COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU program receives grant for establishing national network of researchers

Thursday, August 14, 2014 | 10:02 p.m. CDT
BY ZACHARY VAN EPPS

COLUMBIA — In order to encourage research that benefits the public, the National Science Foundation has awarded MU a $500,000 grant for its Broader Impacts Network.

The grant will fund a five-year initiative to foster collaboration between MU and other national organizations, known as the Broader Impacts and Outreach Network for Institutional Collaboration. The network will connect researchers engaged in broader impacts activities.

Susan Renoe, director of the Broader Impacts Network at MU, said broader impacts activities are designed to explain to the average citizen how researchers are using tax dollars. Renoe described it as a "return on taxpayers' investment."

"Although Congress mandates that researchers include broader impacts in their research projects," Renoe said, "broader impacts are something we should be doing anyway because we are accountable to the American people for how we manage the funds they invest in us."

One broader impacts activity Renoe mentioned was the Saturday Morning Science series at MU, where researchers and scientists present an hour-long talk on a science topic in an easy-to-understand format for the public.

By the end of the five-year period, Renoe said she hopes that BIONIC will be a self-sustaining non-profit organization. One of the goals for the five-year initiative is to
launch BIONIC's national website, which will have a searchable online database and resources to connect researchers around the world with one another.

Kemi Jona, a research professor at Northwestern University and a member of BIONIC's Executive Committee, said his organization has been interested in fostering multi-institutional collaborations for a long time.

Jona said the goal of BIONIC is to bring together individuals and offices who were doing broader impacts work, and to support those professional collaborations through networking, training and other activities that would help improve their efforts.

"It's like a network of peers that we can tap into and forge collaborations as we need it," Jona said.

Jona said BIONIC would be a big improvement in connecting broader impacts researchers. Finding specific faculty members in organizations across the country can be a time-consuming endeavor, Jona said. Once BIONIC's national website comes online, connecting with a specific researcher will be much easier thanks to the site's contact resources.

In addition, Jona said the national Broader Impacts Network would help professionalize the broader impacts field.

"What we have right now is a situation where people sort of stumble into that role," Jona said. "There is no formal pathway that prepares you for (broader impacts) work."

The other organizations involved with the planning of BIONIC include the University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Iowa State University and Stanford University.

The NSF's grant is the third awarded to MU's Broader Impacts Network in the last 12 months, Renoe said.
It’s still early, but University of Missouri employees trying to reduce the number of Missourians who don’t have enough food are confident they are making a difference with the help of a five-year grant.

After one year, Grow Well Missouri, a project that distributes thousands of seeds and vegetable plants to area food pantry users to grow their own food, has already made a difference, project coordinator Bill McKelvey said.

The Grow Well Missouri project is funded by a $500,000 Missouri Foundation for Health grant. It started in early 2013 and has since distributed more than 22,000 seed packets and plant starters to four food pantries in northeast and Mid-Missouri.

Initially the seed distribution was at the Shelby County Food Pantry and St. James Caring Center, but it was expanded to the Central Pantry in Columbia and the Help Center in Mexico. The goal of the grant is to reach eight pantries in northeast and Central Missouri.

McKelvey said the project is an attempt to tackle food insecurity. Missouri ranks seventh in the nation for food insecurity, with the fifth-highest rate of child food insecurity nationwide. In Boone County alone, 13.7 percent of residents are food-insecure, meaning they don’t have access to enough food at a price they can afford, compared to 13.9 percent statewide, according to the 2013 Missouri Hunger Atlas, a product of the MU Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security.

There are typically two rounds of distribution, with events each week in the winter for spring vegetables and another round of distribution events in the summer for fall harvests. McKelvey said the summer distribution wrapped up in late July.
During Year Two, McKelvey said program operators are looking toward the future, hoping to establish a sustainable seed-distribution program with community support that will outlive the current project.

“When we’re out working with groups to distribute seed, we’re only working with them for about two years,” McKelvey said about the partnered pantries. “Then, we have to step back and hope that we have developed a partnership so that what we started will live on.”

Because seeds cost about $4 per person, pantries can consider applying for grants of their own to let their programs live on or can garner financial support from local businesses. There are additional costs that come with Grow Well Missouri’s program, McKelvey said, such as education materials to pass along to future gardeners that indicate best practices, dealing with insects or disease and other related issues.

Central Pantry Supervisor Sean Ross said the feedback he has received from people who use what Grow Well Missouri offers is very positive.

“Some people don’t have a place to plant at all, but the ones who do stopped and asked about the program,” he said about the seed distribution process. “A couple of people have said they’ve really enjoyed their gardens.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New medical isotope producer to help increase supply of element needed to fight life-threatening disease

Friday, August 15, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Nicholas Fowler, the CEO of Northwest Medical Isotopes, calls it “a catastrophe in the making.”

The United States is about to run extremely low on Molybdenum-99, a vital element in nuclear medicine used to diagnose cancer and other life-threatening diseases. The radioisotope is used in about 50,000 medical procedures a day.
“All but 5 percent of the U.S. supply is going to be either taken offline or at risk between late-2016 and late-2018,” Fowler said.

Northwest Medical Isotopes announced in May that it intends to create a reliable supply of the radioactive material by building a $50 million radioisotope production facility in Columbia near the MU Research Reactor. Through nuclear fission, Mo-99 will be recovered from irradiated targets using low-enriched uranium.

There are a limited number of producers of this radioisotope. Globally, there are nine irradiators, many approaching the end of their life-cycles, and six processors, companies like Northwest. None of the producers are located in the United States.

This creates two problems: the supply is undependable, and the isotope with a short shelf life has a long way to travel.

“The U.S. represents the largest market, and it represents the market most at risk from a supply-chain perspective,” Fowler said.

Supply and shelf life
About three-quarters of the isotope consumed in the United States is produced in Canada at a reactor slated to be shut down in 2016. The rest is produced in Europe. The suppliers are essentially operating at capacity, Fowler said.

“There is no upward flexibility or elasticity to see how much market demand there actually would be if there was sufficient supply to potentially satisfy everyone’s need day in and day out,” he said.

The other problem is the isotope’s short shelf life. It is a race against time because it loses its efficacy in days. Each hour spent in transit is time lost for medical diagnoses.

The time crunch is a major impediment for doctors and their patients because they don’t always know when they will need the isotope, and it’s not something you can grab off the shelf.

This is one of the key reasons Northwest Medical Isotopes picked a central U.S. location for its operations. From mid-Missouri, the transient isotope is much more accessible to hospitals around the country.
The company plans to start building at the Discovery Ridge Research Park in 2016 and a year later start producing about half of the U.S. supply needs, according to Fowler.

Columbia is home to the nation’s most powerful university-owned research reactor, with an output of 10 megawatts, as well as a workforce highly skilled in nuclear engineering.

These factors were crucial in determining the production site, but the scientific breakthrough that made domestic commercial production possible happened in another college town, in the Northwest.

**Where it all began**

The idea emerged after a chance encounter between a cardiologist and a nuclear scientist in the wine department at a Costco in Corvallis, the home of Oregon State University.

The cardiologist was expressing his frustrations; the lack of Mo-99 affected his ability to conduct certain tests. The nuclear scientist happened to be working on a project that used research university-class reactors to create the isotope the cardiologist desperately desired.

At this moment they knew they were onto something. The idea made its way to Fowler, and he took on the role of turning it into a business.

Many of the current producers of Mo-99 use highly enriched uranium, but Northwest’s technology uses low-enriched uranium. Fowler said highly enriched uranium is often used because it’s easier and cheaper to extract isotopes than low-enriched uranium, which requires more material to get the same amount of Mo-99.

The drawback is this material can also be used to build nuclear weapons.

**Global efforts**

To address this risk and transform the marketplace, there are two global initiatives taking place.

One effort is to convert all current facilities from using highly enriched uranium to low-enriched uranium.
The second, called full cost recovery, aims to phase out subsidies to producers by 2014. The idea is to create a reliable and safe supply of the isotope in a competitive market.

Because the cheaper uranium is still used and subsidies continue to exist, “the current price of (the isotope) is artificially low,” Fowler said.

When asked how Northwest Medical Isotopes will be able to remain competitive, he said the company has a few distinct advantages.

“The first is ... we don’t have to build a nuclear reactor,” Fowler pointed out. Reactors can cost upwards of $250 million to construct. They plan to use the research reactors at MU and Oregon State to irradiate their material.

Also, the company has developed intellectual property related to the Mo-99 production. It has a novel design for its targets that were developed at Oregon State University and licensed exclusively to Northwest. Targets containing the uranium are placed in the reactor for irradiation.

“Low enriched uranium is less than 20 percent uranium,” Fowler said. “And so it makes the extraction and purification process of Mo-99 more challenging than it does if you’re starting out with much a higher concentration of uranium.

So one of the things the nuclear scientist was working on and we’ve now engaged with the University of Missouri and others is the extraction chemistries enable us to use, from the very beginning, low enriched uranium.”

The next step for Northwest Medical Isotopes is to get a construction permit from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.
Supporting the Sex Assault Bill

August 15, 2014

By
Michael Stratford

NO MU MENTION

WASHINGTON -- In announcing bipartisan campus sexual assault legislation earlier this month, Senator Claire McCaskill suggested that colleges could either protest the scrutiny or get on board with the effort.

“There’s two ways to handle it: you can circle the wagons, deny it, and fight it,” she said at a press conference. “Or you can join forces, and say, ‘Thank you for the heads-up; we need help in this area.’ ”

Several higher education groups in Washington have responded by pushing back against the legislation. While acknowledging that colleges have a moral and legal obligation to root out sexual violence on their campus, some higher education advocates in Washington said that the bill is mostly too heavy-handed. The American Council on Education, for example, said it liked some elements of the bill but said that much of it would add too much complexity to the already-confusing array of federal requirements that colleges must follow when it comes to handling sexual assault cases.

Some individual colleges and university systems, though, are opting for a different approach: they're either embracing the legislation outright or cautiously deferring judgment on it, careful not to be dismissive of the concerns about sexual assault animating the legislative effort.
A handful of institutions have come out squarely in favor of the legislation. But even those that haven't gone as far as endorsing the plan say they still embrace the lawmakers’ effort and want to hammer out the details through the legislative process.

Having unveiled the bill earlier this month, several of its supporters in Congress have gone back to their districts -- and the colleges within them -- to promote the bill.

Senator Richard Blumenthal, one of the bill’s Democratic sponsors, held a press conference in Connecticut alongside a handful officials representing colleges in that state that support the legislation. Fairfield University was one of those institutions. Tom Pellegrino, the university’s vice president for student affairs, said that while the problem of sexual assault on college campuses is not new, it has “now reached the level of legislative prescription.”

“As stringent as the new legislation purports to be, it’s necessary at this point,” he said. “We haven’t gotten there yet by ourselves,” he said. “We have to be reactive to this need.”

“In terms of executing the new requirements, I have concerns about whether we currently have the resources in place,” he said. But those concerns don’t override the positive goal of the bill, which is to have assault-free campuses, he said.

At least one higher education group in Washington, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, said it welcomed the new legislation.

“We believe that the bipartisan bill released today by Senator McCaskill will help us to work collaboratively to prevent and to respond to sexual assault,” Muriel A. Howard, the group’s president, said in a statement earlier this month.

In a memo to its member institutions this week, obtained by Inside Higher Ed, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities urged its members to discuss the legislation with their lawmakers before the end of the Congressional recess.

The APLU memo says that public universities "fully embrace" the legislation "in concept," and cites several positive provisions. But it also suggests some talking points for concerns about the legislation, including the requirement that universities enter into agreements with local law enforcement agencies for handling sexual assault cases. The APLU also says it is concerned that "the revenue from penalties would all go to the department, which creates
undue incentive and may invite a bounty mindset.”

Still, public institutions appeared to be generally more supportive of the bill.

**In McCaskill’s home state of Missouri, University of Missouri President Timothy Wolfe said in a statement that he “welcome[d] the focus of Senator McCaskill and her Senate colleagues on the problem of campus sexual assault.”**

The State University of New York System has come out in favor of the proposal. “Overall we very much support this proposed legislation,” said Joe Storch, associate counsel at the SUNY system in Albany. He praised the requirement that colleges provide amnesty from underage drinking violations for students reporting a sexual assault.

In addition, Storch said that the campus climate survey proposal -- an idea that the American Council on Education has specifically questioned -- was a good idea. “Having this come out from the Department of Education and be administered in a consistent way is a major efficiency,” he said. “It would also help those smaller institutions that don’t have research institutions.”

Andrea Stagg, an associate counsel at SUNY said that the system’s campuses would likely already be in compliance with many of the new provisions, such as the requirement to have agreements with local law enforcement agencies on how to handle sexual assault cases.

Stagg said that the bill was reaffirming to many of the policies already in place at SUNY campuses. "When I read the bill, I didn’t get an accusatory tone,” she said. “This is codifying some best practices. There are definitely details to be worked out, but we look forward to trying to assist.”

Sally Mason, president of the University of Iowa, praised the legislation for “focusing attention on this issue.”

She pointed to bolstered resources for victims and increased grants to support training of campus personnel as among the “good ideas” in the bill.

“'We need to be partners in this,” she said of federal lawmakers. “If I had the solutions to this, I would be the first to stand up and fix this problem. We’re all looking for guidance and
good solutions.”

Other parts of the legislation, though, are aimed at holding colleges more accountable, such as toughening the penalties on institutions that mishandle sexual assault cases. “I’m much more of a fan of carrots than sticks,” Mason said. “I’d prefer to see some incentives for colleges to make good progress going forward.”

The legislation would also require colleges to survey students anonymously each year about their views on campus sexual assault, and publish the results online.

“I’m open to suggestions, some of which are found in this bill, and happy to try things that may have good long-term effects,” Mason said.

Janet Napolitano, the president of the University of California system, said that while she hasn’t yet taken a position on the legislation, she supports its goals.

“We’re still going through it,” she said in an interview last week.

Napolitano earlier this year appointed a systemwide task force to address campus sexual assaults, following two federal Title IX complaints filed by 31 current and former UC Berkeley students. She also changed system policies to require expanded reporting of campus violence and increased support services for victims.

Napolitano has backed separate legislation by Senator Barbara Boxer, a California Democrat, that would require colleges to provide an independent advocate to help victims of sexual assault get the resources they need and help them through any campus proceedings.

"I support the principles of the McCaskill bill, but we are not waiting for federal legislation."

She said that it’s especially important to bolster relationships between campuses and local law enforcement agencies.

"That's one of the areas that have somehow slipped through the cracks in the national debate," she said. "A rape is a rape and universities and colleges are not in the best position to prosecute crimes, so you need to have a way for the campus to have a
connection with local district attorneys."

Without taking a stance on the legislation, Napolitano did allude to some concerns that have been expressed from the American Council on Education.

"It’s very difficult for a piece of legislation to appreciate all the differences between institutions of higher education -- big and small, rich and poor, residential, nonresidential," she said adding that the “lengthy and laborious” rule making process further compounds that problem.

For instance, climate surveys, Napolitano said, are "something that deserves further discussion," noting that such a tool has both possibilities and also limitations. "That’s the kind of thing where a cookie-cutter approach is not always the best way to look forward."

Napolitano said that federal policy makers should focus on using their “convening authority” to facilitate the exchange of ideas on how best to combat sexual assault.

“One thing that Washington can do is to support and convene a national exchange of best practices,” she said. “There are evidence-based strategies in this area. They can support research into this area. That’s important. They can provide resources. Those are things that are well within the purview of the federal government."

The unveiling of the campus sexual assault bill earlier this month was just the beginning of what is likely to be continued attention and scrutiny on colleges for this issue.

The list of lawmakers supporting the effort has grown since it was announced earlier this month. Four more Democrats and three Republican Senators have signed on to the measure.
Missouri utility still interested in nuclear
By JACOB BARKER

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Past the razor wire and security checkpoints that guard Missouri’s first and only nuclear power plant, there’s an empty gravel lot where a second reactor was to have been built.

Union Electric — the utility now known as Ameren Missouri — envisioned an $839 million, two-reactor facility when it began work in Callaway County in the 1970s. Rising costs and more conservative electricity demands prompted the utility to scale back the project. When it finally went online in 1984, the single reactor ended up costing $2.85 billion.

Even after that experience, which led to the largest electric rate increase in state history, Ameren never quite gave up on a second reactor, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported (http://bit.ly/1yhwl3E ). It spent recent years trying to pave the way for another reactor via a financing rule from the state legislature and, more recently, a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy.

But those efforts have stalled, and new energy economics have forced the utility to reevaluate its future needs. Stagnant demand growth means the utility isn’t even sure it will have to replace capacity from its Meramec coal plant in south St. Louis County, which it announced last month it would retire by 2022.

On a tour of the nuclear power plant last month, Warren Wood, Ameren vice president of external communications, indicated the utility was viewing future energy needs through the same lens as most power producers these days.

"It’s not our next immediate resource," Wood said of nuclear generation. "Natural gas is next in the queue."

Its most recent attempt to build a nuclear plant was a 2012 application in partnership with nuclear engineering firm Westinghouse. The partners applied for a federal grant to jumpstart the development of small nuclear plants that provide about 20 percent of the energy a conventional reactor does. That
drew political support from Gov. Jay Nixon, the state's Congressional delegation, the University of Missouri System and local governments eager for the jobs they hoped the project would bring.

Beyond new power, politicians and Ameren pushed the prospect of a new state industry in the design and manufacture of the supposedly assembly-line-ready new nuclear technology. But the DOE twice passed Ameren and Westinghouse over, and the utility said in December it was "stepping back and considering our alternatives."

But as Ameren looks beyond the life of the coal-burning power plants that supply most of the region's electricity, the utility still holds out the hope that a second reactor — albeit a smaller one — might one day fill some more of the 8,000 acres of land it owns in Mid-Missouri.

In the utility's upcoming resource plan, set to be released this fall, Wood said Ameren will stay upbeat on the carbon-free fuel.

"You're going to see nuclear faring well," he said. "Putting all your chips in gas is a risk."

The renaissance in carbon-free nuclear energy hoped for a decade ago hasn't materialized despite increasing concern about climate change and air pollution. Eight permit applications, including one from Ameren Missouri, submitted to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission over the last decade have been put on hold. There are, for the first time in decades, several nuclear reactors under construction, but those are in fast-growing Sunbelt states.

Now, the biggest obstacle to new nuclear plants, besides massive construction costs, is the natural gas revolution.

Even Ameren, long interested in adding nuclear energy for its predictable fuel prices and consistent power, views the fuel it mostly used to meet peak summer demand as the most likely way forward.

"Natural gas prices (a decade ago) were very high and we were expected at that time as a country to have to import liquefied natural gas," said Phil Sharp, president of Resources for the Future, a Washington think tank, and a former member of the Department of Energy's Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future. "With the price of natural gas dropping so much, it simply is cheaper to build natural gas generating plants than it is to build a nuclear plant."

Compared to coal, now-abundant natural gas burns much more cleanly and can go a long way to meeting proposed regulations on carbon dioxide. Plus, it's relatively cheap to build a natural gas plant, which can be online in just a couple of years compared to the decade and billions of dollars it takes to build a full-scale nuclear reactor.

Especially in a slower-growing region such as Missouri and St. Louis, it makes little sense to build a full-scale reactor.
"In Missouri and the Midwest where the economies aren't growing as fast or the populations aren't growing as fast, we don't need 1,000 megawatts," said Joseph Smith, an engineering professor who heads the Energy Research and Development Center at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla. "Maybe we need 200 megawatts or 300 megawatts."

That was the goal of the consortium Smith helped lead to develop small nuclear plants in Missouri. Smith helped coordinate the University of Missouri System's support after Ameren partnered with Westinghouse to pursue the grant for small modular reactors, or SMRs as they're called.

He's still upbeat on SMRs, even after the DOE snubbed the Missouri-Westinghouse consortium. Researchers in the University of Missouri system continue to look at SMR technology, and dialogue with industry continues, he said.

"The technical issues I think we've addressed, and there are different flavors of how you do it," Smith said of commercializing the technology. "The fact of the matter is we've had small reactors for some time on boats floating around the oceans."

Still, SMRs won't be generating in the U.S. for five to 10 years in Smith's estimation. And other companies developing the technology have run into problems.

One of the winners of the Department of Energy grant, Babcock & Wilcox, is scaling back its investment in its SMR program and risks losing federal funding for the project. Ameren's potential partner, Westinghouse, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette earlier this year it had shifted some resources from SMR development back to its full-scale reactor.

However, Holtec international, also passed over for DOE funding, has said it remains committed to its SMR design. No problems have surfaced with the other DOE grant winner, NuScale Power.

Ameren, too, still sees potential in SMR technology.

"I'm convinced it's not a matter of if SMRs become a viable technology, it's a matter of when," Wood said.

One of the reasons Ameren and others still point to nuclear is the risk of volatility in natural gas prices. Gas-heavy utilities learned that the hard way after a bitterly cold winter strained supplies in a still-developing network of natural gas distribution, causing price spikes that drove home the fuel's risks. Others point to the potential of increased natural gas exports that would drive up the cost to domestic consumers.

Sharp, the energy expert, says there's something to be said for a diversity of energy sources: When making long-term predictions on energy markets, academics, government agencies and industry frequently get it wrong.
"This is why many utilities want a diverse supply of energy," Sharp said. "That has become one of the mantras in any given utility system."

But prospects any time soon for more nuclear on Ameren's system seem slim. Nationwide, new nuclear is expected to make a small portion of new generation. The U.S. Energy Information Administration predicts more than 220 gigawatts of new generation from natural gas and diesel power by 2040 (more than 20 times Ameren Missouri's total electric capacity), compared to less than 10 gigawatts from new nuclear.

The "wild card," Smith said, is how stringent curbs on carbon dioxide become. That could curb gas use and accelerate coal plant retirements, changing the electricity generation calculus.

"If we're serious about greatly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, natural gas has a carbon footprint, too," Wood, at Ameren, said.

But if it does come down to a gas versus nuclear question, it won't be anytime soon.

"We have some time until we have to make that decision," Wood said.

Social Media And The Ferguson Shooting: Magnifier, Megaphone And Vehicle Of Threats

BY CAMILLE PHILLIPS

Originally published on Thu August 14, 2014 4:37 pm

Through tweets and vines, Facebook posts and YouTube videos, the world has been watching Ferguson this week. Social media updates from protestors and journalists on the ground have in large part shaped the narrative as demonstrations and unrest continue in response to the fatal shooting of unarmed Michael Brown, 18, on Saturday. When St. Louis City Alderman Antonio French was arrested Wednesday night, word spread almost immediately through the Twitter sphere. Three minutes before midnight, his wife confirmed the arrest.

French has been a central presence at the scene of protests this week, giving up-to-the-minute accounts and sharing photos and six second videos through the online app, Vine.
Citizen Journalism

Just as in other major news events of the past four years, people around the world are getting real-time updates from the ground via social media, often bypassing traditional media outlets entirely to do so.

In the same manner, protestors in Ferguson are following in the footsteps of other activists by using social media to get the word out about demonstrations, marches, town hall meetings and other events.

**But this is the first time citizen journalists have played such a central role in covering breaking news in the United States, said University of Missouri journalism professor Amy Simons.**

“I think this is the first example of where we’re seeing citizen journalism really coming to the forefront and being where we’re getting some of those really good images, and really good video and really good firsthand eyewitness accounts we aren’t seeing because the local media and the national media, as hard as they are trying to get in, they are being pushed back by police,” said Simons.

Vehicle of Threats

Others with bigger megaphones than French have retweeted him, helping spread his messages. Among them: activist hacker collective Anonymous, which has its own reasons for using social media.

Twitter is its vehicle of choice to gets its threats to the ears of people in authority, and as a call to arms to the public. Anonymous set its sights on Ferguson, using a YouTube video to threaten to release the personal information of any police officers involved in the shooting.

This type of activity is typical for Anonymous, says author and hacker expert Gabriella Coleman. She is the author of the forthcoming book "Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous" and a professor of scientific and technological literacy at McGill University in Quebec, Canada.

“This is not the first time that they would do something like this, and this is part of their tactical repertoire to release police names who are involved in actions,” said Coleman.

But what’s not typical is to attack children, as hacker @TheAnonMessage threatened to do earlier this week.
In a series of tweets, @TheAnonMessage released the personal address of Belmar, followed by photos of him with his wife, a photo of his wife and daughter, and a photo that the tweeter claimed to be his son. The goal: for Belmar to release the name of the officer who shot Michael Brown.

The hacker then threatened to release the personal information about Belmar’s daughter.

Coleman says the threat was either a stunt designed to attract attention or an example of one member of the collective drifting away from the rest of the group.

“I don’t really know whether it was a stunt or not from the beginning, but I do know that once that announcement came out, that others definitely reached out to the person running that Twitter account and said no, this is not cool this is not what we do,” said Coleman. “And then he kind of immediately, well not immediately, but soon after retracted.”

The tweet threatening Belmar’s daughter has since been deleted, but @TheAnonMessage tweeted a more general threat soon after.

Because Anonymous is a loose collective with no hierarchy of leadership, disagreements flare up. One such disagreement arose on Thursday, when hacker @TheAnonMessage leaked the name of a man purportedly responsible for the death of Michael Brown. Following a response from St. Louis County Police saying that the man did not work for either Ferguson or St. Louis County police departments, other Twitter accounts associated with Anonymous condemned the actions of @TheAnonMessage.

Within half an hour of the tweets from major Anonymous accounts @YourAnonNews and @Crypt0nymous, the number of people following @TheAnonMessage dropped from more than 80,000 to 3. Shortly thereafter, @TheAnonMessage’s account was shut down.

Disagreement aside, it’s not all that unusual for Anonymous to get things wrong, said Coleman.

“While many times they have gotten things right, on occasion they have gotten things wrong. And then those names are out there, and they are targeted.”

She said that while Anonymous acknowledges that leaking names makes individuals the target of threats, the collective does not endorse violence.

“People wouldn’t tend to say go after him. That said, everyone knows that once a name becomes public, that that person will become the target of threats,” Coleman said. “So while they definitely don’t actively encourage that, they are well aware that that sort of retaliation
will happen. I think that they're okay with pizzas being sent to the officer's house. That's a kind of funny tradition.”

**Magnifier and Megaphone**
According to Coleman, Anonymous often serves to shine a spotlight on incidents such as the shooting in Ferguson. With millions of followers on social media, Anonymous can bring increased attention to the events.

But in the case of Ferguson, that spotlight wasn’t needed as much. The eye of the world was already on the town, in part because of rapper Tef Poe.

Tef Poe grew up in north St. Louis County, and like Antonio French, has been tweeting photos, Vines and comments from the scene of demonstrations and unrest since Saturday afternoon. And with around 25,000 followers beforehand, he has had a large part in spreading the word. He now has more than 31,000 followers.

“I’ve always been one of those artists that wanted to use my platform for something greater than entertainment. Really for me it’s all about the community and touching bases with the people and really hearing the voices of the people of the community and really catering to their concerns and things that disturb them, so I try to talk about that a lot,” said Tef Poe. “This incident just gave me a chance to do that on a global level.”

Tef Poe said that the shooting did not shock him because he knew what the police were like in the Ferguson area.

“Most of us that are from St. Louis have always felt that way about the police presence in north county and some of the tactics that they use to police minorities and poor people in general,” he said.

The social media coverage of the Egyptian Revolution in part inspired Tef Poe to cover the protests in Ferguson in a similar manner. Social media, he said, is the greatest tool protestors have to tell their side of the story.

“This isn’t the first time something like this has happened, it’s just one of the first times that we’ve had the ability to counterattack the media, the mainstream media with the things that we perceive to be factual,” said Tef Poe. “This is one of the first times in American history where you can openly access news and information outside of the big media outlets like MSNBC, CNN. You can go straight to Twitter and get more accuracy than they have. I’m right there when the police pull up. Other protestors were right there when Mike Brown was shot.”
Tef Poe sees the fact that he’s not a journalist as a plus, because he’s not bound by the same professional standards of accuracy.

“I don’t have to follow a certain code of conduct,” he said. “I can just flat out tell you the truth about something, or I can flat out give you my opinion about something about something without it necessarily being a stone-cold fact, it might just be my perception about something, and you may share that same perception, and we can have a conversation about it.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Columbia community gathers at vigil for Ferguson; Ratliff spoke with Michael Brown's family

Thursday, August 14, 2014 | 11:08 p.m. CDT; updated 6:14 a.m. CDT, Friday, August 15, 2014

BY RACHEL JELINEK

COLUMBIA — Red ribbons, lighted candles and decorated signs were held by about 100 MU students, staff and residents who gathered Thursday evening at Speakers Circle to observe a moment of silence for Michael Brown.

Columbia was just one of more than 90 locations across the nation where people gathered for a vigil Thursday night in remembrance of the unarmed teenager shot and killed by a Ferguson police officer.

Through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, the National Moment of Silence 2014 webpages asked cities across the United States to join together in silence and solidarity for victims of police brutality.

Three MU students, Naomi Daugherty, 21, Ashley Bland, 22, and Kailynd Beck, 22, spearheaded the local Facebook event that invited MU students to gather as one at Speakers Circle for the vigil.

Bland said she was with Daugherty and Beck on Wednesday night when they decided to do something in response to Ferguson. There were too many organizations trying to do something
about it, so they thought it would be better to bring all the organizations together for one event, Bland said.

"It's too big of an issue to just tweet about it," Bland said. "I felt called to do something because it is so close."

One of the attendees, local and state president for the NAACP, Mary Ratliff, said she drove to Ferguson and met with Brown's family Monday.

"They were very distraught, the mother's very distraught," Ratliff said. "She's asking for peace so that Michael's memory isn't marred in any way."

While in Ferguson, Ratliff said she witnessed firsthand the tension in the atmosphere, fueled in part by the police department's decision not to release the name of the officer who shot Brown.

"People were angry, they were hurt and they were frustrated," Ratliff said. "They were very unhappy with the lack of transparency."

Ratliff also went to a rally Monday night at Murchison Tabernacle Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in St. Louis "to encourage everybody to stick together and see to it that justice was done for Michael Brown."

At the Speakers Circle vigil Thursday, Ratliff expressed her hope that positive change could follow the tragedy of Brown's death.

"We should use this to make our country and our lives better," she said.

Beck was one of the many who stood in that circle to share her thoughts on the vigil.

"I'm happy to see a lot of black faces, but I'm also happy to see a lot of white faces," Beck said.

Many of the people who spoke said they either lived near Ferguson or had friends or family from the area. That is another reason why Daugherty said joining with the nation in Thursday night's vigil was so important.

"We have students from Ferguson who will be attending MU in the fall, and it is important that they know they have a community who supports them," Daugherty said.
Before the crowd dispersed for the night, the Legion of Black Collegians’ gospel choir members expressed their feelings through song. After they sang alone, almost everyone in the crowd joined in, singing "We Shall Overcome" right along with the choir.

The Missouri NAACP will be meeting at Harris-Stowe State University at 3 p.m. Sunday to bring the youth up to date about Ferguson and to calm the frustration they have, Ratliff said.

"We’ll be talking to young people about how to strategize and protest nonviolently," she said.