MU News Bureau

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June 19, 2014
UM Board of Curators to vote on conduct rules changes

Board meeting starts Thursday.

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, June 18, 2014 at 1:55 pm Comments (2) Updated: 1:59 pm, Wed Jun 18, 2014.

The University of Missouri Board of Curators will vote during its meeting this week to amend, and in some cases completely overhaul, parts of the Collected Rules and Regulations related to Title IX enforcement, sexual assault and student conduct procedures.

Many of the changes address issues that have come up in the sexual assault discussion during the last several months, including the implementation of every university employee being a mandated reporter, with the exception of health care workers, lawyers and others with confidential privileges. Title IX prohibits sex discrimination in education programs or activities that receive federal funding.

Among the proposed changes was one to the general student conduct section that would define "nonconsensual" to include "circumstances in which the alleged victim was incapacitated by alcohol, drugs or other circumstances and, therefore, incapable of consenting."

All of the recommendations come from UM System President Tim Wolfe and the sexual assault and mental health task force he created earlier this year to take inventory of existing resources and suggest improvements. According to board documents for this week's meeting, these recommendations are considered by Wolfe and the task force to be "non-controversial" and the start of more recommendations.

The almost completely revamped section related to Title IX and reporting lists the Title IX coordinators for every campus. That section also outlines what the Title IX coordinator should do in the event of a criminal investigation, stating that the coordinator will not wait for the criminal investigation to be finished before starting with the Title IX preliminary investigation.
MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin announced last week that he plans to hire a full-time investigator who will be able to assist the campus' Title IX coordinator in such cases.

Curator Wayne Goode said while these Collected Rules and Regulation changes are not "life or death" fixes, many are "desirable cleanups."

"Some of the changes we've done and are in the process of doing at the system level and campus level are all around good changes," Goode said. "They're a collection of what I would describe as doing a lot better job of paying more attention to this issue as a whole."

Most of the student conduct process that each of the four campuses must follow is laid out in the Collected Rules and Regulations.

If the changes are approved, the vice chancellor for student affairs would assume the responsibility of appointing members to the student conduct committee, which has the authority to enforce sanctions on students who are accused and believed to be guilty of breaking any of the university's guidelines. Previously, the chancellor was responsible for appointing those people.

The conduct committee can be broken down into smaller "hearing panels" that can address cases. The proposed change mandates those hearing committees have no less than five members, no more than two of which should be students.

Another recommended change would continue to allow a member of the Office of the General Counsel to be a legal adviser to the committee as well as the overseeing administrative officer, but those roles must be filled by two separate attorneys in the same case.

The final, larger change in the student conduct procedure affects the questioning process — any questions the accused has for the complainant, or the victim, must go through the student conduct or hearing panel chair. How the accused questions the accuser is currently not defined.

The board will also vote on a separate proposal that could grant Wolfe the power to act on the board's behalf to address actions related to sexual assault and mental health "that supersede or conflict" with the Collected Rules and Regulations. The president and task force are asking for this power to act during the next few months since the curators' won't meet after this week until October. Goode said this request is not uncommon or controversial. The curators would still have the final say on any decisions during their October meeting.
UM curators to vote on possible changes to sexual assault, Title IX rules

By Kendra Johnson
June 18, 2014 | 8:56 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The UM System Board of Curators was expected to vote Thursday on rule changes in the Collected Rules and Regulations regarding Title IX and sexual assault.

A task force assembled to evaluate sexual assault policies in the UM system suggested adding to the definition of "nonconsensual," changing how hearings are conducted and altering the makeup of the committee that reviews sexual assault cases, among other changes. It also specifies that a Title IX preliminary investigation not wait for criminal proceedings to start.

The task force suggested that the term "nonconsensual," as defined in the Collected Rules and Regulations, be made clearer. The suggested definition would include references to any incident involving alcohol, drugs or any other circumstance where the victim was incapacitated and incapable of consenting.

How witnesses are questioned during conduct hearings would also change so neither the complainant nor the accused person can question each other directly in cases of sexual misconduct. All questions will be directed to and asked through the chair of the committee conducting the hearing.

In addition, Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs, will be in charge of appointing members to the Student Conduct Committee. This panel will have the authority to impose any sanctions upon any accused student. The chair of the committee will be able to divide the conduct committee into
smaller hearing panels that will address cases. The panels will consist of at least five committee members, with a maximum of two students.

**Other proposed changes include:**

- **The conduct committee can take into consideration the previous disciplinary history of an accused person.**

- **There will be a section stating the duties of the Title IX coordinator with a list of the coordinators for all four UM System campuses.**

The proposed changes are the result of the [Mental Health and Sexual Assault Task Force’s](https://www.um system.edu) suggestions to the university to better ensure the safety of its students and faculty, said John Fougere, chief communications officer for the UM System.

**The road to change**

The changes come in the wake of an ESPN investigation into the death of Missouri swimmer Sasha Menu Courey. Menu Courey committed suicide in June 2011 after she was allegedly assaulted by one or more football players, according to previous [Missourian reporting](https://www.missourian.com). She had been hospitalized for psychological problems several times before she took her own life.

ESPN’s "Outside the Lines" investigation called into question how the university handled Menu Courey's case. The investigation focused on her story and a May 2011 entry in her journal in which she wrote that she'd mentioned the assault in a phone conversation with her athletics department academic adviser.

Earlier this year, UM System President Tim Wolfe formed the Mental Health and Sexual Assault Task Force, which was asked to review and assess existing policies on reporting sexual assaults and make an inventory of the mental health services available to students.

The UM System also hired the [Dowd Bennett law firm to do an independent investigation](https://dowdbennett.com). Its report came out in April and stated that though the university did not break the law, it was not in compliance with the Title IX guidelines.
In early April, Wolfe issued Executive Order 40, which would require all UM System employees — excluding those bound by confidentiality such as health care providers, counselors and lawyers — to report all known information about sexual harassment or assault of a student to the Title IX coordinator.

Before the order, there was no training for MU staff on how to handle Title IX incidents, according to previous Missourian reporting.

**MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin announced earlier this month that the position of Title IX Coordinator will now be a full-time job; Linda Bennett will be the interim coordinator.**

Fougere said the university has made great strides in the past months to improve its handling of Title IX incidents, including creating the Mental Health and Sexual Assault Task Force and issuing Executive Order 40.

"We want to see Mizzou be an example for other schools on how to deal with the societal issues of mental health and sexual assault," Fougere said.

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**MU won't close Manor House or lease space off campus**

By Joe Guszkowski
June 18, 2014 | 6:45 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — **MU has backed off a plan to close Manor House for major renovations and won't be leasing space in an off-campus housing complex after all.**

The two plans, which would have affected students who use graduate and family housing, came to light after the [collapse of the University Village Apartments walkway](https://example.com) in February.
But Director of Residential Life Frankie Minor said this week that the university won't move forward with either plan.

Manor House, which was slated to be closed in May 2015 for renovations, will remain open until the university can decide on a long-term use for the building, Minor said.

The closing of Manor House and University Village, which will be demolished after June 30, would have cost a total of 187 graduate and family housing units over the next year.

The off-campus lease was proposed to offset the loss of space once University Village is gone. But the results of a survey sent in April to current residents, and obtained by the Missourian through a Sunshine Law request, showed that students didn't like the idea of being so far from campus. The survey included information about the distance between the two complexes and campus without naming them.

Manor House

Manor House is an eight-story apartment complex for single graduate students on Hitt Street near the MU Memorial Student Union.

A 2012 Residential Life Master Plan recommended renovating Manor House, and gave two options for the future use of the building.

The first option, referred to as the "Ideal Model" in the plan, would be to convert the building to an undergraduate residence hall, creating 210 undergraduate beds and generating a projected $1,404,380 in revenue a year. The second option would be to renovate the building to increase the number of one-bedroom apartments, generating $516,815 in revenue a year.

The university hasn't decided which option to pursue, and Manor House will stay open until it does. Minor said there are a number of variables that make the decision difficult. After University Village is demolished, there will be less housing for graduate students. At the same time, undergraduate enrollment continues to rise.

Minor said that Manor House, with its Hitt Street location, has always been considered a "keeper" for the university.
“I have to believe that we’ll be doing something with the facility in the near future,” he said. "But our sense is to give the residents as much use of the facility as we can until we make that decision."

Residential Life verbally informed residents as they signed new contracts that Manor House would likely remain open past the May 2015 closing date.

Some of the necessary renovations already have been completed, and others can be done while residents are still in the building.

"Many of the things that were essential for what they call a building envelope or from a safety point of view, we had already done or were in the process of addressing, so we'll certainly continue those," Minor said.

The master plan identified a number of needed upgrades and repairs for Manor House:

- new windows and elevators
- better ventilation
- improvements in plumbing
- "major electrical service upgrades"
- construction of a new exit stair to eliminate a "dead-end corridor condition" or "major reconfiguration of each floor to meet life safety requirements"

A new roof, fire alarm system and elevators were installed in 2003, 2007 and 2011, respectively, Minor said. Renovations to plumbing were in progress, and there are plans to replace the original single-pane windows with more energy-efficient ones.

Those renovations can be done with residents still in the building, Minor said.

As for the dead-end corridor mentioned in the 2012 master plan, Battalion Chief Brad Fraizer of the Columbia Fire Department said that, generally speaking, a building doesn't need to be updated as long as it met code when it was built, though there are some minimum requirements for creating an emergency exit route and other safety features.

However, when a building undergoes significant changes, it might trigger new code requirements, Frazier said.
That would be the case if the university chooses to renovate the building, Minor said. Bringing it up to code would require a second stairwell and would mean the loss of apartments.

The university is not under the fire department's jurisdiction, but Minor said MU considers it good practice to meet the city fire code.

**Students not interested in off-campus lease**

MU was considering leasing space in an off-campus apartment complex to offer more housing options for its graduate students after the loss of University Village, according to previous Missourian reporting.

The results of the survey sent to residents of university-owned graduate housing in April showed that about 40 residents were interested in one of the proposed scenarios, Minor said. But 60 or 70 would have been required for the lease to be feasible. Without being able to guarantee the private landlord 100 percent occupancy, the lease would have been a financial risk, he said.

**Residential Life recommended to Cathy Scroggs, MU's vice chancellor of student affairs, in May that the university not proceed with the plan, and she agreed, Minor said.**

Minor said the locations that MU had been considering might still be desirable for graduate students.

"Dionne George and her staff in the off-campus student services offices know where they are and can refer (students to the apartments)," he said.

The department was able to accommodate all the residents of University Village who wanted to continue living in university-owned housing, Minor said. After that, there were still about 100 spaces left for incoming students between Manor House and Tara Apartments, another complex for graduate students.

**MU spokesman Christian Basi said in an email in April that there were about 150 current and incoming graduate students who had requested housing.**
Minor said historically, more students have requested graduate and family housing than Residential Life has been able to accommodate. He said he won't know until closer to fall if those numbers will be significantly higher this year because of the loss of 125 units at University Village.

University taps new assessment director

Wednesday, June 18, 2014 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri announced Tuesday that Gera Burton has been named director of assessment.

Burton, the former interim co-director of Mizzou Online, will be responsible for overseeing assessment activities at MU, including those related to accreditation and academic programs. She is succeeding John Spencer, who retired in November after 21 years at MU.

"It is fascinating to see how different institutions approach assessment," Burton said in a news release. "I see assessment as part of scholarly inquiry and communication about teaching and learning. Assessment helps with planning and decision-making at all levels. It is a dynamic process that offers valuable feedback to build on the wealth of resources already available to enrich the learning environment."

Burton has worked with Mizzou Online since 2011 and spent the previous 11 years working for the Center for Distance and Independent Study before that program merged into Mizzou Online.

"Dr. Burton brings a wealth of talent and experience to this position," Mardy Eimers, vice provost for institutional research and quality improvement, said in the release. "She understands the accreditation process, has extensive experience working with faculty and academic chairs, and appreciates the role of data and analysis in academic and administrative decision-making."
Senate Bill to Renew Higher Education Act Is Democrats’ Wish List

By Kelly Field

Washington

NO MENTION

Senate Democrats are poised to introduce a bill to reauthorize the Higher Education Act that would create a unit-record system for tracking individual students, allow borrowers to refinance their student-loan debt, and reverse some recent cuts in the Pell Grant program, according to several sources who have previewed a draft of the measure.

The bill, which lawmakers are expected to introduce next week, would also crack down on for-profit colleges, make the accreditation process more transparent, and create grant programs to encourage innovation and dual enrollment, the sources said.

Like the 2009 stimulus law, the measure would provide incentives for states to sustain their higher-education spending, tying new grants to "maintenance of effort" requirements.

For borrowers, the bill would expand loan counseling, improve student-loan servicing, and automatically enroll in income-based repayment programs any borrowers who were seriously delinquent on their loans. The bill would also create a new metric for judging colleges based on borrowers’ risk of defaulting, and would link federal student aid to colleges’ performance on the measure.
Lawmakers have been gearing up for the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act since September, when the Senate education committee held the first of what would be 10 hearings on higher-education issues.

In a floor speech last week, Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, the committee’s chairman, promised that the reauthorization bill would be "consistent with" the "bipartisan approach" that has characterized the hearings. But Republicans were not consulted during the bill’s drafting, according to a senior GOP aide, and the product is largely a pastiche of Democratic policy priorities.

**Partisan or Bipartisan**

The proposal on student-loan refinancing, for example, is the brainchild of Sen. Elizabeth A. Warren of Massachusetts. Mr. Harkin, a critic of for-profit colleges suggested the bill's ban on the use of federal funds for marketing and recruiting, and stricter limits on how much revenue for-profit colleges can draw from the federal government.

On teacher preparation, sources said, the bill draws from the Educator Preparation Reform Act (S 1062), introduced by Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, as well as the Great Teachers and Principals Act (S 1052), introduced by Sen. Michael F. Bennet of Colorado.

On student aid, the bill would revive year-round Pell Grants and would partially restore aid eligibility for students without a high-school diploma or GED. Those proposals have been pushed by Sen. Mazie K. Hirono of Hawaii and Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, respectively.

While some of the ideas, such as remaking teacher education, have bipartisan appeal, others are divisive. Republicans have blocked Senator Warren’s refinancing bill from coming to the floor, and they generally disapprove of Democrats’ efforts to reduce aid to for-profit colleges. Meanwhile, many Republican lawmakers remain opposed to the idea of a unit-record system, nearly six years after Congress blocked the Bush administration from creating one.
Sources said the bill would not repeal the unit-record ban but would instead attempt to work around it, by carving out exceptions. Supporters of such a system say it would provide prospective students and policy makers with more-accurate information about student outcomes, but critics fear that it could compromise student privacy.

**Simplifying the Fafsa**

It’s unclear if and when Democrats plan to bring the bill to a vote, but it’s unlikely the measure will pass the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. Lawmakers there have been holding their own series of hearings on reauthorization, with plans to introduce a bill of their own.

Meanwhile, Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, the top Republican on the education committee, and Senator Bennet are preparing to release bipartisan legislation to simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The bill, which will be announced on Thursday at a noon news conference, would shrink the application from 10 pages to a form the size of a postcard, according to a New York Times op-ed written by the senators.

The new form would ask aid applicants just two questions: "What is your family size? And what was your household income two years ago?"

The measure would also streamline federal loan and loan-repayment programs, and set lower borrowing limits for part-time students.

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June 19, 2014

**Federal Panel Hears Calls for Major Changes in Accreditation Process**

By Eric Kelderman
More than two years ago, a federal panel that advises the education secretary on accreditation issues recommended a series of modest changes in the nation’s system of higher-education accreditation. On Wednesday the panel heard from higher-education experts that a major overhaul will be needed for that system to survive. "We can’t just tweak the regulations here. The heart and soul of accreditation is at stake here," said Judith S. Eaton, president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, which represents some 3,000 degree-granting colleges and recognizes about 60 organizations that accredit institutions or programs.

Ms. Eaton was among six higher-education leaders who were invited to speak to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, an 18-member panel appointed by members of Congress and the Department of Education. The panel, which is known as Naciqi, asked the speakers to comment on any issues that needed to be added, changed, or clarified in the 2012 report, which was criticized by many for advocating more federal oversight of the accreditation process. (Accreditation is a requirement for institutions to receive federal financial aid.)

But the amount of federal regulation of accreditation is already a significant burden during the process, said Terry W. Hartle, senior vice president for government and public affairs at the American Council on Education. For example, Mr. Hartle said, accreditors are required to ensure that institutions are following fire codes, along with certifying compliance with dozens of complex federal requirements.

M. Peter McPherson, president of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, said that accreditation needed to get out of the compliance business and back to focusing on academic quality. Instead, the federal and state governments should step up their own enforcement of laws and rules, said Mr. McPherson and others.

Although accreditors are independent, nonprofit organizations, they operate as de facto agents of the government as long as they serve as the gatekeepers for federal
student aid, said Arthur J. Rothkopf, who is a president emeritus of Lafayette College and a member of Naciqi. Mr. Rothkopf and another panel member, Anne D. Neal, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, have called for federal aid to be "decoupled" from the accreditation process.

While that change would probably be opposed by most accreditors—removing their only leverage over institutions—some speakers said they may now be willing to accept more change in the process than would have been acceptable two years ago, including, for example, eliminating the geographic boundaries of the nation's seven regional accreditors (there were six such organizations, until the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges became independent of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges). Instead, colleges would be free to seek accreditation from the agency of their choice.

Such a proposal could work if there were rules to make sure that colleges were not simply shopping for a new accreditor in order to avoid sanctions from another agency, said Mr. Hartle.

Ms. Eaton said any overhaul of accreditation needed to focus on three areas: helping students learn, improving academic and program performance, and promoting innovation. That approach, however, would require all sides to abandon their obsession with process.

"Let’s not start with where we are right now," Ms. Eaton said, "where every word is sacrosanct."
Have Aspirations, Will Travel

June 19, 2014

By Carl Straumsheim

NO MU MENTION

Students are increasingly looking across state lines to find online degree or certificate programs -- especially if an institution can tempt them with improved job prospects, according to a new look at trends in distance education.

This spring, the researchers, consultants and senior officers at Learning House and Aslanian Market Research surveyed 1,500 recent, current and prospective online undergraduate and graduate students pursuing either degrees or certificates at institutions across the country. Now in its third year, the report released Tuesday morning is the most recent effort by market researchers to identify the millions of students who take all their courses online -- and what motivates them to do so.

Their work has gotten a little easier now that the U.S. Department of Education collects data in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System about the number of students who study online, but the data are still out of date. The most recent information is almost two years old. As the report suggests, a lot has changed during that time.
In the inaugural Online College Students report, released in 2012, 80 percent of surveyed students said they enrolled in fully online programs at institutions within 100 miles from where they live. This year, only 54 percent say the same. The growth is largely driven by graduate students, 48 percent of whom said they study at an institution more than 100 miles away from home, compared to 35 percent two years ago.

That development, the researchers said in an interview with Inside Higher Ed, is fueled by both supply and demand.

“Online education is no longer disruptive,” said Carol B. Aslanian, the senior vice president of market research at Education Dynamics who led the Aslanian Market Research Team. David L. Clinefelter, chief academic officer at the Learning House, led the other. “It’s now. It’s here. People want it.” The online education growth rate may be slowing, Aslanian said, but that rate masks the fact that large nonprofit institutions have entered the online education market while for-profit institutions have shed hundreds of thousands of enrollments. “We’re getting far more high-brand, recognizable, reputable institutions into the online market,” she said. “I think the entrance of brand names is going to captivate the market appeal.”

On the student side, the researchers said they were carefully watching numbers that suggest two in every five fully online students are unemployed and therefore seeking higher education to improve their job prospects. “We don’t know if it’s an anomaly yet,” Aslanian said. “But if we’re getting more unemployed people... it could be due to the fact that these unemployed people want a more convenient way while they pursue a career to study online.”

Questions about furthering their careers resonated with the students who participated in the survey. Asked to pick the strongest marketing message out of a lineup of 18, one-quarter of the students picked “90 percent job placement,” easily beating out “Earn your degree in one year” and “Study at your own pace,” which attracted 10 percent each.
Almost three-quarters of the surveyed undergraduates, or 72 percent, said their primary motivations for studying online were related to their careers -- reasons such as underemployment, seeking a position in a new field, or keeping up to date with skills. Graduate students were most likely to return to school to make themselves more marketable for a promotion or a new position in their field, according to the survey.

The value of an online program that emphasizes employment has been reflected in similar studies of the online education market, including work from the research and consulting firm Eduventures. Brian Fleming, a senior analyst there, said in an email that “it makes sense that adult learners’ No. 1 reason for earning your degree is career enhancement.”

Fleming said he was less certain about the report’s conclusion that “Marketing professionals should consider or test expanding the geographic region for reaching prospective online graduate students,” however. “[T]he national reach of large established online brands (Phoenix, Ashford, Liberty, etc.) makes it very hard for most schools, especially those currently enrolling less than 1,000 online and with limited adult learner foci and technological infrastructures, to break into out-of-state markets in a way that would really drive a coherent strategy,” he wrote.

According to Aslanian, the market is nowhere near saturated with online education providers. “Only 15 percent of all college students are in a fully online program,” she said. “Do I think that number is going to go up in a year or two or three? Absolutely.”

The challenge for new entrants into the market, Aslanian suggested, will be to distinguish themselves from the competition. Instead of launching another standard M.B.A. program, for example, institutions could attract students with specific concentrations, she said.

The convenience factor also ranks high among online students. More than half of graduate students and 70 percent of undergrads surveyed said the period of time between searching for a program and enrolling at an
institution should take no more than two months.

That program should also be lenient with transfer credits -- 82 percent of survey-takers said the amount of credit accepted was important to them. Finally, a plurality of students, 38 percent, said they preferred that the institution told them how much they would have to pay for the entire degree, and not for every course or credit hour.

“I have not seen much other work looking at this issue -- which seems pretty central to most higher ed business models,” said Jeff Seaman, co-director of the Babson Group (which has its own online education report), said in an email. “That students are confused about pricing should be a wake-up call for many higher education institutions.”

Show Me Games provides opportunity to rekindle competitive fire

By Daniel Jones
June 19, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — George Smith sits at a table minutes after leaving Ragtag Cinema and reaches into a paper bag in the next seat. He pulls out a frame. Inside are three medals, a competition bib and a photo of him and three of his grandchildren. They are all items from his first Missouri State Senior Games in 1994.

By his own admission, Smith entered the ’94 Games four years after he had become a couch potato. He had stopped playing in his adult basketball league. He was no longer officiating sports, a job that had kept him active for years. One day, four years into being a couch potato, he walked down the driveway to pick up the mail and was out of breath coming back up the hill to his home.
That year, he signed up for the competition for the first time. After perusing the events list, he decided to register in the shot put and discus. They seemed the easiest.

With little to no training, Smith walked away with a bronze medal in both events. He earned a third medal, silver, in the long jump.

"That started my competitive blood going," Smith said.

He would compete in the games for another 16 years, winning a slew of gold medals along the way.

This summer, after three summers off, he will try to get it pumping again. He will try to compete in the Show Me Games in July because he started too late for this weekend's Senior Games.

Smith was at Uprise Bakery on Tuesday for Ragtag Cinema's showing of "Age of Champions," a documentary about a group of individuals competing at the 2009 National Senior Games. The show was put on by the MU Interdisciplinary Center on Aging, in advance of the Missouri State Senior Games that begin Thursday.

The invitation to the event inspired Smith to sign up for the Show-Me State Games in July, a competition open to all ages (not just seniors). It's a small victory for the Interdisciplinary Center, which promotes the idea of older adults remaining active. But the organization's director, Steven Zweig, says not every senior is cut out for an Olympic-style competition.

"This is a story about exceptional older people," Zweig said about the film, which focused on a 100-year-old competitive tennis player, among others. "But we need to focus on everyone, especially older people, being active."

Zweig provided a list of benefits of staying active: It lowers the risk of heart disease, reduces cholesterol and can potentially deter cognitive dysfunction and arthritis and even reduce the risk of some cancers.

Lorraine Phillips, an associate professor in the Sinclair School of Nursing at MU, said 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week can help prevent the natural loss of muscle mass. As the body gets older, muscles begin to
lose mass. Between the ages of 25 and 80, adults can lose up to 50 percent of their muscle mass, with much of it replaced by fat. Regular physical activity, which rebuilds muscle fibers and enlarges existing muscle fibers, can help stop the loss of muscle.

"We recommend physical activity for almost all of our patients," said Karli Urban, an assistant professor of clinical family and community medicine at MU. "It has as many benefits, if not more, for older adults than for the regular population."

All three agree that it doesn't matter if you're 65 or 95: It's never too late to start exercising.

It's an ideal that resonates with the Missouri State Senior Games. The organization's purpose, laid out on its website, is to "promote and create an interest in lifetime sports, recreation and physical exercise as a means of enhancing one's quality of life."

Promoting and creating an interest in an active lifestyle for people over the age of 50 might sound difficult at first glance, but a desire to stay active is what inspired Smith to compete in the games in 1994 and is inspiring him to compete again in 2014.

In 2010, Smith stopped competing in the games after a hip surgery and a heart attack. He said he's "cured" now, but still hasn't returned to competition.

"The only thing slowing me down," he said, "is up here."

He points to his forehead with both hands. The problem isn't in his hips, nor is it in his formerly misfiring heart — it's in his head. The internal motivation isn't there like it used to be.

Did watching a film about the successes of seniors competing at the National Games bring some of that competitive spirit back?

"It was a little bit discouraging," Smith said with a laugh. "Here I am at 76, and these people are in their 80s and 90s."

"I imagine that some people will probably be inspired, some will be discouraged (by the film)," Zweig said.
He said that society perpetuates two images of seniors: one is of a debilitated, confused person, one that is almost easy to make fun of. The other is of an amazingly successful person uninhibited by age. Of course, Zweig said, the vast majority of older people fall somewhere in the middle.

It probably would be fair to put Smith in the middle group.

"I'm 76 years old," Smith said, leaning back in his chair. "I'm still in pretty good shape for 76."

It's easy to believe him. He speaks confidently with a potent sense of humor. He laughs frequently. His grip is strong and, for a man who is 6 foot 3 inches, still quite trim.

But with all that going for him, he's not quite in that second group that Zweig describes. A passerby would never know. The only way you would is if you knew his story — of someone still looking for that spark, of the motivation to compete again. That little missing piece is the only thing that separates him from the people in "Age of Champions."

"I don't think it would take that much to get back," he said. To get back to where he was before the hip surgery, before the heart attack, back when the competitive blood still flowed.

"If I do well in July, it might be the motivation I needed."