Here's how social life can help you age better

According to a recent study, link between sleep and social participation may be the key to healthy aging.

The University of Missouri research finds that older adults, who have trouble sleeping, could benefit from participating in social activities, in particular attending religious events.

Researcher Jen-Hao Chen said that social connectedness is a key component for health and well-being for older adults. Close connections to, and participation in, social groups provides a sense of belonging and can be essential for healthy aging.

To study the relationship between sleep and social participation for older adults, Chen analyzed two waves of data collected over a five year period from the National Social Life, Health and Aging Project. He looked at three aspects of social participation; volunteering, attending religious services and being part of organized group activities.

He then compared the data to sleep outcomes measured by actigraphy, wearable wrist sleep trackers. Results showed that older adults with greater levels of social participation were getting better sleep.

However, Chen says despite the strong associations between social participation and sleep, social participation does not necessarily lead to better sleep. The strong associations he found could also be due to those already sleeping well may feel well enough to be more active socially. His future research on sleep will continue to use innovative sleep measurements to understand the role various social relationships have on sleep behaviors and outcomes.

Chen added, "To promote sleep health we must consider a comprehensive
approach that emphasizes the role of engaging in our communities, as well as getting enough and better sleep."

The study is published in the Journal of Social Science and Medicine.

MU researchers receive $1.3 million grant to study protein structures

Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 2:00 pm Comments (1)

The National Institutes of Health awarded a $1.3 million grant to a University of Missouri researcher looking into the structures of proteins and how they change as a result of genetic mutations, work that could help with the detection and treatment of cancer and other diseases.

Jianlin Cheng, an associate professor in the College of Engineering, and John Tanner, a professor of biochemistry, are working with an enzyme family involved in a variety of biological processes, according to a university news release.

Enzyme mutations can cause serious medical problems and could be a marker indicating a higher cancer risk, according to the release.

“If a mutation happens to that enzyme, it can cause many diseases,” Cheng said in the news release.

“So we’re trying to use our tool to accurately predict how one mutation, the change of one amino acid, may change the conformation of proteins in that family. That can help explain many metabolic disorders.”

The grant will support research over the next four years, according to the release.
University of Missouri supporters rally against proposed budget cuts

By RUDI KELLER

Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 2:00 pm Comments (10)

JEFFERSON CITY — Early Wednesday morning, four men started from Ripley County for the 200-mile drive to attend the University of Missouri’s lobbying day at the Capitol.

None is a graduate, but all are involved in MU Extension. As they ate lunch after a rally in the first-floor rotunda, the men said they wanted lawmakers to know that cutting the budget to punish the administration will hurt everything the university does.

“We don’t want anything to be singled out,” said Ed Mobley, chairman of the Southeast Missouri Regional Extension Council. “If you harm the university, you harm Extension.”

Mobley, Tom Chaligoj, Jim Beal and Steve Ivy were part of the largest single contingent of university boosters who took part in the rally, which drew about 200 faculty, students, alumni and other boosters. Chaligoj and Beal are the chairman and vice chairman, respectively, of the Ripley County Extension Council.

University supporters gathered as the House Budget Committee was voting on an appropriation bill that cuts $7.6 million from the UM System administration allocation. The bill, for the first time, breaks the university’s single appropriation of state support into seven line items for the four campuses, administration, Extension and multicampus programs.

“We must encourage our friends in the legislature not to punish the UM System with budget cuts despite our recent troubles,” interim President Mike Middleton said at the rally.

The budget cuts are intended to send the university a message that lawmakers are upset, Chairman Tom Flanigan, R-Carthage, said.
“I’ve got 120 members in here who want a piece of” the University of Missouri, “and they are the same 120 members I’ve had since November, December, January, and they haven’t lessened it any,” Flanigan said.

Political rancor that started in the summer over ties to Planned Parenthood’s Columbia clinic was aggravated by student demonstrations and the football team boycott that helped topple President Tim Wolfe. The anger focused heavily on the actions of Assistant Professor Melissa Click interfering with a student videographer during demonstrations Nov. 9 and the inaction of the administration and Board of Curators in response to calls that she be fired.

Click was fired by the board last week after Flanigan proposed a budget that cut $8 million from the university’s $434.6 million appropriation in the current fiscal year.

Interim Columbia campus Chancellor Hank Foley and chancellors from the St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla campuses joined Middleton in meetings with legislative leaders from both chambers.

“What I tell them is that it is going to be passed on to me,” Foley said of the budget cuts. “I don’t see any way that it can’t be.”

Foley said he sensed a thaw in relations since his last visit.

“It was quite different from when I was down here a month ago,” he said. “It was much harsher” then.

UMKC Chancellor Leo Morton said he noticed a change as well. “I think the tone is one that is improving,” he said. “I believe you can expect that to happen over time. It is not just a matter of listening; it is a matter of listening and taking appropriate actions.”

His message, Morton said, is that he will have less money for faculty, student aid and research if his budget is strained to pay for the administration.

Extension has a similar message, Chaligoj said. Without Extension, Ripley County would suffer because residents can’t afford to duplicate the programs, he said.

There’s no denying that the legislative anger reflects the public mood around the state, he said.

In Ripley County, “they are not very happy with the way things were handled,” Chaligoj said. “When somebody does something wrong down in our neck of the woods, they expect the board to ax them.”
AAUP threatens investigation, censure of University of Missouri over Melissa Click firing

By RUDI KELLER

Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 4:46 pm Comments (26)

The American Association of University Professors is threatening an investigation into the dismissal of Assistant Professor Melissa Click that could lead to the University of Missouri being censured for violating standards of academic freedom and governance.

In a letter sent Thursday to Board of Curators Chair Pam Henrickson and interim Chancellor Hank Foley, the association gave the university until Monday to reverse the decision to fire Click. The association is determined to protect standards for faculty discipline actions, said Hans-Joerg Tiede, associate secretary for the Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance.

The letter follows three previous efforts to persuade the university to back down from taking action against Click outside the established UM rules, Tiede said. In it, Tiede wrote that “the board of curators’ summary dismissal of her from the University of Missouri faculty is a matter of basic concern to our Association under its longstanding responsibilities.”

Under university rules, a complaint based on the conduct of a faculty member is forwarded to the academic unit employing the faculty member. As the inquiry proceeds, recommendations for action move up the hierarchy until it reaches the chancellor’s desk. Foley told a legislative committee last month that fewer than five disciplinary actions against faculty have reached that point in the past 30 years.

The association is disappointed with the university’s decision to move ahead with firing Click, Tiede said. “I think our general approach is that we tried to assist in resolving the situation by mediation before we go all the way to having an investigation,” he said.
The university declined to comment on the letter through Columbia campus spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken and UM System spokesman John Fougere.

Click could not be reached immediately for comment.

The curators fired Click by a 4-2 vote in closed session Feb. 24. The board in January suspended Click and hired the Bryan Cave law firm to investigate her actions during the Nov. 9 protests on Carnahan Quadrangle. The vote to dismiss her came two days after House Budget Committee Chairman Tom Flanigan, R-Carthage, proposed cutting $8 million, including Click’s $57,798 annual salary, from the UM appropriation for the coming fiscal year.

She was fired for encouraging students to move reporters from the Concerned Student 1950 protest site and putting her hands on a camera held by student videographer Mark Schierbecker as he tried to record events. Click was charged with third-degree assault on Jan. 25 in Columbia Municipal Court, with prosecution deferred in a deal that required her to do community service.

The video of Click calling for “some muscle” to help remove Schierbecker provoked an intense political reaction among Republicans who control the General Assembly. Firing Click helped restore $402,000 of Flanigan’s cut, but the budget bills are moving forward with a $7.6 million cut to the system administration.

An investigation by the association would be conducted by two to four tenured faculty from other institutions, Tiede said. They would visit Columbia to meet with administrators, curators, faculty leaders and Click, he said. A written report would be considered by the association’s Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee after it was presented to the university and Click for a response.

If approved by the committee, the report would be published and a resolution on censure would be considered at the association’s annual meeting in June, he said. The censure serves as a warning to prospective faculty that their rights may not be respected, he said.

“It is primarily a moral issue. It is also a public relations issue,” Tiede said. “Universities don’t necessarily like to receive bad press because it brings attention to something they did outside the norm of academic conduct.”

The most recent censure action was against the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for withdrawing a faculty appointment from Steven Salaita, an associate professor of English who had resigned his previous position to take a new job. Salaita used Twitter to vent his outrage over Israeli military action in Gaza, prompting supporters of Israel to denounce it as hate speech.
MU was on the censure list for a few years, starting in 1973, after the curators docked the pay of faculty members who canceled classes to allow students to attend anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, Tiede said.

AAUP threatens investigation into Melissa Click's firing, Foley responds
WILLIAM SCHMITT, 10 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The American Association of University Professors warned university officials Thursday that they could face an investigation into the firing of Melissa Click if she is not reinstated soon.

In a letter addressed to Pamela Henrickson, chair of the UM System Board of Curators, and MU Interim Chancellor Hank Foley, AAUP associate secretary Hans-Joerg Tiede called Click's firing "a matter of basic concern" for the organization, which cites advancing academic freedom and shared governance in its mission statement.

"Cases of this gravity, if they remain unresolved, may be referred to an ad hoc investigating committee charged with examining the available documentation, visiting the campus for discussion with the involved parties, and preparing a report for potential publication," Tiede wrote.

AAUP staff are scheduled to meet with executive director Julie Schmid on Monday to discuss authorizing an investigation, according to the letter.

Click was fired last week after being suspended with pay since Jan. 27. At the time, she was facing a misdemeanor assault charge, which has since been deferred.

Click has endured threats, scorn and national scrutiny since she was filmed during demonstrations Nov. 9 confronting MU student and independent journalist Mark Schierbecker
near the Concerned Student 1950 camp on Mel Carnahan Quadrangle. Her firing followed an investigation by St. Louis law firm Bryan Cave into the circumstances leading up to and following Click's call for "some muscle" to remove Schierbecker from the area surrounding the camp.

The AAUP first wrote to Foley condemning the ad hoc investigation on Feb. 2 and sent another letter the day after her firing was announced urging the curators to reinstate her. Each letter has advised following standard procedure in handling complaints against faculty as outlined in the UM System Collected Rules and Regulations.

Foley responded to the third letter on Thursday afternoon, saying that the curators had treated Click fairly, gave her a chance to respond to the investigation and didn't intend to set a precedent in handling faculty complaints with her firing.

"The Board is not seeking nor intends to set a precedent regarding faculty governance in the future," Foley wrote. "This matter has been uniquely challenging in that the typical process had not addressed the seriousness of Dr. Click’s conduct, the essential facts of which are not in question. This has raised serious questions about the University’s tolerance of her conduct and prompted the Board to act."

At an MU Faculty Council meeting hours after Click's firing was publicized, Foley faced about 40 minutes of questions and comments about the curators' decision. Faculty members have said they are concerned that Click was denied due process and that the board's action undermined shared governance and free speech.

"We shall review existing processes and practices in an effort to ensure that any future instance of faculty misconduct is addressed through the typical process with faculty involvement, and without the need for the Board again to act as it has done in this case," Foley wrote. "I intend to collaborate with the faculty in that review and look forward to that dialogue."

AAUP investigations into matters of academic freedom can lead the organization to censure university administrators, according to the organization's website.
"Censure results from the Association's findings that conditions for academic freedom and tenure are unsatisfactory at a college or university," according to the website. "An institution that disregards the concepts of academic freedom and tenure will have difficulty in fulfilling its basic purpose."

The MU chapter of the AAUP wrote to Foley and the Board of Curators on Feb. 19, chapter president Galen Suppes said. The letter called on university administrators to abide by the Collected Rules and Regulations and not to bend to pressure from Jefferson City.

"Regardless of one’s opinion on Dr. Click’s actions, she has a right to due process through faculty assessment in regard to her employment status," the MU AAUP letter reads. "Bowing to political pressure involving the employment of MU faculty is both dangerous and damaging to the reputation of the university and our potential to recruit and retain the best faculty."

Professor organization threatens investigation into Click's firing

COLUMBIA, Mo. -
The American Association of University Professors is threatening to set up a meeting with their executive director on Monday to discuss the possibility of forming a committee. It would be in charge of investigating MU’s former assistant communication professor, Melissa Click.

During a February 26 letter, the organization cited concerns that Click was fired without a hearing before an MU faculty body.

In the latest email Thursday, the group urged the chair of the UM system board of curators, Pamela Henrickson, and Interim Chancellor Hank Foley to reverse their decision on firing Click.

It called for all action moving forward to "be consistent with the institutional regulations of the University of Missouri and with AAUP-supported procedural standards", in order to avoid a possible investigation.
Click Gets ‘Muscle’ From National Association

ST. LOUIS (KMOX) – Another chapter in the firing of former University of Missouri – Columbia assistant professor Dr. Melissa Click.

Now, the American Association of University Professors in a letter to the Board of Curators and Interim Chancellor says it will meet Monday to discuss launching an investigation, unless Click’s dismissal is rescinded.

AAUP associate secretary Hans-Joerg Tiede says basically it boils down to the fact that Click’s dismissal didn’t go through proper channels.

“It has nothing to do with what she’s accused of, whether she’s entitled to due process,” Tiede tells KMOX News. “In general principal that same (idea) applies in the American legal system. It’s not a matter of what you’re accused of, whether or not you’re entitled to due process.”

The association had sent a letter last week to the university saying cases of this gravity, if unresolved, would result in an investigative committee.

Tiede says unless the professor’s brought back and given that chance before the MU board, his group will likely launch an investigation and could choose to censure Mizzou, something he says University officials do not want on the school’s record.

“It’s widely regarded as a blacklist or sorts,” he points out. “There are certainly faculty who would elect not to take a position at an institution on that list.”
The AAUP’s letter to MU chair Pamela Henrickson and interim chancellor Dr. Henry Foley reads “We would therefore welcome any information from you that would indicate that the notice of dismissal issued to Professor Click has been rescinded and that any further action in this case will be consistent with the institutional regulations of the University of Missouri and with AAUP-supported procedural standards, thus obviating the need for an investigation.”

Easing tensions
UM and the state

By HENRY J. WATERS III
Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 2:00 pm Comments (5)

After the onset of a rough patch, the relationship between the Missouri General Assembly and the University of Missouri seems to be somewhat on the mend. House of Representatives budget officials show signs of relenting by restoring some of the money earlier targeted for removal from the university budget. Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, the chairwoman of the House Appropriations Higher Education Committee who was leading the charge against university funding until Assistant Professor Melissa Click was fired, led a delegation of state lawmakers to the MU Research Reactor to promote $10 million in state funds for an expansion of the facility. Lichtenegger and other lawmakers say their colleagues are more at ease now that Click is gone.

Rep. Caleb Rowden, a Republican from Columbia and a member of the House Budget Committee, has introduced several measures intended to reverse earlier proposals by the committee chairman to reduce or restrict UM funding. He says the firing of Click is changing attitudes in the Capitol.

All is not yet love and kisses. Rowden’s attempt to restore half of the $7.6 million cut from UM System administration failed in an 11-15 Budget Committee vote. Rep. Courtney Allen Curtis, a Democrat from Ferguson, filed a bill designating Lincoln University as “the flagship institution of the state” replacing the Columbia campus, and House Budget Chairman Tom Flanigan wants to split UM
appropriations into seven separate accounts. The Lincoln designation won’t go anywhere, but Flanigan’s earmarking is a pernicious idea that should not be enacted. Rowden says he will try to recombine the appropriations, citing sensible reasons for leaving allocation to university system officials.

Sen. Kurt Schaefer wants an eight-member “University of Missouri System Review Commission” composed of outside experts appointed by the speaker of the House and the president pro tem of the Senate.

Schaefer says the university “has a very 1950s-style model of governance that makes them sluggish and unresponsive.” He wants the commission to compare UM to other universities and make recommendations for change by the end of the year.

While the idea of a university reform commission appointed by state politicians is disconcerting, the very idea of a review has merit. Former UM President Peter Magrath conducted a similar exercise led by businessman Charles Knight of St. Louis. The report had a number of interesting suggestions now long forgotten. A first step in Schaefer’s trek toward reform might be to dust off the Knight Report as a starter. Of course, a politician in the midst of a statewide campaign for office might not find that approach as useful as conducting a review under political auspices scheduled to proceed during the campaign.

I don’t mean to unfairly demean Schaefer’s plan. Sometimes good results come from politically motivated initiatives, and by whatever means a review of UM governance and management structures might be a good idea. It would suit me better if it were entirely motivated in-house, as Magrath’s was, but Schaefer might have a point if he says on that basis we might grow old waiting.

Though the student protests and the Click episode have made for a rough moment in the relationship between the university and the legislature, I refuse to get in the dumps. What important marriage proceeds without such moments? Unless the partners are ignorant and poorly motivated, improvement can emerge.

We should look for evidence of good intent on both sides, a collaboration to make the University of Missouri healthier and more effective. A bit of temporary shaking up can help if the best instincts of the parties take over.

HJW III

“Propaganda is a truly terrible weapon in the hands of an expert.” - Adolf Hitler
Missouri Republican candidates not ready to buck Trump surge in presidential contest

By RUDI KELLER

Thursday, March 3, 2016 at 2:00 pm Comments (39)

Republican candidates vying for a spot on Missouri’s statewide ballot are not joining the near panic in some GOP quarters over the prospect of Donald Trump as their party’s presidential nominee.

Predicting political coattails is difficult. In 2008 and 2012, the Republican nominee carried the state but Democrats captured all but one statewide office.

Trump’s victories Tuesday put him in a position to win the nomination. Other candidates are focused on denying him enough delegates to win the first convention ballot, and party leaders are stepping up to denounce Trump. No GOP convention has opened with uncertainty about the nominee since 1976.

Missouri’s U.S. Senate race pits incumbent Republican Sen. Roy Blunt against Democratic Secretary of State Jason Kander.

“Roy Blunt believes that any of the Republican candidates would be a better President than Secretary Clinton or Senator Sanders, and he will support the Republican nominee,” spokesman Tate O’Connor wrote in an email Thursday.

The only recent public poll in the race was published Sunday by Missouri Scout, a subscription political news service. It showed Trump leading the GOP presidential field with 32 percent to 23 percent for Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and 20 percent for Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida.

Missouri Republicans will award 49 delegates based on the results of the March 15 presidential primary.

Voters will choose nominees for state and county offices in August.
None of the four candidates seeking the Republican nomination for governor gave concerns about Trump.

“Catherine will support whoever wins the Republican nomination,” Nick Maddux, campaign manager for former U.S. Attorney Catherine Hanaway, wrote in an email. Her rivals, Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, businessman John Brunner and former Navy SEAL Eric Greitens sent similar messages.

A vigorous primary is good for the GOP, Kinder said. “Like others, this primary can be positive for the conservative cause if the remaining candidates focus on unifying our party and our country and avoid derogatory and divisive rhetoric or tactics.”

Greitens is focused on winning the primary, spokesman Austin Chambers wrote and “is looking forward to standing with whoever the Republican nominee is to ensure that both Hillary Clinton and Chris Koster are defeated in November.”

The primaries have brought a surge of new voters into the party and that will help in the fall, Brunner said in an email from spokesman Mike Hafner.

The other statewide GOP primaries are two-candidate contests. State Sen. Kurt Schaefer of Columbia and University of Missouri associate professor of law Josh Hawley are battling for the nomination for attorney general.

“I don’t know that Donald Trump is going to be the nominee. We’ll see what happens,” Schaefer said.

Hawley wrote in an email that he is focusing on winning voters in his own contest. Trump is tapping into the same anger he’s trying to harness.

Sen. Will Kraus of Lee’s Summit, a candidate for secretary of state, noted that the nominating contest is not over. “I think Donald Trump has energized people to get engaged in the process,” he said.

Kraus’ rival, Jay Ashcroft, said any possible nominee will be “vastly superior to Hillary Clinton or Bernie Sanders.”

Bev Randles, a candidate for lieutenant governor, wrote that she is focusing on her race and declined to give an opinion.

State Sen. Mike Parson of Bolivar, Randles’ opponent, said he has no issues with Trump’s campaign and doesn’t know how it will affect the party.
The state treasurer’s race pits state Sen. Eric Schmitt of Glendale against state Sen. Dan Brown of Rolla. Schmitt said he will support whoever is the nominee.

Brown could not be reached for comment.

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**Death and Politics: Did a Vicious Campaign Drive a Candidate to Suicide?**

A Republican kingmaker, Ted Cruz's campaign manager and questions of faith hounded an "anti-corruption" crusader until his tragic end

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**No MU Mention**

For all of Tom Schweich's accomplishments — degrees from Yale and Harvard, partner at an international white-shoe law firm, chief of staff to three U.S. ambassadors, second-ranking international law enforcement official at the State Department, professor, author and twice-elected auditor of the state of Missouri — the first thing you noticed about the guy was that he sure didn't look like a politician. He probably stood five foot four on a good day, with a receding hairline, sunken eyes and big jug ears. He never weighed more than 140 pounds, partly due to the fact that he suffered from Crohn's disease, a gastrointestinal condition that diminishes appetite. His suits draped over his slight frame and his ties hung down to his fly. Harry Otto, who served as Schweich's number two in the auditor's office, remembers first laying eyes on his future boss and thinking, "He doesn't look like he could fight his way out of a wet paper bag."

Schweich didn't act much like a politician either. He stepped on his applause lines. He let reporters into the little corners of his life, his collections of rare coins and autographed Hollywood memorabilia. Nor was he temperamentally suited for the rough-and-tumble of electoral politics. Tightly wound and thin-skinned, he took slights and insults personally and spoke his mind with refreshingly little filter. "Tom never thought about what the reaction would be," says his former campaign treasurer, Joe Passanise. "He would just act."
That's certainly what he did on the evening of January 28, 2015, when Schweich announced his candidacy for governor at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, in a speech the likes of which Missouri had never heard. The 54-year-old lifelong Republican told the audience that Missouri’s government had been held captive by lobbyists, political consultants and outside interests. Corruption and cronyism were endemic. Over the objections of his advisers, he singled out his opponents by name: His main Republican rival, former Missouri House speaker Catherine Hanaway, whom he referred to as "Catherine Layaway," had been "bought and paid for." The Democratic favorite, Attorney General Chris Koster, who allegedly gave preferential treatment to corporations after taking donations from those same companies, was the "poster child for selling his office to contributors." (A Koster spokesperson denies any wrongdoing by Koster and says the campaign has "implemented what we believe is the strongest conflict of interest policy in the nation.")