UM System implements new hearing process for discrimination, harassment complaints

Thursday, September 25, 2014 | 5:58 p.m. CDT; updated 6:26 a.m. CDT, Friday, September 26, 2014

BY CAITLIN HOLLAND

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System is training employees to serve as investigators and panelists in a new hearing process for discrimination and harassment complaints against students and student groups, according to a risk management consultant advising the system.

That training addresses a new equity resolution process outlined in an update to the system's Collected Rules and Regulations, announced Monday. These policy updates were made in an attempt to strengthen the university's sexual misconduct and discrimination responses, according to a news release.

The updates are in effect, and the UM System Board of Curators is scheduled to vote on them at its next meeting, scheduled for Oct. 2-3 at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

The updates, which come during a time of heightened awareness about sexual violence and sex discrimination, replace earlier rules about sexual harassment and a positive work environment. Daniel Swinton, a managing partner of the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management firm advising the UM System, said the updates have been in the works since April.

Under each update is an explanation of what has changed from earlier versions and what it means for students and employees:

Clarifying that the university’s prohibitions against sex discrimination, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct apply to students, employees, volunteers and visitors (new Chapter 600, "Equal Employment/Educational Opportunity," Section 600.020);

This policy update combined two sections — one for student protection under Title IX, and one for employees, volunteers and visitors under Title IX — into one. The goal is to eliminate perceived differences implied by having them in separate sections, UM System spokesman John Fougere said.
According to the policy, if any person in those four categories experiences sex discrimination, he or she is encouraged to report it to the university's Title IX coordinator. This was previously expressed in the two separate sections.

This policy now covers issues relating to Title IX, the Clery Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Before Monday, only Title IX was mentioned in the rule.

**Clarifying definitions of sex discrimination to be consistent with existing law and best practices (Sections 600.020.C.1-6 and 200.010.B.7);**

The existing laws and best practices mentioned here are Title IX, the Clery Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Before Monday, the only definitions listed were for sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual exploitation, consent to sexual activity and incapacitated. Definitions were added for the following terms: stalking on the basis of sex, dating/intimate partner violence, complainant and accused.

**Simplifying requirements for mandated reporters, making it mandatory for any employee of the university that becomes aware of sex discrimination to report all information to the Title IX coordinator (unless expressly exempted from doing so) (Section 600.020.E.);**

All UM System employees, with the exception of health care providers, counselors, lawyers and associated staff, have been considered mandatory reporters since Executive Order 40 in April. Under that order, though, the amount of information an employee was required to report differed depending on his or her role at the university, Fougere said.

Swinton said there had been three standards that applied differently to groups of employees:

- Under Title IX, responsible employees were required to report as much information as they knew about a sex discrimination incident, he said.

- Campus security authorities were required to report unidentifiable information about sex offenses on or near campus under the Clery Act, he said.

- Under employment laws, supervisors were required to report harassment or discrimination if they became aware of it, he said.
This was problematic because all three standards could have applied to one employee, making it unclear what he or she was required to report, Swinton said. As of Monday, all employees are required to report the same amount of information to the Title IX coordinator.

There are no sanctions outlined in the rules and regulations for employees who do not report information. However, Swinton said, university employees could face disciplinary action for not doing so. Those situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis, he said.

**Creating a new equity resolution process for all discrimination claims when the accused is a student or student organization, with equity resolution hearing panelists for discrimination claims being trained administrators or staff appointed by the chancellor (Section 200.025.B.9, G.6.a.);**

This new policy is called a civil rights investigation model, Swinton said. The model requires having investigators and hearing panelists on each campus who are trained to carry out the equity resolution process. Each campus will have between six and 20 investigators who have undergone at least 32 hours of training. There are still two more days of training scheduled for these investigators, Swinton said.

The number of hearing panelists will vary by campus, and their training will probably take place in the next month, he said.

The equity resolution process is designed so all discrimination and harassment cases will be handled equally, regardless of whether they deal with sexual harassment, religious or racial discrimination, retaliation against someone who previously reported an incident, or in any other form, Swinton said.

This is to address the issue of campuses interpreting rules differently and using them in different ways to resolve the complaints.

This new rule also mentions that the university can investigate off-campus incidents, if the harassment or discrimination may affect the complainant’s work or education. Swinton said the universities have always had some jurisdiction over these situations, but this update just states that more clearly.

The accused and complainant are each allowed one adviser through the investigation process. That could be a parent, attorney or university-provided adviser. Anyone found to violate Title IX could face punishments, from a reprimand to an expulsion.
MU president's former home now events center

COLUMBIA, MO. - The University of Missouri says the former home of the university system's president will be open for special events starting next week.

President Tim Wolfe moved out of the house, called Providence Point, last fall. He said he wanted to move into a personal home in Columbia and predecessors complained the home was not comfortable for families.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports the home will be used for special events and meetings but will not host political events or promotions of products for personal use. It will be open for event use Oct. 1.

The nearly 13,000-square-foot home was built in 1971, with an addition completed 14 years later. The university spent about $200,000 to improve the property in 2012-2013.

Read more here: http://www.kansascity.com/news/state/missouri/article2240852.html#storylink=cpy
Bacterial ‘chatter’ tells cancer cells to die

Scientists can manipulate a molecule used as a communication system by bacteria to prevent cancer from spreading. This communication system can tell cells how to act—or even to die—on command.

While always dangerous, cancer becomes life-threatening when cancer cells begin to spread to different areas throughout the body.

“During an infection, bacteria release molecules which allow them to ‘talk’ to each other,” says lead author Senthil Kumar, an assistant research professor and assistant director of the Comparative Oncology and Epigenetics Laboratory at University of Missouri.

“Depending on the type of molecule released, the signal will tell other bacteria to multiply, escape the immune system, or even stop spreading.

“We found that if we introduce the ‘stop spreading’ bacteria molecule to cancer cells, those cells will not only stop spreading, they will begin to die as well.”

Hard-to-kill cancer cells

In the study published in PLOS ONE, Kumar and coauthor Jeffrey Bryan, associate professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine, treated human pancreatic cancer cells grown in culture with bacterial communication molecules, known as ODDHSL. After the treatment, the pancreatic cancer cells stopped multiplying, failed to migrate, and began to die.

“We used pancreatic cancer cells because those are the most robust, aggressive, and hard-to-kill cancer cells that can occur in the human body,” Kumar says.”To show that this molecule can not only stop the cancer cells from spreading, but actually cause them to die, is very exciting.

“Because this treatment shows promise in such an aggressive cancer like pancreatic cancer, we believe it could be used on other types of cancer cells and our lab is in the process of testing this treatment in other types of cancer.”

The next step is to find a more efficient way to introduce the molecules to the cancer cells before animal and human testing can take place, Kumar says.
“Our biggest challenge right now is to find a way to introduce these molecules in an effective way. At this time, we only are able to treat cancer cells with this molecule in a laboratory setting. We are now working on a better method which will allow us to treat animals with cancer to see if this therapy is truly effective.

“The early-stage results of this research are promising. If additional studies, including animal studies, are successful then the next step would be translating this application into clinics.”

Donald W. Reynolds Foundation reaches $100 million in donations

September 25, 2014  BY Torie Ross

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, the foundation that donated the funds for the Reynolds Alumni Center and the money to fund and maintain the Reynolds Journalism Institute, will become the University of Missouri’s first $100 million donor with their latest gift of $10 million to the MU School of Journalism.

The money will be used to build the Faculty Excellence Fund, which will support 50 faculty fellowships for associate and full journalism professors. The terms of the gift, the final donation from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, which will dissipate in 2017, allows the Missouri School of Journalism to accept third party donations of $200,000 until the funds from the foundation are made available in 2021. When the Reynolds Foundation funds become available, they will distribute fellowships of more than $400,000 each to selected faculty members.

“Exceptional teaching is a hallmark of the University of Missouri School of Journalism…our professors, supported by the Reynolds Foundation’s generous gift, will prepare those who lead our industry in the future,” said Dean Mills, dean of the MU school of Journalism, in a statement.

Donald W. Reynolds, the foundation’s namesake, graduated from the Missouri School of Journalism in 1927 and was a mentee of the school’s founder, Walter Williams. Reynolds built the Donrey Media Group, which ultimately owned more than 100 newspaper, radio, television and advertising companies. “We feel certain he would have been pleased to know that his foundation provided significant support to his alma mater and made its final grant to endow salary support for faculty in the journalism school,” said Fred W. Smith, chairman of the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.
MizzouWireless problems stem from software malfunctions

Allen said MizzouWireless infrastructure is solid, but programs are not working properly.

By Annabel Ames

Recent difficulties connecting to MizzouWireless have been attributed to authentication and coding issues, said Gary Allen, UM System vice president for information systems.

Allen said MizzouWireless relies on two systems that need to communicate to allow for reliable connection. However, the two systems have not properly worked together recently, causing connection issues.

“They’re supposed to be built in such a way that they can seamlessly communicate in fractions of milliseconds as you’re trying to connect,” he said. “When those systems don’t work together as advertised or intended, you get a problem.”

Bryan Roesslet, director of systems and operations, said while the increase in enrollment has added some stress to the network, the Division of Information Technology is equipped to handle the number of users.

Allen said MU has 12 wireless controllers on campus, which is more than half of what industry standards require. He said, however, that one of the controllers crashed at one point this semester, which caused unexpected malfunction in the network.

“It’s not a situation of being overwhelmed by the usage and not being prepared for that,” he said. “The code doesn’t always work the way that it’s supposed to, and that’s what we’re dealing with here. The code is not behaving as code should.”

Allen said the IT department relies on vendors to provide software that allows MizzouWireless to run smoothly, and the vendors need to be consulted each time an issue comes up.

Roesslet said while the IT department spent the summer working with the vendors to fix any issues before the semester started, it is still unsure what is causing the malfunction in the network or when MizzouWireless will begin to run smoothly.

“I can’t tell you the number of hours that we put in over the summer,” Roesslet said. “We were quite confident going into this semester that we were not going to see problems, and that still hasn’t proven to be the case.”
Ben Bolin, Missouri Students Association Senate speaker, said fixing wireless issues should be a main priority for MU.

“If MizzouWireless goes down for even an hour, it can make a difference in someone’s study session,” he said. “We believe and assume that it will always be up and running; so many of us leave things until the last minute to print off and get done, and without it students are left almost running rampant to find some source we can go to.”

Bolin said when the network suffered intermittent connection for a week last year, MSA met with the IT department to better understand the issue. He said that every time the network is disrupted, students take to social media to voice their complaints.

“The more we can’t access it, the less we trust the wireless system here,” Bolin said.

Roesslet said he recommends students to use wired connection in residential halls and public computer labs while the department continues working with vendors and technical experts to solve issues.

“We are working as hard as we can to fix this; this isn’t a lack of effort or technical skill,” he said. “None of that is intended to deflect from the importance of us getting this service back to the point that you all expect. We understand that we need to provide an infrastructure that allows people to get what they want and what they need.”

MU to test emergency systems Friday

Thursday, September 25, 2014 at 10:00 am

The University of Missouri will test its emergency systems at 8:50 a.m. Friday.

ALERTUS beacons, which are located in lecture halls and in hallways of most classroom buildings, Memorial Union and the MU Student Center, will sound for 10 seconds, flash for three minutes and a test message will be displayed on the beacons, according to a news release.

“We test our emergency plans and warning systems annually,” said Jack Watring, chief of the MU Police Department. “The entire system, which includes alert beacons, desktop notifications, text messages and social media postings, will be activated.”
University officials also have been updating emergency evacuation plans for all buildings on campus. Each building has established evacuation procedures detailed in the building’s emergency action plan, and the building coordinator will update those plans on a regular basis. A summary of MU’s Emergency Operations Plan can be found at mualert.missouri.edu/documents/executive-summary.pdf, and emergency procedures can be found at ehs.missouri.edu/other/er.

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**Sport For All Campaign Needed to Attack Health Crisis**

We're fat and getting fatter.

There's really not a nicer way to put it. Today, more than two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese.

According to the Trust for America's Health, 20 years ago, no state had an obesity rate above 15 percent. Today there are 41 states with obesity rates over 25 percent.

Obesity is linked to more than 60 chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Annual health cost figures related to obesity in the U.S. are at nearly $200 billion, and nearly 21 percent of medical costs in the U.S. can be attributed to obesity. Per capita medical spending is $2,741 higher for people with obesity than for normal-weight individuals.

As such, what we're facing is more than just a health crisis; it's also an economic crisis. Researchers estimate that if obesity trends continue, obesity-related medical costs alone could rise by $43 to $66 billion each year in the United States by 2030.

The sobering statistics go on and on, but you get the picture. And it's certainly a bleak one.

There's no solution other than to make significant changes in the way we live our lives. Healthier diets are certainly part of the answer, but a big factor -- and one too often overlooked -- is that we simply have to move our bodies more.

We're way too sedentary.

**Dr. Frank W. Booth, a professor at the University of Missouri, says physical inactivity is a key cause of the nation’s overweight/obesity crisis. Booth contends that of the estimated**
750,000 Americans that die each year of heart disease, diabetes and colon cancer, research shows that one-third of those could be prevented by increased physical activity.

Booth calls the increasingly prevalent condition of being fat and out of shape Sedentary Death Syndrome (SeDS).

Story continues…