MU Faculty Council members discuss strategic plan, Title IX

Thursday, October 9, 2014 | 8:13 p.m. CDT

BY ISABELLE GUSTAFSON

COLUMBIA — MU Faculty Council members discussed the future of the MU Strategic Operating Plan and its evaluation committee at Thursday's council meeting, in addition to addressing Executive Order 41 and Title IX.

The strategic plan is a revised version of an earlier plan launched by University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe. MU will spend more than $300 million in the next five years to carry out a strategic plan to increase its ranking among the Association of American Universities, according to previous Missourian reporting.

Funding for the plan would come from student fees, private sources and new state funds. But the largest portion of funding, at more than $183 million of the total $300 million, would come from budget reallocation.

Faculty council member André Ariew said Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin visited the strategic plan’s evaluation committee this academic year. He said Loftin expressed concern that it lacked charge, and he questioned its value.

"The chancellor we have now is flexible," faculty council member Craig Roberts said. "He doesn't like rigid plans. If it doesn't work, fix it."

After some further evaluation, Loftin determined that the committee should continue to exist, Ariew said, but it should do a few things differently: quickly react to modifications as they are created and provide two written evaluations per year.

Executive Order 41 and Title IX

On Sept. 23, the UM System announced revisions to the university’s Collected Rules and Regulations in areas of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct and student conduct procedures. These are summarized in Executive Order 41, issued by Wolfe.
At the meeting, faculty council member Dennis Miller said there were concerns that these revisions were done without faculty input and that the school is not putting enough emphasis on the prevention of sexual misconduct. Miller said the university should be proactive rather than reactive.

"We've got a lot (of information) on how we handle these issues when they happen, but not a lot on how we prevent them," faculty council member Tim Evans said.

Several faculty members also expressed concern that they have yet to be trained for Mandatory Reporting with regards to sexual misconduct and Title IX.

"I think it's unconscionable that we have not gotten any sort of training," faculty council member Nicole Monnier said. "There really isn't something out there already that we can be doing? We are now liable and vulnerable and our students are now vulnerable."

Roberts stressed that faculty and administration will work together to take steps to find ways to protect students.

"These students are our students," he said. "This is dear to our hearts."

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

GEORGE KENNEDY: Sexual violence finally has attention of those with influence

Thursday, October 9, 2014 | 5:40 p.m. CDT; updated 8:02 p.m. CDT, Thursday, October 9, 2014

BY GEORGE KENNEDY

The Reynolds Alumni Center room was packed Tuesday morning for Sen. Claire McCaskill’s “listening session” on the subject of sexual abuse on campus. It struck me that who was present might be even more important than what was said.

MU Athletic Director Mike Alden sat in the front row. Campus Police Chief Jack Watring was a couple of seats away. Two rows back, Columbia College vice president and dean Terry Smith sat beside me. Mitchell Baxley, the detective who handles sex
crimes for the Columbia Police Department, was there. So was his boss, Deputy Chief Jill Schlude. A half-dozen schools besides our own were represented.

I don’t mean to suggest that the content wasn’t significant. It was. But to me, the presence of those I’ve named, along with a number of anti-violence activists and a sprinkling of students, demonstrated that this is a problem that has come out of the shadows and at last has the full attention of the leaders who can do something about it.

One of those leaders, of course, is Sen. McCaskill herself. Introducing her, MU Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton reminded us that she has been a crusader against sexual abuse and assault since her days as a prosecuting attorney in Kansas City. Her campaign against sexual abuse in the armed forces has been persistent and effective.

She is prime sponsor of a bill intended to address what has been called the country’s most underreported crime by strengthening enforcement of Title IX, demanding more transparency from colleges and creating more realistic penalties.

She explained Tuesday that the bill, which already – and remarkably in today’s Washington climate – has bipartisan sponsorship, is being held up for fine-tuning and in hopes of attracting enough co-sponsors to assure passage, at least in the Senate.

The senator has been publicly critical of her alma mater on this subject, but she said Tuesday that she now thinks our university “has turned the corner.” UM System President Tim Wolfe, who wants to make the university’s process a national model, contacts her so often it’s “annoying,” she joked.

It wasn’t a joke when she glanced at Mike Alden and noted that the university’s new rules treat every student the same “as the best basketball player.” And she pointedly contrasted the bungled investigation of a rape allegation last year against Florida State University’s star quarterback with the immediate suspension last week of a University of Florida quarterback who has been accused but not charged.

Chief Watring assured her, and the rest of us, that the campus police department has a special team to investigate reports of sex crimes and that all officers receive regular training. Detective Baxley said Columbia patrol officers are taught to be “sympathetic and non-judgmental.” They’re instructed to leave the most sensitive questions to him.
Just how much work remains to be done was illustrated by a student who said she and many of her friends aren’t really sure just what constitutes sexual assault or how to report it. The lack of knowledge is “a huge problem,” Sen. McCaskill said.

Another problem, which Detective Baxley mentioned to the crowd and discussed with me after the session, is that victims often are called on to give multiple statements — first to a Title IX advocate, then to law enforcement. That can be tiring, embarrassing and even damaging to law enforcement if the statements are not identical.

The parallel processes on campus and off are one reason, he told me, that no more than 10 percent of the assaults he learns of ever get to trial. Charges are never filed without the victim’s consent, he said. He and Deputy Chief Schlude also reminded me that the city police have no jurisdiction on campus, though they do cover adjacent Greektown.

We were joined by Colleen Coble, a journalism graduate who is now CEO of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Together, they educated me in the law.

Missouri law no longer requires force as an element of a sex crime. The law also specifies that a person who is drunk or otherwise incapacitated is incapable of giving consent to have sex. In that regard, if in no other, Missouri is more progressive than many states, they said.

When I got back to my office, I found an email from the MU student body president. It called attention to the “Enough is Enough” campaign to change the culture on campus to eliminate sexual abuse and to encourage intervention if it occurs.

October is “Relationship Violence Awareness Month.” After Tuesday, we can’t say we aren’t aware. We can say enough is enough.

MU receives 'Military Friendly' title for sixth year

The MU Veterans Center has provided services for veteran students since 2007.

MU has received the title of a “Military Friendly” campus by Victory Media for the sixth consecutive year.
MU was among 1,400 schools out of 3,000 applicants to receive the title this year. The school was evaluated on five criteria: on-campus military support, credit acceptance, school-offered tuition assistance, spouse and dependent benefits, and flexibility with scheduling and course completion requirements.

“We care about our veterans,” said Carol Fleisher, director of the MU Veteran’s Center. “That is the most important thing. So, I was just tickled that we received it.”

The evaluation criteria were developed with help from veteran employees of Victory Media to help veterans pick a school best suited to their needs.

“Military Friendly was founded as a way to help military members and veterans be able to better judge what to do with the next major phase of their life,” said Tristan Germann, recruiting specialist for Victory Media. “We want to give them the best information related to their life as we can.”

The MU Veteran's Center was established in December 2007 after a taskforce of student veterans from the MU Student Veterans Association submitted a 42-page proposal to then-Chancellor Brady Deaton.

“He adopted the whole thing,” Fleisher said. “And we were one of the first schools to have a veteran’s center. The other two schools to have one before us were Pennsylvania State University and Mississippi State University.”

Calling themselves a “full service, one-stop shop,” the center aims to provide a solution to any problem, concern or issue a veteran may come to them with.

“If we don’t have an answer, we find out,” Fleisher said. “We don’t make them go to different offices to find a solution. We pick up the phone and we make the calls. Many centers don’t do that.”

Out of all its services, Fleischer said the center prioritizes peer mentoring and support services. She said the center is a place for veterans “to call their own.”

Kevin Melkowski said he shares that feeling. A first-year graduate student in computer science, Melkowski came to MU as an undergraduate after retiring from the U.S. Navy in 2010.

“I found the center by Googling ‘Mizzou veteran’s center’ and a number popped up,” he said. “I was talking to them before I even got to MU. If it was not for the center, I would have been here without a lot of people to talk to.”

Melkowski said even though the center was helpful and “should never go away,” MU is not always veteran friendly.

An example he gave was the implementation of the Returning Heroes Act, which caps tuition at $50 per credit hour for all student veterans regardless of their class standing.
“It should be that the tuition cap is applied before all our other grants, which go toward paying for housing and food, but instead, MU applies all the grants and the tuition cap is applied to the remaining amount,” Melkowski said. “That makes the grants and the cap worthless.”

Despite that, he said he thinks MU is deserving of the Military Friendly title because “they really try, which is more than I have seen in other schools.”

“They offer free tutoring at the Student Success Center, which really helped me with my classes,” he said. “I became a tutor myself to give that service back.”

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

In a low-profile year, the stakes of this year’s Missouri election are high

BY JASON HANCOCK

THE STAR’S JEFFERSON CITY CORRESPONDENT

JEFFERSON CITY - His name won’t appear on the ballot, but Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon has a lot riding on the outcome of November’s election.

In the legislature, Nixon’s fellow Democrats hope they can shrink the Republican supermajority that managed to override a historic number of the governor’s vetoes over the last two years. Further down the ballot, voters will decide whether to sign off on a GOP-backed amendment to Missouri’s constitution limiting the governor’s budget authority.

There aren’t any high-profile statewide campaigns to capture voters’ attention and drive them to the polls. But the outcome of the Nov. 4 election could go a long way toward shaping not just Nixon’s final two years as governor, but the state’s politics for years to come.

Debates over tax policy, health care, business regulations and a whole host of hot-button social issues are likely to be decided by the outcome of legislative elections across the
state. And the arcane but critical constitutional change in the budget process could tilt political power further away from the governor and toward the legislature.

“The stakes are huge,” said Rep. John Rizzo, a Kansas City Democrat.

And Republicans are confident — with reason.

“The political environment is good for Republicans this year,” said House Speaker-elect John Diehl, a Republican from the St. Louis area.

The GOP currently controls 110 of the 163 seats in the Missouri House and 23 of 34 in the Senate. It also has candidates facing no opponents in 51 House races and half the Senate races. As of last month, the House Republican Campaign Committee had $1.2 million cash on hand. The Missouri Senate Campaign Committee, which supports Republicans, had $348,942.

“We have a very unselfish caucus,” said Rep. Todd Richardson, a Poplar Bluff Republican. “Every member is working together and contributing to elect good people to the House.”

Democrats have only 24 candidates who face no opponent in the House. Only one of their candidates is unopposed for the Senate. The Missouri Democratic Party last month had $700,000 in the bank to support candidates in both chambers.

While the party is trailing the Republicans in fundraising, the gap isn’t nearly as wide as it has been in recent elections, thanks to cash infusions from statewide Democratic politicians. U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill has given the party $390,000 to spend on legislative races. Attorney General Chris Koster has chipped in $200,000 as part of a four-year pledge to donate $400,000. Missouri Treasurer Clint Zweifel gave the Democratic Party $10,000 in July.

Nixon, who has been criticized in the past by Democrats for not getting more involved in legislative elections, has not made a similar financial commitment to his party. However, last month he held campaign events for several Democratic candidates in the St. Louis area.
“Our statewide elected officials are sick and tired of having to explain what the hell is going on with the radical agenda coming out of Jefferson City,” Rizzo said. “They are fed up.”

Democrats have virtually no hope of regaining the majority in either chamber this year. But they could pick up enough seats, Rizzo said, to have a voice in the process.

“The difference between 109 seats and 104 is all the difference in the world,” he said. “With a Democratic governor who can use the veto, that will change everything.”

Republicans held 106 seats in 2012, three shy of a veto-proof majority. They managed to override one of the governor’s vetoes that year.

With 110 seats last month, the governor saw 57 of his vetoes overridden, including a bill tripling the waiting period to have an abortion and another voiding local bans on the open carry of firearms.

Preserving a supermajority will give Republicans much more leverage when negotiating with the governor, Diehl said. But even if his party falls short, he said, the most recent veto session proves the GOP can count on Democrats to help enact their legislative agenda.

“Every single override vote we did this year had support of Democrats,” he said. “In some cases, half their caucus.”

If voters approve the GOP-backed constitutional amendment, the governor’s hand in negotiations with the legislature may be weakened even further.

The General Assembly has the constitutional duty to craft the state’s budget. The governor has the ability to veto specific spending items.

But the constitution also gives governors the authority to withhold spending if there is a shortfall in state revenue. The governor can restore the money to the budget if the state’s financial situation improves, and lawmakers have no authority to override the withholding of funds.
The proposed constitutional amendment would change that, giving lawmakers the opportunity to override the governor’s decision with a two-thirds majority vote.

Proponents point to last year’s battle over an $800 million tax cut proposal.

Nixon vetoed the tax bill, then withheld $400 million in funding for education, building projects and other government services out of concern legislators might override that veto.

When the override effort failed, he eventually released all the money. Republicans cried foul.

“This is about checks and balances,” Richardson said. “We’ve seen a pattern of this governor abusing his constitutional authority, and we’re trying to create some legislative oversight.”

Nixon has panned the amendment, arguing that his budget powers are necessary tools that have been wielded by Republican and Democrat governors to maintain the state’s fiscal discipline.

Governors use the withhold authority to “balance the state budget and prevent government from spending beyond its means,” said Scott Holste, Nixon’s press secretary. “The governor has made clear that amending the constitution to weaken Missouri’s strong safeguards against overspending by the legislature is fiscally irresponsible.”

**If the amendment passes, it will “tilt the balance of power in the legislature’s favor, although it will take time for judicial decisions to determine the extent it does so,” said Peverill Squire, a political science professor at the University of Missouri. “This measure sounds good to Republicans now. If it passes, they may come to regret it when circumstances change.”**

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New ROTC cannon keeps football tradition booming

Friday, October 10, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CDT; updated 7:06 a.m. CDT, Friday, October 10, 2014
BY MATTHEW PATSTON

COLUMBIA – Little Joe became a loud, proud fixture at Faurot Field and one of MU’s most recognizable football traditions. The ROTC cannon has punctuated every MU touchdown and field goal since 1954.

This year, however, there is new artillery behind the north end zone.

In the spring, an MU professor of military science caught wind of an opportunity to acquire two new cannons. ROTC Sgt. Jake Fisher drove his pickup to Fort Knox, Kentucky, to retrieve the piece of artillery that had been returned to the Army after a few years at its previous home: the University of Kansas ROTC program.

After four years of sporadic use at Jayhawk football games, the ROTC program at KU returned the two cannons to the Army in 2014, and they ended up at Fort Knox.

"We just drove over there, hitched them up and drove back," Fisher said.

Initially, the plan was to use both of the new cannons, on loan from the National Guard, for recruiting purposes, with Little Joe remaining on the field and providing signature detonations.

Shortly after the new cannons arrived, however, the Missouri National Guard decided it wanted Little Joe back unless paperwork was filed for an exception to policy every time Little Joe was used – a process MU ROTC deemed unworkable.

After nearly 60 years of Little Joe, the whirlwind cannon swap initially left some of the Cannon Crew, ROTC cadets who take the field for football games, uncertain of the tradition’s future.
"I don't think we knew if we were going to have a cannon this year," ROTC Cadet David Hermerding said. "I left last semester not knowing if we had one and came back and we had two. I’m glad we could take them from KU, though."

With the acquisition of additional artillery, the ROTC decided to update the cannon tradition, retiring the "Little Joe" moniker in favor of a new, democratically elected name.

Fans can submit a name via the ROTC Facebook page, or on Twitter at @NameTheCannon. Favorites include "The Boomin' Truman," "Mizzou-kah" and "Black Jack," the nickname of Missourian and WWI Army General John J. Pershing. Fans will be able to suggest names until Wednesday. The new name will be revealed during halftime of the Nov. 1 game against Kentucky as part of the festivities for Military Appreciation Day.

End Zone Report from Columbia Missourian on Vimeo.

Both of the newly acquired cannons are 75 mm howitzers and will fire 10-gauge blanks, the same as Little Joe, and date to the early 1940s.

As the Missourian reported in 2012, a money-saving measure by the Army forced a switch to 10-gauge blanks after years of using 75 mm blanks, which were considerably louder.

Fisher said MU ROTC is considering returning to the 75 mm rounds and said there's a chance of the louder blanks being used this season.

The new cannon that replaced Little Joe on the sidelines sports a new paint job. Local artist David Spear painted the familiar face of the Mizzou Tigers logo, with stars and stripes extending from the tiger's mouth to the muzzle. A yank on a plush tiger tail that dangles to the side sets off the firing mechanism.

The second cannon, which is painted a glossy jet-black, will be used for recruiting and ceremonial events. It’s been painted pink for the Georgia game on Saturday as part of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and it will be on display.

On game days, cadets with the ROTC Cannon Crew test fire the painted cannon while the bleachers are empty. The first few firings are without ammunition, but 90 minutes before kick-off the cannon is loaded: A test fire signals the opening of the gates and gives fans permission to start filing in.