Graduate students employed by the University of Missouri will have a harder time paying for health insurance after MU told students Friday it is taking away subsidies that help with premium costs.

MU Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin said the change is the result of a recent IRS interpretation of a section of the Affordable Care Act. The law, which requires adults to have health insurance or face tax penalties, “prohibits businesses from providing employees subsidies specifically for the purpose of purchasing health insurance from individual market plans,” the university said in a letter sent to students Friday.

The IRS, Rubin said, considers the university’s student health insurance plan from Aetna an “individual market plan.” Because of the IRS classification, the university cannot give graduate students with assistantships a subsidy to help with health insurance costs, Rubin said.

If the university continued to do so, Rubin said it could be fined $36,000.

“We’re trying to comply with the interpretation of federal law,” Rubin said. “We’re not trying to hurt” students.

MU is using the $3.1 million it had budgeted for graduate student employee health insurance subsidies to create one-time fellowships for those employees. All graduate students with qualifying titles — a group that includes teaching assistantships, research assistantships and fellowships — will be eligible for the one-time fellowship this fall.

“We wanted to make sure the students who needed insurance had the money ... in the fall,” Rubin said.

In the spring, those students will have to pay completely out of pocket for health insurance.

Graduate student employees’ MU health insurance plans expire Saturday. Employees will have to renew their plans to be covered after Saturday, if they haven’t already. The cost will come out
of the employees’ pockets until the fellowship money is paid. Rubin said the university does not yet know when those payments will be made.

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said all graduate student employees who were eligible for the subsidy will receive the fellowship, which can be spent on tuition, books, rent or other expenses. The university cannot give students money solely for health insurance costs, she said.

Graduate Professional Council President Hallie Thompson said graduate students started a private Facebook group Friday afternoon to discuss the change.

“People are seriously up in arms about this,” Thompson said.

Thompson said students she has talked to wish MU would have let them know sooner.

“They depend on this insurance,” Thompson said. “We need it every month and every day.”

Thompson said the Facebook group had more than 500 members after only a few hours. Students in the group, she said, are planning an open forum Monday to talk about the change.

MU was first informed of the issue with health insurance subsidies on July 21. At that time, the UM System’s general counsel and human resources sought an outside legal opinion. University lawyers met and discussed the subsidies July 29. Then, MU contacted other universities to see how they were handling the change and reviewed its budget to see how it could assist students, Rubin said.

Thompson said students should have been informed earlier of the possibility of losing the subsidy.

“That’s a surprise. Had,” students “been able to budget for it a few weeks in advance, it would have helped,” Thompson said.

Rubin said MU wanted to explore its options for assisting students before sending out the information.

MU spent about $4 million on health insurance subsidies for about 3,100 graduate students last year. Rubin said she is not sure how soon students can expect to receive the one-time fellowships.

The fellowships will be $1,240 for domestic students with a 20-hour assistantship appointment, $709 for domestic students with a 10-hour assistantship appointment, $709 for international students with a 20-hour assistantship appointment and $620 for international students with a 10-hour assistantship appointment.
MU is no longer allowed to pay for graduate students’ health insurance


COLUMBIA, Mo. - The University of Missouri announced Friday after it is no longer allowed to pay for graduate students' health insurance.

MU officials say this is because of changes in federal policy and the IRS' interpretation.

The IRS considers the school's student health insurance plan an individual market plan. Under the Affordable Care Act, employers are no longer allowed to give employees money so they can buy health insurance on the individual market.

MU says it became aware of the policy change three weeks ago and has been reaching out to other universities, working with human resources and trying to come up with alternatives to help offset the cost.

MU says it will give one-time fellowships to all qualifying graduate student employees

MU to stop health insurance subsidies for graduate students
MU selects new engineering school dean

Saturday, August 15, 2015 at 12:00 am
The University of Missouri has selected Elizabeth Loboa, an associate chair and professor from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University, as its next College of Engineering dean starting Oct. 15.

Loboa is an associate chairwoman and professor of the Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University and a professor of materials science and engineering at North Carolina State, according to an MU news release.

Loboa earned a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from the University of California-Davis.

She has a master’s degree in biomechanical engineering and a doctorate in mechanical engineering from Stanford University.

University of Missouri System Chief of Staff Bob Schwartz had been the college’s interim dean since September, when Jim Thompson stepped down after nearly 20 years as dean. Thompson didn’t give a reason for leaving.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU names Elizabeth Loboa dean of College of Engineering

JUSTIN L. STEWART, Aug 14, 2015

COLUMBIA — MU's College of Engineering has a new dean.

Elizabeth Loboa, an associate chair and professor of the Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University, will take over as dean Oct. 15.

Loboa will succeed interim dean Robert Schwartz, who started last September after James Thompson stepped down from the position.

Loboa could not immediately be reached Friday afternoon. However, in an MU news release, she said she is honored to be chosen.
"The multidisciplinary environment at Mizzou is truly astounding and provides opportunities for creation and translation of cross-cutting technologies at an unprecedented level," said Loboa, who is also a professor of materials science and engineering at North Carolina State.

Loboa earned her bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the University of California-Davis in 1995, a master's in biomechanical engineering from Stanford University in 1997 and a doctorate in mechanical engineering, also from Stanford, in 2002, according to her faculty profile on North Carolina State's website.

MU Provost Garnett Stokes said in the release that Loboa is well qualified to lead the College of Engineering because she is a renowned researcher and educator with comprehensive knowledge in biomedical engineering and economic development and has a passion for mentoring students, faculty and staff.

The college has 103 faculty members and 3,500 undergraduate students, according to an MU News Bureau release.

Loboa's salary will be $330,000 a year, according to the MU News Bureau.

University balks at disclosing 'personal' emails sought under Sunshine Law

By Rudi Keller

Sunday, August 16, 2015 at 12:00 am

The University of Missouri operates under a policy that protects personal documents and emails in its possession from public disclosure, a policy that has never been tested when the topic is political ambition.
When open records requests sought material from Republican candidate for attorney general and associate professor of law Josh Hawley, he objected to the release of his university email account and documents created on his office computer. In response, university counsel Paul Maguffee twice assured Hawley his personal emails would not be disclosed.

“When an employee sends or receives a personal email, we do not consider that to be a record retained by or of the University of Missouri,” system spokesman John Fougere wrote in an email to the Tribune.

Other agencies in state government operate on a different standard. The Tribune has received emails from spouses arranging a dinner date in response to Sunshine Law requests. The more liberal standard is the one the university should operate under, said Jean Maneke, an attorney who advises the Missouri Press Association on public disclosure laws.

“I do think that if an email resides on a server of a public governmental body, it is clearly a public record, and there is no expectation of privacy that a public governmental body employee has in the emails that they exchange,” Maneke said.

Hawley is the target of several open records requests filed by Kevin Elmer of Nixa, a former legislator who supports state Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, for the GOP nomination for attorney general. The university has begun releasing the records sought by Elmer, who paid almost $5,000 for the documents.

Elmer received Hawley’s long-distance telephone logs and expense reimbursements Friday. He has not received any documents or correspondence.

Schaefer is the target of a request to the university filed June 4 by the Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust. The Washington, D.C.-based foundation is seeking evidence that Schaefer used his position as a lawmaker to influence university decisions regarding Hawley’s tenure or ability to run for office.

The foundation has made headlines targeting Democrats and unions. On Friday, it filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission that U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill admitted to campaign law violations in her recently published memoir, “Plenty Ladylike.”

Hawley is on an unpaid leave of absence from the university while he campaigns. He said in an interview last week that his opponents won’t find anything improper.

“I don’t have anything to hide,” Hawley said. “It is clear to me that my candidacy and my advocacy have stirred up a hornet’s nest. That’s fine, and I can take it. That is what is going on here.”

The university needs a better reason to close Hawley’s emails than that they are personal, Elmer, an attorney, said Friday.
“I think government employees have clear notice they are using taxpayer-funded computers, and that is a public domain,” Elmer said. “Therefore, it is covered by the sunshine statutes.”

The Sunshine Law defines a public record as a “record, whether written or electronically stored, retained by or of any public governmental body.”

The law is not “written or intended to consider personal e-mails sent or received by employees,” and the university does not release them because of privacy and other concerns, Fougere wrote.

The university has not been faced with a decision about whether to release or withhold personal emails or documents about political plans, Fougere wrote.

“We have never had to address this specific issue before,” he wrote, “so until we have had the chance to completely review Mr. Hawley’s emails, we won’t know whether the issue will indeed come up in this instance and thus do not want to speculate on it.”

In a July 20 letter to the university’s records custodian about the requests, Hawley wrote that he was separating his documents and emails “that involve non-University business from those that pertain to University matters.” He was labeling those that he considered covered by attorney-client privilege, he wrote.

“Nothing in this letter or my actions shall be deemed a waiver of any objection to producing any documents based on privilege, non-responsiveness, undue burden or any other applicable ground,” Hawley wrote.

Hawley’s rivals for attorney general said the university policy is wrong. Schaefer, an official in several departments under Gov. Matt Blunt, said he told employees the law does not protect personal email sent through government accounts or created on government equipment.

If someone “sent a joke to a co-worker that somebody else might think is off-color, my response was that was tough. You shouldn’t have sent that because you are a public employee on a public server,” Schaefer said.

Democratic candidate Jake Zimmerman, a former lawmaker, said the issue is similar to the way the Missouri House treats members’ email accounts. Only records in the control of the chief clerk are subject to the law, he said.

“To me the threshold baseline question here is if you are using a state computer for official business and you are communicating with people, those records are open,” Zimmerman said. “The law does not care if a public official likes or dislikes public disclosure.”
UM President Wolfe to receive Missourian Award

By Megan Favignano

Saturday, August 15, 2015 at 12:00 am

University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe will receive the Missourian Award, which recognizes outstanding citizens in the state, during a banquet and ceremony Saturday, according to a university news release.

Ralph Slavens and his late wife, Corrine, created the Missourian Award to honor citizens who have made outstanding contributions to their community, the state or the nation. Walter Cronkite, George Washington Carver, Walt Disney, Mark Twain and President Harry Truman are among the award’s past recipients.

Wolfe, an MU alumnus, became the UM System’s 23rd president in 2011.

Before becoming president, Wolfe held leadership positions in the corporate world, with experience in information technology, consulting and sales. He earned his bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1980 from MU. He is also a graduate of the Harvard Business School’s Advanced Management Program. Wolfe grew up in Columbia and graduated from Rock Bridge High School.

Missourian Award goes to UM President Wolfe

ANADIL IFTEKHAR, Aug 15, 2015

COLUMBIA — University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe is expected to receive a Missourian Award Saturday during an award banquet and ceremony at The Chateau on the Lake in Branson, Missouri.
Wolfe is the 23rd president of the UM System, taking office in 2012. He is an alumnus of MU’s Trulaske College of Business and he also earned a degree from Harvard University in 1995.

He went to Rock Bridge High School in Columbia, where he started as quarterback for the 1975 state championship football team, according to a news release.

"I am deeply moved to receive an honor such as the Missourian Award and humbled to be mentioned with such Missouri legends as Harry S. Truman and Walter Cronkite," Wolfe said in the release.

The Missourian Award was created by Ralph Slavens and his wife, Corrine, to honor prominent residents of Missouri. To receive the award, one must have been born in Missouri or "became famous in Missouri," according to the award's website.

In September 2014, former MU chancellor Brady Deaton received the award.

Op Ed: University's tobacco tax increase is the wrong choice

By State Rep. Robert Cornejo • R-St. Peters

Recently, Attorney General Chris Koster and Treasurer Clint Zweifel have been working together on a proposal that would raise the tobacco tax from 17 cents per pack to around 90 cents per pack (not coincidentally, the same amount as the defeated 2012 tobacco tax) in order to fund Treasurer Zweifel’s “Missouri Promise” proposal of higher education spending.

University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe very quickly echoed his agreement with the plan, which would essentially direct hundreds of millions of dollars to the university system every year without the funds being subjected to the oversight of the appropriations process. This is the same University of Missouri System (of which I am a proud alum) that just this year completed the purchase of Normandie Golf Course in the St. Louis area. This leads any reasonable person to believe that any financial stress in the university system is more of a result of spending issues rather than revenue problems.
If they move forward with this ill-conceived and wrong-headed initiative, it will be the fourth offered to Missouri voters in 14 years. Our state rejected similar proposals in 2002, 2006, and 2012; to attempt to place another on the ballot, which would increase the tax per pack by more than five times the current amount, is simply ignoring the will of the voters.

This proposal should concern every Missourian, not just those who use tobacco. It would create a massive new government program completely outside of the checks-and-balance system set up by our forefathers and funded solely by a type of tax that often fails to reach revenue estimates. For example, Illinois fell more than $100 million short of revenue estimates in 2013 after increasing its cigarette tax. In New Jersey, revenues dropped by $52 million after its 2006 tax increase.

If this tax fails to generate adequate revenue to fully fund Missouri Promise, would those who are backing it accept it as a failed idea, or would they come to the Legislature asking for general revenue money to make up the difference? I would wager the latter is far more likely.

Missourians have rejected similar proposals for a good reason: Tax increases like this are a bad deal for our state. They take more money from taxpayers and create spending obligations that we just cannot sustain.

If they are truly interested in improving access to education and not just looking at this as an opportunity to raise funds, then Attorney General Koster, Treasurer Zweifel and the university need to give up on this idea and work with the Legislature on policies that can be accomplished without a tax increase.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH  
Associated Press

Mizzou unveils a new dorm and renovates 2 others

COLUMBIA, Mo. — The University of Missouri-Columbia is starting the year with one new and two renovated residence halls.
Gateway Hall is new to campus. The project cost $21 million. With 196 bedrooms, the hall can house 331 students. Common areas include a wall paneled with doors from Jones Hall, which closed in December 2014.

MU also spent $34.8 million to renovate Wolpers and Johnston halls. Together, the two residence halls can house up to 613 students.

The three halls all feature reused and renewable furniture. There also are new lobbies with open areas for residents to hang out with friends, motion-activated lights and quiet rooms in a range of sizes for studying.

AUGUST 15, 2015

MU to start year with 1 new, 2 renovated residence halls

The Associated Press

COLUMBIA, MO. - The University of Missouri-Columbia is starting the year with one new and two renovated residence halls.

The Columbia Missourian (http://bit.ly/1NiSo4R ) reports that Gateway Hall is new to campus. The project cost $21 million. With 196 bedrooms, the hall can house 331 students. Common areas include a wall paneled with doors from Jones Hall, which closed in December 2014.

MU also spent $34.8 million to renovate Wolpers and Johnston halls. Together, the two residence halls can house up to 613 students.

The three halls all feature reused and renewable furniture. There also are new lobbies with open areas for residents to hang out with friends, motion-activated lights and quiet rooms in a range of sizes for studying.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU's new Gateway, renovated Wolpers, Johnston dorms on display

KAYLA PIEDIMONTE, Aug 14, 2015

COLUMBIA — An open house Friday showcased three newly completed residence halls at MU.

New to campus is Gateway Hall, 1000 Virginia Ave. Construction began in September 2013. With 196 bedrooms, the hall can house 331 students. In the first-floor lobby is a table made from a tree taken down during construction. Common areas include a wall paneled with doors from Jones Hall, which closed in December 2014.

Gateway also features two unisex bathrooms, with four toilet and shower rooms, on every floor.

"Regardless of who you are, going to the restroom should not be an issue that you are concerned about," said Frankie Minor, director of Residential Life.

Outside Gateway is an almost-finished rain garden that will reduce the environmental impact of runoff rainwater. Green spaces above the north and south entries help with storm water runoff. On the southwest corner of the roof are solar panels that will save energy by preheating water before it goes through an instantaneous heater and out to students, according to information provided at the open house.

"This is the hall of the future," Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor of student affairs, said.

The project cost $21 million, according to MU information.
Renovation of Wolpers and Johnston halls, at Rollins and Hitt streets, began in February 2013. Together, the two residence halls can house up to 613 students. Johnston's Sabai dining hall, which offers Southeast Asian food, has also been renovated.

The Johnston-Wolpers renovation cost $34.8 million, according to MU information.

Gateway, Wolpers and Johnston all feature reused and renewable furniture, according to MU, as well as new lobbies with open areas for residents to hang out with friends, motion-activated lights and quiet rooms in a range of sizes for studying.

Speakers at the open house made a point to say Gateway, Johnston and Wolpers residence halls are LEED-certified. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design and is a coveted certification the recognizes a variety of efficiencies and building practices.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New median and beacons to stop College Avenue mid-block crossings

THOMAS SCHREIBER, 1 hr ago

COLUMBIA — College students and others coming and going from East Campus will no longer able to cross College Avenue between University Avenue and Rollins Street where they choose.

The project

Construction is being completed on a new median between the northbound and southbound lanes on College Avenue between Rollins Street and University Avenue. Pedestrians will be able to cross at two conventional crossings, at Rollins and at University.

They also can cross using two new "High-Intensity Activated crossWalKs," or HAWK, beacons. They will be the first of their kind in Columbia, according to Public Works spokesman Steven Sapp.
The idea for the median has been in the works since 2009. The project was approved by the Columbia City Council in 2014. The approved plan called for a concrete median with a fence on top to be built and for the two HAWK beacons to be installed.

Sapp said the project is expected to cost $824,000. A Missouri Department of Transportation grant for pedestrian safety provided $750,000 for the project. MU and the city Public Works Department each provided $35,000 for the project.

The construction, which began June 1, is on schedule to be completed by Friday, before the fall semester begins, Sapp said.

**New crossings**

The HAWK beacons are designed to allow pedestrians to cross safely while keeping the flow of traffic unimpeded.

HAWK beacons won't change the look of crossings for pedestrians, but motorists will see a few differences: Flashing yellow lights will warn them to prepare to stop, and flashing red lights will mean they can proceed only after making sure the crosswalk is clear.

The two HAWK crossings will be located about 100 feet north of Wilson Avenue and about 300 feet north of Bouchelle Avenue.

Fourth Ward Councilman Ian Thomas, one of the co-chairs for the Pedestrian Safety Task Force, said College Avenue between Rollins Street and University Avenue is an important spot to have more visible traffic signals like HAWK beacons.

"A huge number of pedestrians cross that road, and a tremendous number of motorists exceed the speed limit," Thomas said.

The posted speed limit on that stretch is 35 mph.
According to a 2014 report compiled for the College Avenue Safety Enhancement Project, there were 2,500 mid-block crossings on an average week day. The same report stated that from June 2005 to June 2012 there were 20 vehicle crashes involving pedestrians on College Avenue from University Avenue to Rollins Street.

"When when a pedestrian is hit at 40 mph., there is a good chance they will be killed," Thomas said.

Sapp said traffic will keep moving until a pedestrian is ready to cross and pushes a button.

"Our hope is that pedestrians will take time to activate the walk signal," he said.

Sapp said the Public Works Department worked closely with MoDOT and MU to plan the HAWK beacons. They have been successes in St. Louis and Nevada, Missouri, he said.

"The goal here is to regulate the crossing points," Sapp said. "Our No. 1 goal is pedestrian safety."

A national report released by the Federal Highway Administration showed that using HAWK beacons at pedestrian crossings reduced the number of crashes by 29 percent. That report looked at 21 sites roughly three years before and roughly three years after HAWK beacons were introduced.

Thomas said he hopes that HAWK beacons will be put into place in other areas around Columbia, such as the stretch on Providence Road between Green Meadows Road and Reactor Field.

The HAWK beacons are different than a crossing on East Broadway just west of College. That crossing only has flashing yellow lights to act as a warning that a pedestrian is crossing. But like the HAWK, the pedestrian has to hit a button to activate the lights.

The HAWK beacons have yellow and red lights that alternate between flashing and being solid after a pedestrian hits the button to cross. HAWK beacons are positioned like traditional traffic lights.

Loss of left turns
The median with the fence on top will mean no more left turns from southbound College onto Rosemary Lane and Wilson Avenue.

Sapp said the department will monitor the situation in the first few months and make tweaks if necessary. He referenced the median on Providence Road between Stadium Boulevard and Green Meadows Road as an example of motorists adjusting to change.

"Adding medians down roadways is nothing new," he said. "Residents can still get in (to Rosemary and Wilson) via University or Rollins."

Should reducing food waste start with meat?

Posted by Christian Basi-Missouri on August 14, 2015

Approximately 31 percent of food produced in the United States, or 133 billion pounds of food worth $162 billion, went to waste in 2011, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Although America wastes less meat (on average) compared to fruits and vegetables, a new study finds that meat production uses significantly more energy compared to vegetable production.

This wasted energy is usually in the form of resources that can have negative impacts on the surrounding environment, such as diesel fuel or fertilizer being released into the environment.

“While many of us are concerned about food waste, we also need to consider the resources that are wasted when we throw away edible food.” says coauthor Christine Costello, assistant research professor at the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

“Farm equipment used to feed and maintain livestock and plant and harvest crops uses a lot of diesel fuel and other utilities from fossil fuels. When people waste meat, these fuels, as well as
fertilizers, are also wasted. Based on our study, we recommend that people and institutions be more conscious of not only the amount but the types of food being wasted.”

During the study, pre- and post-consumer food waste was collected from four all-you-care-to-eat dining facilities over three months in 2014. Costello and her research team created a detailed inventory of the specific types of food waste: meat, vegetables, or starches. The food waste also was categorized as either edible or inedible (peels and ends of fruits and vegetables).

Once the food waste was categorized, Costello and her research team analyzed greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions resulting from fertilizer use, vehicle transportation, and utility use on the farm. GHG emission estimates were measured from cradle (land preparation or animal birth) to farm gate (when the grain or animal was sent to a processing facility). Previous studies have shown that the majority of GHG emissions occur in the production stages prior to the farm products’ leaving the farm.

“Based on the findings, we recommend consumers pay special attention to avoiding waste when purchasing and preparing meat; if consumers choose to prepare extra food ‘just in case,’ they should use plant-based foods,” says coauthor Ronald G. McGarvey, assistant professor at the Harry S Truman School of Public Affairs and department of industrial and manufacturing systems engineering.

Costello and McGarvey recommend that future research should examine the effects of facilities that operate as all-you-care-to-eat versus those that operate à la carte at the consumer level. McGarvey and Esma Birisci, a doctoral student in industrial engineering, are developing techniques to improve production as well as ordering decisions to reduce food waste and corresponding GHG emissions.

The study appears in Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems. Funding came from the Richard Wallace Faculty Incentive Grant and the Mizzou Advantage Initiative.

MU professor develops mood-tracking app

By Caroline Dohack

Sunday, August 16, 2015 at 12:00 am

Tracking one’s moods is an important part of treating depression. So Ganesh Gopalakrishna, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Missouri School of
Medicine and a psychiatrist at MU Health Care, conceptualized a smartphone app to make it easier to track mood patterns over time.

Gopalakrishna noted that while mood diaries are hardly a new concept in treating depression, providing the ease of an app might make patients more likely to keep up with them, which in turn can lead to better strategies for coping.

“Most people have their smartphone within reach most of the day,” he said.

The app, called MoodTrek, allows users to log their moods by choosing from five “smiley face” icons to indicate how they felt each day. Because sleep and physical activity can play a big role in mood, the app also allows users to log this information, or to integrate this data from a Fitbit activity tracker. There also is a journal feature that lets the user make additional notes and a helpline that connects the user with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

Gopalakrishna, who developed the app with a team from MU, Missouri University of Science and Technology and the Tiger Institute for Health Innovation, said that as a patient uses the app, certain patterns and correlations become evident.

“They see they haven’t been sleeping well for a couple of days and their mood is down, so it’s important to keep up their sleep. It provides feedback in that way,” Gopalakrishna said.

Data stored in the app also can be useful to one’s counselor or psychiatrist. The user can download reports to take to his or her therapist. If the provider uses a Cerner-developed electronic medical record, the information is uploaded instantaneously to the patient’s medical records.

MoodTrek is available for free on the Google Play store for Android smartphones and tablets and will be available for iPhone and iPad in the future.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MoodTrek app meant to give psychiatrists, patients insight on emotional triggers

JUSTIN L. STEWART, 14 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Twenty-one percent of Missourians suffer from depression, according to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. That’s about 4 percent more than the national average of 17.5 percent.
MU assistant professor of psychiatry Ganesh Gopalakrishna is trying to help people suffering from depression better understand some of the reasons behind their mood swings with his MoodTrek app.

Information recorded in the app allows psychologists' patients to share their physical and emotional data through an export function that gives them the option to email their data or save it to their device.

The free app has four tracking categories: mood, step, sleep and journal. The quality and quantity of a person's sleep and activities are some of the variables that can affect mood in a major way, according to the MoodTrek website.

"Identifying mood swings and trends more periodically between clinic visits helps us treat depression better," Gopalakrishna said.

App users who also have a Fitbit activity tracker can link the app to their activity tracker, syncing up their sleep and step information. This information can also be entered manually.

To track mood, users select between a range of five simple faces, ranging from a frowning face to a big smiley face. All of the categories can be updated throughout the day, tracking the time of each activity.

When a psychiatrist asks how patients have been, they often only reflect on the past week or so, even though it may have been three months since their last visit, Gopalakrishna said. This helps better fill in those gaps.

"You like to think you're more consistent in how you've been doing than you actually are," said Kody Ihnat, a 21-year-old MU math and physics major. Ihnat, who said she was the first person to use the app, said the best part was its ability to promote honest and open communication with psychologists.

"It's helping your therapist help you," she said.

Ihnat, who uses the app once a day, said it helps her pinpoint factors that affect her mood. She's forced to ask herself questions such as, "Why am I having these peaks and valleys on these specific days?"
The weakest part of the app is the fact that there are only five faces to describe a mood, Ihnat said. Sometimes that range doesn't fit how extreme her emotion may be, in which case she adds a note in the app to better explain why she's feeling how she feels.

For users who find themselves in a dire state, a one-touch button can automatically connect them with the National Suicide Hotline.

The idea originated while Gopalakrishna was training in residency. One patient brought in a log during each visit of what he had been doing and feeling between appointments. Gopalakrishna said the information the patient gave him helped fill him in on how his patient had been between visits.

The app, which was released March 17, has been downloaded more than 100 times, Gopalakrishna said. While it currently only works on Android operating systems, he said an Apple version is in development, though he doesn't know when it will be released.

Gopalakrishna worked alongside Sriram Chellappan, an associate professor of computer science at Missouri University of Science & Technology, to create the app. They paired with Missouri S&T's technology transfer and economic development staff to develop the app with the Tiger Institute for Health Innovation.

Ihnat, who's been using the app for about eight months, said she plans to continue using it with hopes that it catches on more widely so that she can use it with therapists not in the MU system.

She said a person doesn't have to be seeing a therapist to get value from the app.

"It's not just for the clinically and chronically depressed," she said. "I think it has applications in being proactive in maintaining mental health."
Ellis Library to increase security with extended hours

By Megan Favignano

Saturday, August 15, 2015 at 12:00 am

Three more security officers will patrol the University of Missouri’s Ellis Library when the building extends its hours starting Sept. 8.

The additional security officers — one full-time and two part-time — will work night shifts once the library extends its hours. Under the new schedule, Ellis will be open from noon Sunday through midnight Friday and from 8 a.m. until midnight Saturday.

Pat Jones, MU Libraries head of security and facilities, said the library wants students to feel safe, in part by having security officers working during those late hours, she said.

MU Libraries spokeswoman Shannon Cary said the salary range for each position is $10 to $15 per hour.

The library will close off access to its upper floors at midnight when it is open overnight, allowing students to use the ground floor and first floor. The library’s hour extension applies only to the building and not to library services. Students won’t be able to check out books after midnight, which is when the service desk closes.

Security officers will walk through the upper floors to make sure everyone has left or moved down to the open floors. An officer will rotate through the building, on the closed and open floors, throughout the night. Keeping only a couple of floors open after midnight creates a “more controlled environment,” Jones said. Officers will be positioned at the west and north entrances and will check IDs to ensure only MU patrons use the library during those late hours.

“That’s for the security of our patrons. We don’t want to just let anybody in,” Jones said. “We want to let our patrons in and our staff in that are part of the university.”

Library officials also want to add security cameras and more lighting on the outside of the building and possibly add a card-swipe access system instead of having officers manually check IDs. Those are changes that will take time to implement, Jones said.
Jones said the library is looking at adding 16-18 cameras and 18-20 lights on the outside of the building. The feed for the cameras would go to the library security office and to the MU Police Department. Currently, the library has security cameras inside the building only.

Even with the three new hires, Jones said the library security team will be stretched.

“I won’t have wiggle room for vacation or any wiggle room for sickness,” Jones said.

Jones or her assistant will serve as backup for the night crew if someone is out sick. Jones said eventually she would like to hire one more security officer if the budget allows.

The library will use student security officers to cover the extended hours on Fridays and Saturdays. Student officers go through the same training Jones undergoes as head of security, including CPR and emergency protocols.

In her more than 30 years with the MU library, Jones said she has dealt with strange incidents, including vandalism, finding urine on books and sexual misconduct. She has also come across people who attempt to sleep in the library.

Jones encourages students to contact library security if they have suggestions for other changes that would make them feel safer.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

FROM READERS: Toby Mills writes about working with Columbia kids for the PhotoVoice project

TOBY MILLS/MISSOURIAN READER, Aug 14, 2015

Toby Mills works as a mental health project manager for MU’s Disaster and Community Crisis Center. She oversaw the recent PhotoVoice project in which Columbia youth photographed the city.

As a mental health worker, I had no previous understanding or familiarity with PhotoVoice before the summer of 2015. However, I was given the opportunity by my department to oversee two different PhotoVoice projects in May 2015, and I quickly accepted. I was as excited to get
out in the community and to work with youth as I was to learn something new about photography.

**As a part of a team of professionals working with the Disaster and Community Crisis Center at Mizzou’s Department of Communications, we spend time studying and writing about community resilience, but it is even more exciting for me, personally, to get out into the community and learn about youth resilience firsthand.**

We collaborated with two different local agencies, Boys and Girls Club of Missouri and Fun City Youth Academy and worked with children, from fifth grade through high school. Topics for our groups spanned from photography 101, to ethics and consent, to what makes a community.

Doing our best to stay true to the PhotoVoice mission to deny no one the opportunity to speak and be heard, we encouraged youth to use the cameras to tell the story about what defined community for them, what they liked about their community, what they would like to change about their community and what they wish other’s knew about their community. We held groups at their agency, and we also took walking field trips in the community. Some of the kids were even allowed to take their cameras home to take pictures of their neighborhoods and family members. After several opportunities of capturing photos, the kids were able to select their favorites and write captions, telling the story of their photographs in a final photo exhibit at their summer program.

While it is true that a couple of the children showed varying interest, a lot of the children were quite enthusiastic to let us and others know exactly what needs to be improved in their community. Other children captured what they found to be beautiful and emphasized the importance of focusing on the positive aspects of life. Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of PhotoVoice, for me, was witnessing a child find a previously undiscovered talent and love of photography or helping a child to find a way of expression that did not rely solely upon words.

After this experience, I hold such a high regard to the staff members at these agencies that give so much of themselves to positively influencing the lives of children. And I so respect the creative minds and voices of these youth, who have so very much to teach us about how we can
Bill Caldwell, a machinist and labor union official in Kansas City, is finished with Sen. Claire McCaskill.

“I’m not knocking on any doors, I’m not phone-banking for her. Period,” he said. “I think she’s forgotten where she came from.”

Caldwell’s deep disappointment — prompted by McCaskill’s support for a new U.S. trade agreement with Japan and 10 other Pacific Rim nations — may reflect the ordinary tension between a legislator and a constituent. No lawmaker can make everyone happy all the time.

But McCaskill is a Democrat. Her party traditionally supports organized labor, relying on it for money and votes.

That relationship is changing, many analysts say. Declining union membership and the rank-and-file’s support for conservative positions on issues like guns and abortion have combined to disrupt the decades-old coalition between Democrats and labor.

That changing relationship has led some candidates and campaigns to conclude that labor unions are no longer the political threat they once were.

AUGUST 14, 2015

Free-trade spat between McCaskill, labor suggests changing relationship between Democrats, unions

BY DAVE HELLING
dhelling@kcstar.com
“For all intents and purposes, they’re a paper tiger,” said Ryan Johnson, president of the Missouri Alliance for Freedom, a conservative public interest group.

Rep. Emanuel Cleaver, a Democrat, still counts labor as an ally. But “organized labor today is not what it was 25 years ago,” he said.

Immediate evidence of the split between Democrats and labor surfaced in this summer’s debate on the pending trade deal, known as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. Supporters say the agreement will lead to lower import and export fees on everything from computers to tennis shoes, saving Americans money and creating jobs.

Most labor unions have bitterly opposed the deal. They claim it would actually lead to the elimination of high-paying jobs in the United States while harming the environment and threatening workers’ rights.

They’ve compared it to the North American Free Trade Agreement — NAFTA — which lowered barriers for imports from Mexico and other countries.

“There’s no middle class,” Caldwell said, referring to the impact of free-trade deals. “It’s a line in the sand.”

McCaskill was not available for comment on the issue. In an email, spokeswoman Sarah Feldman said the TPP vote was “a good example of how important it is to Claire to separate her supporters and donors from her votes, and while she knows she disappointed some friends, she did what was right for Missouri jobs.”

Republicans — and President Barack Obama — have made similar arguments.

“We are not going to grow our economy or create jobs if we put up trade barriers,” said Rep. Kevin Yoder, a Kansas Republican.

Sen. Roy Blunt of Missouri voted for accelerated trade negotiations, as did Sens. Jerry Moran and Pat Roberts of Kansas. All are Republicans.

“I can see an economy in the middle of the country based on making things and growing things,” Blunt said. “But you have to have someone to sell that new opportunity to.”

Their positions may reflect a political calculation that extends beyond free trade.
Organized labor’s influence at the ballot box continues to dip. In 2014, Labor Department figures show, only 214,000 Missouri workers were members of a labor union. That’s 8.4 percent of the state’s workforce, compared with 11.5 percent just 10 years ago.

In Kansas, 95,000 workers were union members last year, 7.4 percent of all employees. Declining union membership means fewer campaign workers, smaller donations and dwindling votes.

“We have less members, that’s one thing that’s for sure,” said Pat Dujakovich, president of the Greater Kansas City AFL-CIO. “And we in labor have not done a good job of educating our members. A good number of my members will vote in their own worst interest.”

Marvin Overby, a political science professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, said McCaskill and her Democratic colleagues likely felt they had little to lose by opposing labor and voting for accelerated consideration of the TPP.

“For a Democrat like McCaskill, the other part of (her) answer is: Where the hell do they go?” Overby said, referring to labor voters’ typical reluctance to elect Republicans. “And labor’s strength is concentrated in places where she’s already doing pretty well.”

Additionally, the nature of labor union membership is changing, Overby said. Manufacturing unions — cars, aircraft, clothing — are giving way to unions representing service workers, teachers and public employees. Those union members, he said, are less focused on trade agreements than on other issues such as wages and health care.

On those issues, labor remains an important force, some Democrats say. On Friday, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers endorsed Hillary Clinton for president.

“I still think that, for the Democratic party, labor is still big,” Cleaver said.

That strength will be tested next month in Missouri. Gov. Jay Nixon has vetoed a bill that prohibits mandatory union dues, a measure known generally as right to work. Lawmakers will attempt to override Nixon’s veto in September.
Labor groups have scheduled rallies in several Missouri cities this month, attempting to find votes to sustain Nixon’s veto. “Right to work is a divisive, partisan political issue meant to punish labor unions,” one labor-related Facebook page says.

But Republicans and other supporters of right to work are also lobbying and asking for public support. Americans for Prosperity Missouri has purchased airtime to run an ad supporting the legislation.

Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder, now a GOP candidate for governor, has challenged Democrats to a debate on the issue.

“Right to work, at its core, is about fairness,” he said in a statement this summer. “If a worker in our state does not want to pay union fees, they should not be required to do so just to get or keep a job.”

Overby said he still expects Missouri Democrats to vote to uphold the governor’s right-to-work veto. Labor’s influence may be diminishing, he said, but it has not disappeared.

Ryan Johnson of the conservative Missouri Alliance for Freedom said it’s possible Nixon’s right-to-work veto will be sustained this fall, but that declining union membership means mandatory union dues in the state will eventually disappear.

“They’ve dwindled in numbers, they’ve dwindled in power and the ability to move the ball on important issues,” he said.

Unions are likely to be involved in Missouri politics in 2016, supporting Democrats like Attorney General Chris Koster for governor and the party’s eventual presidential nominee. Jason Kander, now seeking the nomination to run against Blunt, will also need labor support in cities like Kansas City and St. Louis.

Even McCaskill may still get Bill Caldwell’s vote in 2018, if she runs for re-election. The machinist says he would find it tough to cast a ballot for a Republican, and notes McCaskill is still reaching out to labor for help.

But “I'm just not going to associate with her,” Caldwell said. “I'll never do anything else for her again.”
Missouri AG candidate pushes health director on abortion center

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – A Republican Missouri senator running for attorney general on Thursday said the state health department director could be held in contempt if she refuses to name a hospital that grants admitting privileges to a Columbia Planned Parenthood, which last month was licensed to provide abortions.

Health and Senior Services Department Director Gail Vasterling told a Senate committee investigating Planned Parenthood that the Columbia center or a doctor at the center has admitting privileges at an area hospital. But she declined to name the hospital, saying that’s not a public record.

“I don’t know that I can legally talk about what’s in the closed records,” Vasterling said.

Sen. Kurt Schaefer, who is running for attorney general, gave Vasterling until Aug. 21 to name the hospital.

If Vasterling doesn’t cooperate, Schaefer said she faces contempt. The Missouri Constitution allows the Senate to punish those who demonstrate “contemptuous behavior in its presence during its sessions” with a $300 fine, 10 days in jail or both.

Schaefer also said the Senate could ask the courts to intervene.

“The biggest issue is they are refusing to tell the public,” Schaefer said.

Admitting privileges are required for Missouri abortion centers, although members of the Senate committee disputed whether an individual doctor or a hospital as a whole needs those privileges.
Lawmakers questioned Vasterling and another health department employee for hours over the July licensure of the Columbia abortion center. The health department issued a license for the center to provide abortions within days of anti-abortion activists releasing an undercover video showing Planned Parenthood’s senior director of medical services discussing procedures for providing fetal body parts to researchers.

That’s placed the center’s license in the middle of a Senate committee investigation into abortion practices in the state.

Laura McQuade, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, said in a statement that the committee meetings are “about political grandstanding, not facts.”

“This is yet another orchestrated attempt to restrict access to safe, legal abortion in Missouri and to the needed services Planned Parenthood has provided for nearly 100 years,” McQuade said.

Schaefer said calling the investigation a political maneuver is “sickening.”

Calls to Boone Hospital Center and University of Missouri Health System – both based in Columbia – were not immediately returned Thursday.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Construction not stopping students from moving into District Flats

MATTHEW MUSACCHIA AND JENNIFER LU, Aug 15, 2015

COLUMBIA — When students moved into the new District Flats apartments, they were greeted by a large poster that read, "Welcome Founding Residents." They were also greeted by unfinished sidewalks and at least two workmen still doing construction behind plastic orange netting. Tyvek sheets still clung to some of the glass panels.
According to previous Missourian reporting, the final building inspection, which included plumbing, electrical wiring and fire systems checks, was completed on Tuesday. Residents began to move in Saturday. Construction on the six-story, 259-bed apartment complex began in September and progressed despite two referendum petitions and a lawsuit that moved into federal court.

While the management did not update incoming students about the construction timeline, they have told students that the building would be ready by move-in day. Building representatives declined to take questions and asked reporters to leave the premises.

Maria Martinez, a first-year MU graduate student in the journalism program, said she was unconcerned by the construction as long as it was a “cosmetic thing” and didn’t affect the interiors of the building.

Susan Brady was in line with her son Paul Laurie, an upperclassman at MU studying political science, as he waited to check in. Brady said that as a mother, she found it "a little concerning that the children don't have sidewalks" but added that she thought the management seemed nice.

Although the registration line dwindled as the day progressed, students continued to move in through the afternoon.

Alexandra Council, an MU sophomore in journalism, was excited to move into District Flats. Council, who had lived in the residence halls her first year, looked forward to having her own bedroom and living close to campus.

The rent was comparable to what they paid last year, added Council's mother, Julie, as she helped her daughter unload an SUV. However, they were a little surprised by the construction around the corner, she said. Along Locust Street, there were boon lifts, compact excavators and pallets of bricks. However, "the inside is done," Julie Council said.

"All the things that matter," Alexandra Council added.

Jack Teuscher, an MU sophomore, said some of the rooms appeared unfinished, though his room was ready to move into.
"You can tell everything is brand new," he said. "Everything just got done being constructed so you can tell they don't have all the walls painted or anything like that."

Marquise Griffin, an incoming MU graduate student studying education leadership and policy analysis, was moving his belongings out of a U-Haul van with the help of his mother and uncle. He had seen a preview of the interiors on the Districts Flats website and said he had been a little concerned the room was too good to be true. However, he was impressed with the amenities, which include a television set and a gourmet kitchen.

Dheeraj Daswani, a junior majoring in business administration, said some of the amenities were the main reason he wanted to move in.

"You get your own bathrooms. It's all new and everything — furniture included," he said. He added that the move-in was simple so far. "It's going really smooth, they're making it really easy for us."

**Missouri Urban Journalism Workshop: Exploring the Income Gap**

COLUMBIA - **Celebrating its 45th year, the Missouri Urban Journalism Workshop welcomed 18 high school journalists to the MU campus July 11.** Over the course of nine days, the students tackled the pressing matter of the income gap by reporting and writing stories on varying topics that relate to the theme.

Of the 18 high school students, four focused on convergence journalism and produced a newscast containing their own packaged stories. The convergence students traveled around Columbia and Boone County to put together news stories for their final newscast that was produced in the KOMU newsroom.
At the Missouri Urban Journalism Workshop, high school students from around the country work together with the guidance of professional journalists to produce stories, photos and broadcasts. MUJW is sponsored by the Dow Jones News Fund and takes place at the University of Missouri - Columbia.

**THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**

**AUGUST 16, 2015**

**Mará Rose Williams: College debt is a safe topic in a campaign year**

**BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS**

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**NO MU MENTION**

As the 2016 presidential race picks up pace, the high cost of college and how to pay for it are claiming a front-line position among candidates.

The exorbitant cost of a college education, coupled with the national mantra that higher education credentials are the ticket to a well-paying job, has created a student loan debt burden that most would agree is way out of line.

Student loan debt has soared to $1.3 trillion, surpassing Americans’ credit card debt, according to the latest data.

Politicians on both sides of the party line seem to recognize that financing college is a crucial issue among people 18 to 34 who account for about 25 percent of the nation’s voting-age population. That’s the same voting bloc that showed up in droves in the last two presidential elections.

Tapping the young vote is a good reason for candidates to release help-to-pay-for-college proposals.

And “it’s a safe,” campaign issue, says Dale Neuman, a University of Missouri-Kansas City political science professor emeritus.
“It’s a bread-and-butter issue without emotional overtones, like abortion/Planned Parenthood,” Neuman said. “I doubt a lot of people would think it’s a good idea to have a chunk of the population shackled with college debt.”

He admits, though, that Democrats and Republicans may differ on whether government ought to be subsidizing the reduction of that debt.

But he offered this: Any public policy solutions cast in dollars and cents are negotiable — a little less money here or there — without a candidate being accused of flip-flopping. Not so with moral questions of right or wrong.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Democratic front-runner, is the latest to lay out her position — a plan for debt-free college.

Clinton’s $350 billion “New College Compact” plan isn’t completely original but rather a collection of some debt-easing ideas that have been tossed around the political arena for a while.

She proposes spending about $175 billion over a decade on grants to states and includes such notions as fining institutions that let students pile up debt they can’t pay off once they graduate, cracking down on the for-profit schools industry and allowing graduates with old debt to refinance.

Clinton’s plan also wraps in the proposal President Barack Obama announced eight months ago, to make two-year community college free for students meeting certain criteria.

Earlier this summer two of her Democratic Challengers, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont and former Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley, said that debt-free college would be central in their campaigns.

O’Malley also said he wants to improve college and career readiness, increase college completion rates by 25 percentage points in 10 years and ensure that all college students have an option to graduate debt-free in five years.

In July, a Republican contender, Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, put forth some of his ideas to counter student loan debt. One of his suggestions mirrored one previously talked about by one of his Republican challengers in the race, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie.
Both proposed that students find investors who would pay their tuition in return for a percentage of the student's income for a limited time after graduation.

Rubio also proposed loosening rules on accreditation agencies to allow some new low-cost options to compete for students in the higher education business.