Mizzou News

Daily Clips Packet

August 31, 2015
Mizzou graduate students pledge to fight for benefits

August 28, 2015 6:09 pm • By Koran Addo

A year from now, or maybe sooner, University of Missouri graduate assistants want to be able to look back on this week and say this was the moment they brought change to Mizzou.

 Graduate assistants are a subgroup within the graduate student population. They are student teachers pursuing their doctorates while also teaching classes, grading papers and conducting research.

 In many ways, they are like the adjunct instructors colleges rely on for cheap labor — adjuncts across the country are fighting for higher wages, while graduate students are fighting for stable job benefits.

 And like adjuncts, graduate assistants often feel invisible on campus. For many of them, their feelings of being overlooked were made plain on Aug. 14 when the university stopped paying for their health insurance, without warning.

 Mizzou is blaming its change in policy on how the IRS interprets the Affordable Care Act. They say the law prevents employers from giving employees money specifically to buy health insurance from individual market plans. Because the IRS classifies graduate teaching and research assistants as employees, rather than students, they fall under this interpretation.

 In the two weeks since the policy change, graduate assistants have made enough noise in the media and on social media to extract an apology from Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and one more year of university-paid health insurance.

 But in a rally on campus Wednesday, the message was clear: Graduate assistants are mobilized and they have several more grievances.
The challenge now is to find a way to bottle this week’s enthusiasm into something that can be sustained. The fear is that the university will ride out this current wave of activism until the noise dies down.

For his part, Loftin has met with graduate students this week and assured them their concerns are being heard.

A reporter’s request to speak to Loftin made through Mizzou’s media relations department was denied, so it’s unclear what plans the administration has to address graduate student concerns.

However the university responds, graduate students say they will not be placated by lip service.

“We’re not naïve,” said Matt McCune, a research assistant pursuing a doctorate in physics. “We want to see results.”

Among their biggest gripes, graduate students say, is the gradual chipping away of benefits they were promised — in many cases, the same benefits that attracted them to the school in the first place.

Jason Entsminger, a first-year doctoral student who’d been teaching at the University of Maryland, had been on Mizzou’s campus for only 24 hours when he got an email that said the university would no longer pay for his health insurance.

Even after the university backtracked and restored the health insurance subsidy for one extra year, Entsminger said the relationship was forever changed.

“I turned down other offers to come here,” he said. “I have a letter saying I’ll get three years of health insurance. Now that’s been ripped away from me.”

For students who’ve been around longer than Entsminger, they’ve gone through a number of other changes.

After a fire and the collapse of a walkway resulted in the death of a Columbia firefighter, the university announced the demolition of the University Village apartments — affordable graduate student housing that was popular among international students who often lack cars and find off-campus living problematic.

About the same time, the university closed the Student-Parent Center, which many graduate students depended on for affordable child care.

And starting next fall, incoming graduate assistants working part-time schedules will see their tuition waivers cut in half.

“These are all benefits that made this university attractive to so many students,” said Anahita Zare, outreach chairwoman for the Forum on Graduate Rights.

On top of losing those benefits, Zare said, graduate students are most upset with a number of fee increases — sometimes adding up to more than a thousand dollars — that can eat up as much of a third of the teaching stipend many graduate assistants rely on.

At least some of the disappearing benefits can be explained away by unstable finances. Missouri, like all other states except Alaska and North Dakota, spends less on higher education today than it did before the recession.

And the university has explored options to address some graduate student concerns.

University spokesman Christian Basi said a study found that building the type of housing students want would be cost-prohibitive at a price of more than $28 million.
And when the university dangled free land to developers provided they used the property to build an affordable child care center, none took the bait, Basi said.

Despite those roadblocks, Basi said the university would continue to look for solutions.

But as with all top-tier universities, reputation matters.

Hallie Thompson, president of Mizzou’s Graduate Professional Council, said the health of any top-flight research university rested in its ability to attract and retain top-flight talent.

“That goes for faculty and graduate students,” she said.

MU graduate students lobby for more incentives

By Megan Favignano

Sunday, August 30, 2015 at 12:00 am

A decision by University of Missouri officials this month to stop subsidizing health insurance for graduate assistants has sparked a conversation among MU graduate students about the incentives and resources they have lost over the years.

During a rally last week, graduate student Conor Lewis described the current state of graduate education at MU as being in crisis, citing incentives that graduate students have lost, including full tuition waivers for 10-hour graduate assistants and the demolition of graduate student housing at University Village apartments.

“We’re in a crisis right now,” Lewis said. “This is a crisis that has been sown by the administration and is being reaped by the educators in the classroom.”

The latest contribution to the crisis is insurance subsidies. The day before student health insurance plans expired on Aug. 15, MU officials told graduate assistants an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act prohibits the university from providing subsidies for health insurance premiums to graduate student employees. The Forum on Graduate Rights student group formed in response to the revocation of subsidies.

While the administration later backtracked, guaranteeing subsidies for this school year and creating a task force to research options for next year, its initial decision was “the spark that lit a long-accumulated pile of kindling,” a Forum on Graduate Rights letter said. The non-university-
sponsored student group gave MU administrators a list of demands that included a long-term solution to the subsidy issue, more on-campus graduate student housing and better pay for graduate assistants.

**Living wage**

Among the demands was a guarantee that no graduate student employee will be paid a rate below the poverty line, which currently is $11,770 for a single-member household.

The Forum for Graduate Rights recommends all graduate student employees have 20-hour appointments, which include a higher stipend than 10-hour assistantships and would qualify them for full tuition waivers and health insurance subsidies.

MU stipends vary by discipline, with the majority of programs awarding graduate assistants the university’s minimum stipend of about $10,800, after an 8 percent raise this summer, MU Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin has said. Graduate students working 10-hour assistantships can earn as little as $7,000 a year.

The University of Alabama — a Southeastern Conference school of comparable size to MU — has a minimum stipend of about $13,500.

David Francko, associate provost and dean of the University of Alabama Graduate School, said the average stipend graduate student employees with 20-hour assistantships receive is between $14,000 and $15,000.

Julie Masterson, associate provost and dean of the graduate college at Missouri State University, said about 77 percent of their graduate assistants receive an $8,600 stipend for the school year.

**Tuition waivers**

This summer, MU’s office of graduate studies said only graduate student employees with a 20-hour appointment will receive a full tuition waiver starting in fall 2016. Students in assistantships with 10-hour appointments will receive a waiver covering half of their tuition. Currently, full tuition waivers are given for all assistantships.

“This loss of benefits adds another burden for already struggling student employees,” the Forum for Graduate Rights said on its website. The solution, according to graduate students, again lies in making all assistantships 20 hours.

Department budgets pay for stipends, and the university covers the tuition waiver. Some journalism and music faculty at last month’s faculty council meeting expressed concerns that their department cannot afford to pay only 20-hour assistantships. They said their students’ coursework does not allow time for more than a 10-hour appointment.

The University of Alabama and Missouri State also give 10-hour assistantships half of a tuition waiver.
**On-campus housing**

The graduate student group also wants to see more on-campus, university-sponsored graduate student housing at an affordable price. Housing is a more addressable concern, MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said.

University spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said MU has 330 apartments available for graduate and family housing.

Graduate student on-campus housing at University Village closed July 1, 2014, and the complex was demolished because of safety concerns after Columbia Fire Department Lt. Bruce Britt died while working the scene of a walkway collapse at one of the buildings in February 2014.

MU began working with a consultant six months ago to determine the need and potential costs of additional graduate student housing.

The university, Loftin said, received the results last week and is examining the data, which suggests there is a market for additional graduate student housing.

“We have to make sure that whatever we build, we can pay for,” Loftin said. “It’s important to know what people will pay for.”

If MU adds graduate student housing, Loftin said he would prefer a public-private partnership. Doing so would not require the university to put as much capital into the project.

Iowa State University — an Association of American Universities member like MU — Missouri State and University of Alabama all said they do not have on-campus housing specifically for graduate students.

**On-campus child care**

The University Village apartments student housing also had on-site child care services. The Forum on Graduate Rights would like to see affordable, on-campus childcare again available for graduate students. Loftin questions how much need there is for on-campus childcare.

“The challenge is the numbers,” Loftin said.

When the child care center at University Village was open, Banken said, 16 of the 29 children there belonged to MU faculty, staff or students. The facility had space for as many as 42 children and offered below-market rates as well as a discount for low-income families.

“The child care issue is passionate and emotional,” Loftin said. “I have yet to see the numbers that would justify a massive investment by us.”
Banken said MU put out a request for proposals for a new child care facility last fall, but no developers expressed interest. MU has agreed to provide the land to a developer for free if the developer’s child care facility offers a discount to MU faculty, staff and students.

Child care still is available on campus through the Child Development Laboratory, which Banken said usually has openings. Third-year doctoral student Rachel Straughn-Navarro said she would like to see a child care option geared more toward students who might have night classes.

**Fee waiver**

The list of demands also included a waiver of course fees for graduate student employees. The Forum on Graduate Rights’ website said those fees can “present a great financial burden on students.” One specific example the group mentioned was the College of Engineering’s Engineering Excellence fee created last year, which charges students $73.50 per credit hour.

Banken said incidental fees for students increased from $460 in 2000-01 to $1,018 in 2014-15 — or about $40 a year. In that same time frame, she said, the annual stipend graduate students receive has increased by about $157 per year.

**Subsidized health care**

MU subsidizes health insurance premiums for eligible graduate student employees, which is equal to about $3,000 annually for each student on a 20-hour assistantship. The Forum for Graduate Rights wants a “fully-subsidized student health care plan for all graduate student employees.”

When MU said it would no longer subsidize health insurance, it created a one-time fellowship — $1,240 for domestic students with 20-hour assistantships — that would have been given to all graduate student employees to offset their health insurance costs for the fall.

The IRS’s interpretation of the Affordable Care Act led the University of Alabama to take a similar route to MU’s initial decision. Before this fall, the university paid the full annual health insurance premium for all of its graduate assistants and fellows.

Francko, dean of the University of Alabama’s graduate school, said the university became aware of the insurance issue in mid-July and sent a letter out to students a week later saying the university could no longer pay insurance premiums. The university agreed to give students extra funds equal to the fall semester premium, though they were not required to use the money to buy insurance. Francko said the university will do the same thing in the spring if national lobbying efforts to change the IRS interpretation are not successful.

Missouri State was not affected by the IRS’s recent interpretation because it does not subsidize graduate assistant health insurance.

As MU considers its options and what it can offer graduate student employees next year to help defray health care costs, the Forum on Graduate Rights is asking the university to pay special
attention to international students, who are required to be on the university’s student health insurance.

MU spent $3,938,793.28 on health insurance subsidies for more than 3,000 students last year.

**What’s next**

Loftin said a graduate student experience task force that was created last spring would be expanded to discuss the new list of graduate student concerns. A separate task force is looking at what options the university has to help graduate student employees with health insurance costs next school year. The task force has three months to provide Loftin with recommendations.

The Forum on Graduate Rights was set to meet Sunday night to discuss the group’s next actions or events.

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**MU administrators to faculty: We bungled communication about insurance subsidies**

By Megan Favignano

Friday, August 28, 2015 at 2:00 pm

**University of Missouri administrators apologized Thursday to the MU Faculty Council for poor communication about the university’s withdrawal of graduate student employees’ health insurance subsidies earlier this month.**

“The intent of withdrawing the subsidies was not to scare the bejeezus out of” graduate student employees “and certainly not to hurt them,” MU Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin said during the meeting. “We really were directed that the subsidies could not continue. And although I attempted in a very broad way to communicate this information across the administration, I didn’t do a very good job of doing that.”

MU officials told students a recent IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act prohibits the university from providing subsidies for health insurance premiums to graduate student employees the day before student health insurance plans expired. The administration later
rescinded that decision, guaranteeing subsidies for this school year and creating a task force to research options for next year.

In 2014, about 3,100 graduate student employees received the subsidy, at a cost to MU of about $4 million. Domestic students with 20-hour assistantships received $3,051 apiece annually, while those with 10-hour assistantships received $1,525. Amounts are lower for international students.

Several faculty members have thrown their support behind graduate students lobbying for better treatment.

Tim Evans, Faculty Council member and associate professor in the veterinary diagnostic laboratory department, described the meeting’s discussion as productive and candid.

“I can’t remember the last time I was at a meeting where you had a chancellor, provost and vice chancellor apologize and say things could have been done differently,” Evans said.

Rubin said she felt it was her responsibility to solve the problem, which is why her office spent two weeks looking for solutions before telling students they would no longer receive the subsidy. As a short-term solution, MU created a one-time fellowship — $1,240 for domestic students with 20-hour assistantships — that would have been given to all graduate student employees and could have covered their health insurance costs for the fall.

Evans said graduate student leadership should have been involved in the discussion in late July, when the university learned it could no longer provide subsidies.

“I think that’s really critical,” Evans said.

Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and Provost Garnett Stokes also attended Thursday’s faculty council meeting, each apologizing for poor communication surrounding the insurance subsidies.

“What I’ve learned in over 41 years in higher education is process is king,” Loftin said. “We have to have process. We have to have you — the faculty — and the students involved in the conversation.”

The insurance subsidy changes and lack of communication and student input leading up to the decision caused students anxiety, Loftin said.

Rubin, Loftin and Stokes answered faculty questions at the meeting, including questions about when officials first learned of the subsidy issue, where graduate education falls in the university’s budget priorities and what plans MU has to address other graduate student concerns.

Loftin said MU officials have made hiring and rewarding quality faculty a priority. The Budget Allocation Advisory Council gives recommendations about budget priorities each year. Multiple faculty members said Thursday they want to see graduate students placed at a higher budget priority.
TheChat: Chris Koster rips the ‘pretend’ world of Missouri Republicans

BY STEVE KRASKE
skraske@kcstar.com

Good morning.

▪ “I joined the Democratic Party eight years ago because I got fed up living in a 'pretend' world of my former party. A 'pretend' world where every Missourian comes from a storybook family, and where everyone is healthy for their entire lives, and teenagers never have sex.” — Democratic gubernatorial frontrunner Chris Koster lampooning his former party at this weekend’s Truman Dinner in St. Louis.

▪ “Under current regulations, even those schools with lunch programs operating in the black would be required to raise their prices to meet the federally mandated price.” — Missouri Congresswoman Vicky Hartzler explaining why she’s sponsoring legislation that would allow some districts to bypass a federal requirement to increase the cost of student lunches.

The change could force some families out of the program, she argues. Hartzler says local education officials are best-positioned to decide the cost of school lunches. (link courtesy of johncombest.com).

▪ “Trumpeters.” — Sarah Palin’s nickname for Donald Trump’s followers.

She also called them “Trumpservatives.” Gag us with a spoon...

▪ “We’re not naïve. We want to see results.” — Matt McCune, a research assistant pursuing a doctorate in physics at the University of Missouri, on the concerns of graduate students who complain that they are seeing promised benefits erode away.
Graduate students are banding together, and they’re speaking out about their grievances. The group cleared one hurdle in recent days by demanding, and getting, one more year of university-paid health insurance.

▪ “It’s a totally weird situation. There is nobody that can take action to do anything.” — Rice County Clerk Alicia Showalter on the tiny town of Frederick, Kan., which faces an uncertain future after no one ran in an election to pick its leaders or even cast vote.

The Legislature may have to weigh in to dissolve the central Kansas town, which has been around since 1887 and once was home to 150. Today, the population is about 10.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

DEAR READER: Responding to a big story in your backyard

TOM WARHOVER, Aug 29, 2015

Dear Reader,

Some thoughts on the continuing story of MU graduate student protests against the campus administration.

The 20-second nutshell: Graduate students on Aug. 14 are told their campus health insurance would be canceled the next day. They get angry. The top guy, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, throws more money their way without restoring insurance. Students stay angry. The grievance list grows to include past transgressions (loss of child care, student housing, low pay). MU restores the health plan. Angry students walk out of classes anyway for a day.

Editors identified it as the big story that first week. And the next week. There are enough unanswered questions that the issue will be with us for some time.
That means we threw a whole bunch of people at the coverage. On Wednesday, for instance, more than a dozen staffers were sent out to cover the protests and those affected by it. There are two higher education reporters dedicated to continuing coverage. Requests for documents have been made under the law that makes the government’s work available to the public.

Is it really worth all that, or are we covering something because we’re so close to it? After all, the Missourian is managed by editors who are also professors and staffed by students, some of them working toward their master’s degrees.

I figure it this way: If there were an employee walkout by one of the biggest businesses in town, we’d be there. If more than 3,100 employees and their families were told they would lose their health insurance in a day, we’d cover it.

There were more than 7,787 graduate and professional students on campus last year, according to MU’s online “pride points.” That’s a whole bunch of residents of Our Fair City, even before you add significant others like kids.

The conflict of interest question has been a moving target.

As with most news organizations, the Missourian has a policy on conflicts of interest. “Credibility matters,” it begins. “The Missourian strives to be an independent and impartial source of news and information, which means we must maintain an independence from faction. We should make every effort to maintain rigorous professional standards for ourselves and to avoid business and political ties that could threaten our credibility.”

The most pertinent sentence in this case: “Students and staff should not cover nor attempt to manipulate coverage of organizations or events in which they are involved.”

Taken at its most literal, the Missourian would never be able to cover anything about MU. The more practical application is to weigh a student’s involvement against the proximity of the event or issue.
During the week of Aug. 17, the question was complicated because only graduate students were doing reporting. The fall semester was still a week away. Fortunately, the reporter who did the bulk of the reporting that week is a graduate student who had private health insurance.

Then the story grew beyond questions of insurance. Virtually every graduate student is affected. It is impractical to keep all graduate student copy editors, reporters, photographers, graphics editors and photo editors from the story.

Student staffers are asked whether they’re too emotionally invested. If they’re unable to cover the story fairly, then others step in. The question isn’t whether someone has a bias. Everybody has biases. Being a part of the community and covering it is a scenario every journalist faces.

**What's next?**

On graduate health insurance, there are holes in the timeline and players not named in the decision. There is a task force working on a permanent answer. Overall, what is the value of graduate student work and what is the cost? Should the students be paid more? Does it make sense to add graduate student housing or child care facilities?

Chancellor Loftin and his No. 1, Provost Garnett Stokes, said this week in a faculty meeting they want to increase the number of graduate students as the university marches toward its goal of 38,000 students by 2018. (That’s just 3,000 to go.) The aspirations would appear at odds with reality.

Tom
MU Administrators haven’t reviewed graduate satisfaction data in 12 years

“Personally, I’m sorry for what happened, I really am,” Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said.

Faculty Council met Thursday to discuss issues surrounding graduate student health insurance. Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, Vice Provost Garnett Stokes and Leona Rubin, Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies, were all in attendance to answer faculty member questions.

There was discussion about ways the university responds, or fails to respond, to the needs of graduate students.

“When graduate students graduate, they take a survey about the positives and negatives of their experience,” Rubin said. “For 12 years we haven’t looked at and analyzed that data, so our task force that we recently organized has started to look at those survey results.”

When asked by a faculty member why nobody in the administration has looked at the graduate student survey results for the past 12 years, Rubin responded, “I don’t know,”

Chancellor Loftin apologized for how he handled the graduate health care situation.

“Our grad students are an instrumental part in our commitment to being a tier one institution of higher education,” Loftin said. “Personally, I’m sorry for what happened, I really am.”

Loftin’s comment was in response to the graduate students’ recent walkout regarding their health care being taken away by the university.

Stokes admitted that the university has to do a better job of using data it compiles from students.

“We are discovering that as an institution we gather a lot of info and and we are not using that info to better the institution,” she said. “We have not been doing a great job about actually utilizing the info that is gathered to better the university.”

One faculty member asked Loftin if administration would consider increasing stipends for graduate students. Loftin said that that process will begin later this year.

“There is only so much new money coming in every year and we all know there are always more needs than money available to meet those needs,” Loftin said. “I have been doing this for a long time and I have found that process is king. We have to take some time to work through this.”
Loftin also added that the budget needs to be complete for the upcoming year by March 2016.

Faculty also questioned administrators about the lack of communication between concerned parties during the early stages of the graduate student health care crisis.

These questions came in the wake of reports from the Columbia Missourian that Loftin learned that graduate students lost their healthcare subsidy over social media.

Stokes conceded that she didn’t do a good job of fostering adequate communication between administrators.

“I made mistakes in terms of my understanding of who knew what,” she said. “We didn’t tell the people we needed to tell because I wrongly made assumptions about who was getting what info.”

The next Faculty Council meeting will be held on Sept. 11.

UM asked to revoke Columbia abortion doctor's license

August 28, 2015 2:48 pm  •  By Alex Stuckey

JEFFERSON CITY • The Missouri Catholic Conference is asking University of Missouri to revoke hospital privileges for a doctor performing medical abortions in Columbia.

Colleen McNicholas began performing medical abortions at the Columbia Planned Parenthood facility this month. The Department of Health and Senior Services approved in July the facility's license to perform abortions after a three-year lapse in those services.

McNicholas was granted "refer and follow" privileges at University of Missouri Health Care as part of the facility's licensure. Those privileges allow her to refer her patients to the hospital and check their medical record after they're admitted.

Republicans on a Senate committee investigating Planned Parenthood believe those privileges are not sufficient under state law. They also believe university officials actively recruited McNicholas to resume abortions in Columbia and shepherded her application for privileges through the process.

Mike Hoey, conference executive director, said recruiting McNicholas violates state law, which states that the use of public funds, employees or facilities for abortion activities is prohibited.

"These statutes have been on the books for thirty years and were adopted by the Missouri General Assembly as a reflection of the strong commitment of Missouri citizens to affirm the sanctity and dignity of all human life, including innocent unborn children, and to ensure that public bodies in no way aid and abet the abortion industry," Hoey wrote.
The Senate Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life began its investigation following controversial videos that alleged the organization sold fetal body parts. Planned Parenthood has vehemently denied these allegations.

As part of the committee's investigation, it also is examining the resumption of medical abortions at Columbia Planned Parenthood. A medical abortion uses two medicines that can end a pregnancy up to nine weeks after a woman’s last period. The St. Louis facility remains the only center in Missouri that performs surgical abortions.

Missouri Catholics respond to MU abortion controversy

Watch story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=89fce9ac-d615-4a8a-956a-bdcd6609b232

EFFERSON CITY - The Executive Director of the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC), Mike Hoey, drafted an open-letter to MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin responding to an abortion controversy surrounding the University Hospital.

The controversy started after it was discovered that an abortion doctor was given privileges to regular access at the University Hospital. At a senate hearing Tuesday, Senator Kurt Schaefer accused MU of using taxpayer money to pay for abortions. However Planned Parenthood said the abortion doctor would only use the hospital if a woman needed an emergency surgical abortion. Planned Parenthood also accused Schaefer of using the hearing as a platform to promote his own political agenda.

"The University shouldn't be giving hospital privileges to an out-of-town doctor whose sole reason for coming into Columbia is to perform abortions," Hoey said.

Hoey said he is calling many churches in the state to unite over this controversy.

"We are in the initial stages of talking to Catholics, and we'll be talking to the Baptist convention and other people," Hoey said. "This is important. This is an important moral issue."
He said he loves MU, but he feels these accusations have tarnished the school's image.

"It stains the reputation of a great university," Hoey said. "The University Hospital should be saving lives, not encouraging the ending of innocent lives through abortion."

However, Hoey said people should not dwell on any "past mistakes," but stay optimistic and focus on resolving the conflict.

"I'm afraid that some people may home in on the mistakes that were made, and just start scapegoating people," Hoey said. "We're not interested in scapegoating anybody. Everybody makes mistakes. Let's correct the mistakes, and let's move forward."

Hoey said he understands Loftin will need time to think and make a decision. But in the meantime, he intends to spread awareness of the controversy.

"We're going to continue to make people aware of it, and we're going to continue to urge the chancellor and the university to revoke the privileges of this abortion doctor."

Hoey said he is confident MU will "make the right decision."

"By the time the Tigers run out of the tunnel for the first football game, I hope this whole shadow of controversy is behind us," Hoey said.


CPS cooperated with MU, Planned Parenthood on sexual health program

By Roger McKinney

Sunday, August 30, 2015 at 12:00 am

A University of Missouri health educator and an education coordinator with Planned Parenthood had been working to develop what the health educator described as a “comprehensive sex ed” program for Columbia Public Schools.
That partnership ended Monday, when Planned Parenthood ceased its participation in the project, said MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken. The move came as state legislators questioned MU’s relationship with Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, which operates the Columbia clinic.

A CPS official said the project was the MU health educator’s initiative, not the school district’s.

Heather Eastman-Mueller, health educator and researcher with the MU student health center, urged discretion about revealing the project in an email dated June 24, before the recent controversy over Planned Parenthood started. The message was among 600 pages of emails and other documents provided last week by MU to the Senate Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life, chaired by Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia.

The committee has been examining the validity of the Columbia Planned Parenthood clinic’s license to perform abortions and the privileges of Colleen McNicholas, the doctor performing the medication-induced abortions. The Columbia clinic was awarded a license to perform the abortions in July.

The committee’s inquiry began after videos by the Center for Medical Progress scrutinized how Planned Parenthood handles tissue from aborted fetuses and whether the organization profits by selling that tissue for research. The first video was released in July. The state inquiry has examined whether abortions are legal at the Columbia clinic and the relationship between the university and Planned Parenthood.

Nationally, Planned Parenthood provides sex education resources and helps coordinate programs in schools. The organization also offers free and reduced-price contraception throughout the country.

Eastman-Mueller, who also is an adjunct instructor in women’s and gender studies at MU, sent the email with the subject line “CPS Education meeting” on June 24 to Kate Ibur, education and outreach coordinator with Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, and Maureen Coy, health educator for the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services.

“I have been working with some MU students on drafting a proposal to the CPS School Board for comprehensive sex ed,” Eastman-Mueller wrote in the email.

Eastman-Mueller invited Ibur and Coy to take part in the project. She wrote of performing a HECAT analysis, a health education curriculum analysis tool. It’s designed to identify a curriculum that best meets a school district’s health education course of study.

“We have already met with the Curriculum Coordinator and have an in with a School Board member,” Eastman-Mueller wrote.

“Due to the ‘politicalness’ of this project please refrain from sharing this with too many people as it could hinder the eventual outcome pretty quickly,” she wrote.
Coy responded to Eastman-Mueller that her work schedule would not allow her to participate.

Eastman-Mueller did not respond to messages seeking comment about the emails.

Ibur, with Planned Parenthood, was part of the project until Monday, when Planned Parenthood withdrew. MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin canceled agreements between the medical and nursing schools and the Columbia Planned Parenthood clinic on Monday. An agreement between the clinic and the School of Social Work was left in place.

Ibur did not return a message seeking comment about her exit from the project. Elise Higgins, a spokeswoman for Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, said the organization would not comment on why Ibur withdrew from the project.

Banken said Eastman-Mueller and the social work graduate student working with her planned to continue with the project to develop the proposal for the district.

Columbia Public Schools has no sex education curriculum, said CPS spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark. She said there is a human sexuality part of the district’s health curriculum that is based on state and national learning objectives.

The district’s current human sexuality component requires students to evaluate contraception methods and emphasizes abstinence as the only 100 percent effective method.

Shelli Adams, school improvement director for CPS, said Eastman-Mueller took the initiative to develop the proposal to audit the district’s curriculum.

“She wanted to offer suggestions of what should be included in our curriculum,” Adams said. She said Eastman-Mueller had met with Christi Hopper, CPS secondary physical education and health coordinator, about the proposal.

Adams said working with outside parties to review curriculum is not uncommon. “We often get suggestions from parents, community members, activists or community groups about what they would like to see in the curriculum.”

Adams said no changes in the health curriculum are planned. She said a curriculum review committee would be the first step for any potential changes.

Adams said the district has a comprehensive procedure for evaluating and implementing all curriculum. She said the review cycle generally takes place over six years.
MU warns of shots fired near campus

By THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Sunday, August 30, 2015 at 12:00 am

For the second time in nearly 24 hours, University of Missouri officials issued an alert of a gun-related incident near campus late Friday night.

In a message posted on the MU Alert website at 11:23 p.m. Friday, police said they received a report of shots fired near Hitt and Cherry streets.

The Columbia Police Department was investigating the incident and found one shell casing near the scene, the alert said.

A silver four-door vehicle occupied by four black males was last seen leaving the area and heading toward Campus Bar & Grill near Elm and Ninth streets, the alert said. No other description of the suspects was immediately available.

MU officials issued an update at about 11:45 p.m. and said Columbia police were continuing to search for the vehicle but that there was no threat to the MU campus.

It was the second straight day an MU Alert was issued because of a gun-related crime. A report of a car passenger brandishing a handgun near Lathrop Hall on the MU campus triggered a similar alert at about 7:54 p.m. Thursday, though no shots were fired, and the gun was not pointed at anyone.
Columbia police were investigating a shots fired incident near the intersection of Hitt and Cherry streets in downtown Columbia Friday night.

The MU Police Department posted an alert at 11:23 p.m. that it received reports of shots fired and, in an email blast, urged students to take precautions.

Columbia police found one shell casing at the scene and were looking for a silver four-door vehicle that was seen leaving the area, heading toward Campus Bar & Grill, according to a statement posted on MU Alert’s Web page.

Police had no description of a suspect as of 11:23 p.m. At 11:38 p.m., the alert system sent a message saying the situation had stabilized and an 11:45 p.m. post on the website said Columbia police "believe there is no threat to campus at this time."

The alert was the second in two days by the system.
Shots Fired Downtown Near MU Campus


Shots Fired Near MU Campus

Watch story: http://mms.tveyses.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=915fac1d-dce2-4a09-8b4b-513930de54ba
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Lafferre Hall gets $500,000 for renovation

ANADIL IFTEKHAR, 1 hr ago

COLUMBIA — The MU College of Engineering received a $500,000 gift for the ongoing Lafferre Hall renovation.

Burns & McDonnell, an engineering, architecture and consulting firm based in Kansas City, donated $400,000, according to a Friday news release by the College of Engineering.

The remaining $100,000 came from Ray Kowalik and his wife, Jill. Kowalik, executive vice president and president of global practice at Burns & McDonnell, earned his undergraduate degree in civil engineering at MU.

"This gift in support of the college's renovation serves to reinforce the university's commitment to science, technology, engineering and math education in order to provide our students with the tools they need to be successful in today's job market," MU Provost Garnett Stokes said, according to the release.

The gift would go toward an "area dedicated to student collaborations" that will be named after the donors, MU College of Engineering Interim Dean Robert Schwartz said in the release.

MU has more than 3,000 engineering students, according to the College of Engineering website. The college is the university's fastest growing school, MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said in October, according to previous Missourian reporting.

The total cost for the Lafferre Hall renovation, set to be completed in December 2016, is $44.7 million, College of Engineering head of communications Jan Wiese-Fales said.
The state approved $38.5 million for the project, according to previous Missourian reporting. The rest of the funding will come from private donations, Wiese-Fales said.

**New journalism school dean asks for faculty, staff input**

By Megan Favignano

Sunday, August 30, 2015 at 12:00 am

*University of Missouri School of Journalism Dean David Kurpius is asking for faculty and staff input before he sets an agenda for the school’s future.*

Since arriving on campus this summer, Kurpius has been meeting with full-time journalism faculty and staff. The meetings, he said, are a chance for him to learn what each person sees as the school’s successes, opportunities and areas for improvement.

“That’s a very important process — and I take it seriously — before I set a direction of exactly where we’re going to go and what we’re going to do,” Kurpius said. “It’s important for me to listen to them first.”

Faculty and staff in the school have been positive about the meetings, journalism school Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies Lynda Kraxberger said.

“It’s a great way to find out the culture, successes and some things that might need improvement,” Kraxberger said.

Kraxberger meets with Kurpius regularly to update him on policies and the school. Kraxberger said part of her job is to help Kurpius understand the school’s culture and history. Kurpius, she said, has an open-door policy.

Kurpius said he also is talking to alumni and professionals in the journalism field.
Kurpius said he wants to teach but is not sure how soon he will be able to get into the classroom. His first focus will be helping the overall operation of the school. That desire to teach is what led Kurpius to leave newsrooms after about a decade working in television.

“I worked my way from reporter to producer to news director. The part of being a news director that I loved was the mentoring of the young staff that came in,” Kurpius said. “I liked that teaching role.”

After completing his doctorate in journalism and mass communications, Kurpius started teaching at Louisiana State University. He worked there in various teaching and administrative roles from 1997 through this summer.

Gary Myers, chair of the search committee that selected Kurpius and dean of the MU School of Law, said Kurpius’ background in the journalism industry and academics made him a good fit for the position. Kurpius, he said, will be able to understand the administrative side of the role and what employers in the profession want in students.

“It’s the ideal mix,” Myers said.

The journalism school, Kurpius said, needs more diversity. Kurpius said when he was a journalist, he often chose stories about race and that his master’s thesis focused on race and media. During his four years as Louisiana State University’s head of enrollment, the university had four record minority enrollment classes, he said.

Kurpius said diversity is about having people of different races, political viewpoints and religious beliefs represented. The school doesn’t have a bad culture when it comes to diversity, he said, but it could be more welcoming.

“We’ve made some nice strides, but we have a ways to go to be where I’d like to see us,” he said.

He did not elaborate on what specifically the school could do to improve diversity.

The journalism school, Kurpius said, also can contribute to MU’s goal to raise its status in the Association of American Universities, or AAU, a prestigious organization of colleges and universities.

“This school helps” work toward that goal “in many ways, with the prominence and with the awards our faculty, staff and students win,” Kurpius said.

He said the journalism school, which had a total undergraduate enrollment of 1,842 last school year, can help support that university-wide AAU focus with its research and by training master’s and doctoral students. The school already is making those contributions. Last summer, the school’s faculty, students and alumni presented 99 peer-reviewed research papers at an Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in San Francisco, with 11 earning awards.
Myers said he believes Kurpius will be able to get the word out about what the school is already doing while pushing the school to do even more.

“He’s a visionary leader,” Myers said. “When he walks into a room, people will know he’s a leader.”

Another personal focus, which Kurpius emphasized during his interview process, is the importance of a student focus. Kurpius said he initially won’t be in the classroom but that he will seek out other opportunities to meet and speak with students.

Myers said he is excited for faculty, staff and students to get to know the journalism school’s new dean.

“They’ll find he’s a wonderful guy,” Myers said.

Downtown parking study might yield changes

By Caitlin Campbell

Saturday, August 29, 2015 at 12:00 am

Wearing a reflective, neon-yellow vest and clutching a brown clipboard, Clint Smith made his way through each level of the parking garage at Fifth and Walnut streets Friday and used a red pen to count cars.

Smith, a city planner for Columbia, was volunteering for a downtown parking audit to gather information on parking space occupancy and turnover rate. The audit is designed to help city officials better understand and design the parking in downtown Columbia.

National not-for-profit Smart Growth America granted the city assistance from “national experts on ... parking solutions” to conduct the audit and provide recommendations to the city on its parking, city planner Rachel Bacon said.

“They’re going to analyze our data and present us with some suggestions on how to improve the city’s parking,” Bacon said. “We’ll see different tools and techniques on how to alleviate our parking problems.”
Volunteers for the city counted cars in parking garages and along city streets and marked tires with chalk to determine how long cars stayed in one space. People made trips to count cars throughout the day to provide insight as to how the parking situation fluctuates over time, Smith said.

“The counts provide us with occupancy rate figures for all the parking spaces we have in the downtown area,” Smith said. Once the city gets the results, “we can determine if we need more.”

Volunteers also counted cars near East Campus, including along University Avenue, Rosemary Lane and Anthony Street.

**The city has been considering implementing a permit-only parking program on East Campus streets near the University of Missouri.** Residents have complained for years about students parking in front of their homes.

In March, the city held a public meeting about parking options for residents in the area, including the neighborhood adopting Parkmobile, a pay-by-phone parking application the city is using in parts of downtown. Even though school has resumed and neighborhoods once again are filled with cars, the proposal has stalled.

Public Works spokesman Steve Sapp said the proposal was delayed because the city still is working out details. In March, residents disagreed about how they would like the program to function.

“East Campus folks have asked us to slow down on it, so we’re slowing down,” Sapp said.