as welcome as they thought they would be when they came to Columbus,” Ako-Adounvo said.

Her office joined with the Office of Student Life to survey international students about their experiences, and the results, Ako-Adounvo said, were likely to be familiar to many of the international educators: students asked for more opportunities for guided social interactions, additional academic support – writing support in particular – and more preparation regarding the culture and expectations of the American classroom (notably, Ako-Adounvo said, her office was finding that international students were disproportionately represented in academic misconduct cases compared to their American counterparts).

International students at Ohio State also talked about wanting to build a better sense of belonging.

“While students rated their experiences overall as good, satisfactory, they did not report a high sense of belonging,” Ako-Adounvo said. “This concerned us because the institution is really looking at how to create an exceptional experience for all our students, so if we had almost 10 percent of the student body, give or take, saying they didn’t really feel like they belonged – well, that was a problem, and we had to do something about it.”
What to do about it was a major theme here at the NAFSA conference. Among the strategies Ohio State tried were creating a pre-departure orientation for students in China and an airport welcome program. The university also expanded its cross-cultural programming to try to respond to the students’ desire for more guided social interactions. “The great part of it was that they wanted to make friends with American students, so we brought American students and international students together in very deliberate ways in smaller programs to create learning opportunities,” Ako-Adounvo said, noting, for example, that Ohio State sponsors excursions, conversation groups and student leadership programs.

Bringing international and domestic students together was likewise a theme in a presentation given earlier in the day by Joe D. Potts, associate dean of international programs at Purdue University. “We wanted the answers to some basic questions: are they interacting with one another, are they making friends? What do they think about their interactions with one another?” he said.

Purdue surveyed 11,000 of its domestic students and 4,000 international students. Among the findings: only 5 percent of Chinese students reported having an American student as one of their five closest friends. Similarly roughly 5 percent of American students reported having an international student among their five closest friends.

“Looking at Chinese students specifically, which is important because we have so many students from China, Chinese students were generally satisfied with their interactions with American students,” Potts said. The same was true for American students: “Chinese students and American students mostly were neutral about their interactions with one another, but in general satisfied or very satisfied, which was surprising [as] there doesn’t seem to be that much interaction going on,” Potts said.

So, how do you motivate students to change the status quo? Or, “How do you get students to be less satisfied with what they’re currently satisfied with?” Potts asked prompting laughter from the audience. “We haven’t figured it out but we know that getting students involved in positive experiences with one another and activities together is helpful.”

Potts also described a need to get all the various offices on campus involved with integration efforts – not just the international student office – and to provide resources for those efforts (at Purdue those resources come from a $2,000 tuition surcharge that international students pay). Potts gave a long list of areas that Purdue has invested in with an eye toward better serving international students, including advising, counseling (in the form of foreign language-speaking counselors), writing services, faculty/instructional support, first-year mentoring, orientation and registration, residence life, and career services.

A report released by NAFSA earlier this week on improving international student retention identified improved career services to be a top desire on the part of international students.

“Collaboration is big,” said Ako-Adounvo, of Ohio State. “There’s no need to reinvent the wheel when you have colleagues who do particular things for a living; you can just collaborate with them.”

In addition to those international education administrators who shared some of the practical strategies they’re trying to improve integration and acculturation on campus, several scholars spoke Thursday about the research they’ve done on international student adjustment issues. Kenneth Wang, an assistant professor in counseling psychology at the University of Missouri, presented on an “International Friendly Campus Scale” he co-created.
“In our research on international students, we don’t often measure how friendly they perceive the campuses [to be],” Wang said. “We often look at individual factors: is it their personality, is it their language proficiency, is it their self-efficacy, their acculturation. We attribute it to the individual, to the international student himself, but not so much in terms of the environment. I thought this would be a good opportunity to measure the friendliness of the environment that international students are in because we believe that the environment has a huge impact on international student adjustment.”

The scale asks students 1) about their perceptions of the services offered by the international student services office 2) their social engagement (including their friendships with American and other international students), 3) perceptions of academic support (do they feel comfortable talking with faculty about academic issues when needed or do faculty make an effort to understand the difficulties international students may face), 4) identification with the institution and 5) experiences of discrimination. In a sample of 501 international students at Missouri, Wang found that identification with the institution was the factor most strongly correlated with life satisfaction and positive affect, whereas negative affect was strongly associated with a lack of academic support and feelings of discrimination.

In a presentation on factors impacting academic success and social adjustment of international students, Chris R. Glass, an assistant professor of educational foundations and leadership at Old Dominion University, stressed the critical role that faculty play in helping international students succeed. He reported that in open-ended interviews a large majority of international students said that professors played a significant role in their educational and personal development, “and not just in terms of class content but in terms of their long-term academic success as well as their sense of belonging at the institution,” Glass said.

“What we found is that at pivotal moments where maybe a student is struggling and a professor responds with cultural sensitivity, it has transformative effects,” Glass said. “We have examples…of that not happening in the classroom as well and that have equally deleterious effects for students’ sense of self and academic outcomes.”

Glass also emphasized the value of inter-group dialogue in the classroom, “so even if a student may not have a deep friendship with a U.S. peer, there is meaningful interaction that goes on across cultures. It’s not just the content of the class, it’s the way the instructor structures the class for interaction.”

He quoted one international student, a female undergraduate student from Eastern Europe, to this end: “One of my professors, Dr. [Professor], what he does is he makes us sit at different places every class so we get to talk to pretty much everybody in the class over the semester. At first everybody is like, ‘No, I don’t want to do that! That’s going to suck.’ But then we really formed a cohesive group because of that. I love that.”
Tiger Treasures sale set for Saturday

Thursday, May 29, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The annual Tiger Treasures rummage sale is this weekend, giving the community the chance to browse and purchase surplus items collected at the University of Missouri.

The sale is from 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday at Surplus Property, 1507 Capen Park Road. A shuttle will be available from the Hearnes Center south parking lot to the sale starting at 5 a.m., and anyone interested in getting inside as early as 6 a.m. can do so for $5. Entry is free from 7 to 11 a.m.

The surplus sale will include furniture, electronics and clothing, among other items, that were donated by MU students and the community. All proceeds from this year’s sale will benefit The Y, MU’s YMCA.

For more information about the event, go to sustainability.missouri.edu/tigertreasures.