MU graduate students take further steps toward unionizing

By MEGAN FAVIGNANO

Thursday, October 1, 2015 at 2:00 pm  Comments (5)

Graduate students at the University of Missouri who have been demanding better pay, a long-term insurance solution and full tuition waivers for all graduate assistants, among other things, are a step closer to unionizing.

Organizers of the Forum on Graduate Rights, a non-university-affiliated student group, voted to affiliate the Coalition of Graduate Workers — the prospective graduate student union — with the Missouri National Education Association and the National Education Association, the largest teaching unions in Missouri and the United States.

The Forum on Graduate Rights hosted an open forum for students Wednesday night, which drew a crowd of about 30 people.

A committee led by graduate students Connor Lewis and Eric Scott has been gauging interest in a potential graduate student union since late August. The group shared its plans to pursue unionization during the Wednesday forum at Keller Auditorium. Scott and Lewis said they were optimistic they could gather about 2,000 signatures necessary to hold a vote this year and have a contract in place by 2016.

Lewis said similar conversations about graduate student worker benefits are happening at colleges and universities across the country. “We’re part of a bigger movement,” he said. “We’re at a pivotal moment within graduate education in this country.”

The Forum on Graduate Rights formed in August after MU gave graduate assistants 24-hour notice that they would no longer receive health insurance subsidies because of an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act. The university later rescinded that decision, but the process sparked a campuswide discussion about graduate student employee benefits. Graduate students with assistantships conduct research for the university and teach undergraduate classes.
Organizers of the Coalition of Graduate Workers said about 220 graduate students had expressed interest in serving as their departments' union representatives and answering questions from fellow graduate student employees.

The Forum on Graduate Rights began recording videos of graduate students sharing their stories during the Wednesday event. The videos will be part of a campaign to share those stories, which feature graduate students discussing the positive and negative aspects of working at MU.

Ronnie LaCombe, a graduate student and MU committee member of the Forum on Graduate Rights, filmed her story during Wednesday’s meeting. LaCombe said she would like to see the university focus on rebuilding trust with students.

“I don’t trust the university anymore,” LaCombe said. After receiving the health insurance email in August “my total perspective of the university changed.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU graduate rights coalition pushes ahead on unionizing

SARAH WYNN, 15 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The Forum on Graduate Rights’ organizing committee, now called the Coalition of Graduate Workers, announced its unionization plan and timeline Wednesday.

“It is our hope that we are going to be able to secure collective bargaining rights for all the graduate student employees here at the University of Missouri,” Eric Scott, committee co-chairman, said at the meeting in Keller Auditorium.

By collective bargaining, Scott said the committee hopes:

- To get dignified working conditions for graduate students
- To secure strong benefits and protections for graduate students
- To represent the full diversity of graduate students
On Sunday, the coalition passed a unanimous resolution to affiliate itself with the Missouri National Education Association and the National Education Association. Scott and committee co-chairman Connor Lewis said the NEA is the biggest union in the state and nation and has 3.5 million members nationwide.

“They were really impressed with what we are doing, and they really believe that this is a campaign that can succeed in making our working conditions, as well as the University of Missouri, better,” Lewis said.

The coalition hopes to hold an election to authorize a union by the end of 2015 or the beginning of 2016. To do so, the group will need about 2,000 MU graduate employee signatures. If the signatures come through, a union election will be held.

“We’re in a moment nationwide where there are graduate student campaigns beginning in Harvard, Cornell, most of the Ivy League schools,” Lewis said. “There is a certain wave of graduate workers who are not happy with their working conditions.”

In other action Wednesday evening:

- The forum announced graduate student employees will have a float at the MU Homecoming Parade on Oct. 10.
- The forum launched its storytelling campaign. Graduate students had the opportunity to get in front of a video camera to tell stories about their time at MU. Most voiced their disappointment in the university after their health subsidies were suspended in August. (The subsidies were later reinstated.) The video will be available to the public during Graduate Education Week, Oct. 12-16.

“I just want everyone to keep that in mind that we are at a pivotal moment in graduate education in this country, and that’s what we’re keeping in mind moving forward,” Lewis said.
I don’t for a moment question Kurt Schaefer’s sincerity in his ongoing assault on Planned Parenthood. Our senator sincerely wants to win statewide office in a state whose political coloration has shifted from a pale Democratic blue to a deepening Republican red. He hasn’t confided in me, but I’d be surprised if his ambition doesn’t extend even beyond the attorney generalship he currently seeks.

So a politician described just two years ago by no less an authority than Henry J. Waters III as having “crafted a moderate, even progressive, record” is running hard to the right against a law professor who may be even more conservative than he has become.

I just have two problems with his campaign.

First, his “Sanctity of Life” committee is depriving the women he was elected to represent of their freedom of reproductive choice. And second, he has bullied our university into surrendering its independence in a crucial area of health care.

As to the first problem, the attack on Planned Parenthood both locally and nationally was launched on the basis, or pretext, of a set of videos dishonestly recorded and dishonestly edited by a rabidly anti-abortion organization.

The fact is that abortion constitutes a tiny fraction – less than 5 percent by most accounts – of the health care provided to women, many of whom have no other access, by Planned Parenthood. No
government money is spent on abortions. That’s the law, and there has been no evidence produced that the law is being violated.

Nor has there been any evidence produced to support the charge that Planned Parenthood has sold fetal tissue for research purposes. In fact, Chris Koster, who holds the office Senator Schaefer seeks, has cleared the St. Louis chapter of Planned Parenthood of that very allegation. His investigation appears to have been based on science rather than ideology.

**In a way, the second problem, the university’s cave-in, is even more serious. An institution, like a person, can be bullied only if it allows itself to be. We can only wish that Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin had been as zealous in defending our institution’s independence as Senator Schaefer was in attacking it.**

The Missourian reported Sept. 15 that the university has since August 21 canceled 10 contracts with Planned Parenthood branches, including the agreement that permitted the performance of medical abortions in Columbia. Those cancellations ended a 26-year relationship.

Along with several hundred others, I went Tuesday afternoon to the Pink Out rally on campus. The crowd was mostly young and mostly female, with a sprinkling of those who fit neither category and only a quiet half-dozen or so “pro-life” protesters.

For more than an hour, students, faculty, Planned Parenthood advocates and a couple of Democratic legislators exercised their right of free speech.

“The sanctity of life does not end at birth,” one woman reminded us.

Another woman held a placard that said, “My daughter was raped. Planned Parenthood cared for her. Who will care for your daughter?”

Other placards read, “Mizzou values politics over women” and “Universities need courageous and independent leadership.” One carried a threat: “No more contributions to the University of Missouri.”
State Rep. Stacey Newman, from St. Louis, renamed the Schaefer committee “the Planned Parenthood witch-hunt committee.”

State Rep. Stephen Webber, who is running for the Senate seat Sen. Schaefer is giving up, said, “We must make sure the University of Missouri does not cave in to political pressure again.”

As I walked away from the rally, I could hear the remaining crowd reworking one of the chancellor’s favorite chants: “M-I-Z, SHAME ON YOU!”

It may have been the first campus gathering this year he didn’t attend.

EDITORIAL: Planned Parenthood, not politics, prevents abortions

Here’s a fact: If grandstanding Republicans in Congress and across Missouri succeed in defunding Planned Parenthood, there will be more abortions.

The one thing people on both sides of the ideological divide — and the millions who occupy a less volatile middle ground — agree upon is that they would like to see fewer women getting abortions.

Planned Parenthood makes that happen. The nonprofit organization, under fire after “deceitfully edited” videos made by abortion foes were circulated this summer, does far more to prevent unwanted pregnancies than to facilitate abortions.
Abortions account for about 3 percent of all services provided by Planned Parenthood, the organization’s data show. The bulk of its services, 76 percent, are for contraception and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. Cancer screening and prevention are 9 percent and other women’s health services are 11 percent.

More contraception properly used equals fewer unwanted pregnancies equals fewer abortions. This is not a difficult equation.

But there is no political gain to be had for Republicans by not beating their chests against Planned Parenthood. Primary voters are unlikely to read the fine print describing the multitude of services Planned Parenthood provides. They may not believe the organization’s president, Cecile Richards, when she says the secretly made videos that make it look as though Planned Parenthood is selling fetal tissue for profit were heavily doctored by abortion foes.

They may not agree with Ms. Richards when she said she is “proud” of the work the agency does in helping its clinics retrieve 1 percent of fetal tissue when requested by abortion patients because the tissue is used in research for cures and treatments for diseases.

These same voters may not have found it offensive that U.S. Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, was critical of Ms. Richards for her salary of $590,000 at a not-for-profit. Mr. Chaffetz’s committee is bent on slashing federal funding for Planned Parenthood, even though federal funds are not used for the tiny percentage of abortions performed at some of the agency’s 700 clinics around the country.

When Wayne LaPierre is lobbying Congress on behalf of the not-for-profit National Rifle Association, does anyone chide him for making more than $1 million a year? Certainly no Republican would.

Congress doesn’t have a monopoly on demonizing Planned Parenthood. At least one Republican presidential hopeful, Carly Fiorina, flat-out lied about what the secretly obtained videos showed. Maybe she didn’t think anyone had actually viewed them and that she could make up details and use them to advance her candidacy.
Missouri lawmakers and political candidates also have found fruit in hounding the organization. Sen. Kent Schaefer, R-Columbia, is an example. Mr. Schaefer was a moderate Republican until he launched his bid for Missouri attorney general. Then he turned sharply to the right, only to encounter a primary opponent in Josh Hawley even more conservative than Mr. Schaefer claims to be.

Mr. Hawley, on leave from a teaching job at the MU School of Law, clerked for Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts in 2007. He took part in writing briefs in the Hobby Lobby case. The court ruled in Hobby Lobby that closely held companies could refuse to pay for contraceptive coverage for employees because of religious objections.

To get to the right of Mr. Hawley, Mr. Schaefer is leading the movement against Planned Parenthood in Missouri. He formed and is heading the Senate Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life, which has been investigating the organization’s operations since the doctored videos appeared.

Mr. Schaefer’s committee didn’t even pause on Monday when the current Missouri attorney general, Chris Koster, the only Democratic candidate for governor next year, said that his office’s review of Planned Parenthood’s operations in Missouri had found no evidence that the organization had sold fetal body parts.

After the committee launched its investigation, MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin asked MU Health Care to review the policies it uses to grant privileges. The medical staff’s executive committee then voted to discontinue the privileges beginning Dec. 1. The doctor’s limited privileges had allowed her to refer patients to University Hospital and to follow a patient’s progress, but not to treat or prescribe medication.
Under state law, doctors performing abortions must have clinical privileges at a hospital no more than 30 miles from the clinic where abortions are provided.

This is a war against women, particularly poor women. It is not a war against abortion. These are not attempts to reduce the numbers of abortions performed in the United States. Those numbers are going down sharply, having dropped 12 percent in the past five years.

Health experts do not give politicians the credit for lowering abortion rates. They chalk it up to an increase in the number of women using stay-in-place, continually active forms of birth control that have very low failure rates. This is the kind of birth control that Planned Parenthood dispenses. This is the kind of information Planned Parenthood gives women who don’t want unexpected pregnancies.

This is the kind of prescription that really does prevent abortions.

Hanaway, Brunner join Kinder in opposition to embryonic stem cell research

By RUDI KELLER

Two more candidates seeking the Republican nomination for governor said Wednesday that they oppose embryonic stem cell research.

In emails to the Tribune, former House Speaker and U.S. Attorney Catherine Hanaway and wealthy retired businessman John Brunner joined Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder in opposition to the research that uses material from in vitro fertilization to search for cures to diseases and genetic disorders.
As a member of the Missouri House in 2001, Hanaway sponsored legislation banning the use of state general revenue for abortions, abortion services or fetal tissue research. The bill did not reach the House floor for a vote.

“State-funded institutions should not be using Missourians’ hard-earned tax dollars to conduct research involving aborted fetal tissue or embryonic stem cells,” Hanaway said in an email sent by her campaign. “Protecting religious liberties will not stop Missouri from being a leader in medical research. I applaud those researchers in Missouri who are making great strides with non-embryonic research.”

In a statement issued by his campaign, Brunner said research can move ahead without embryonic stem cells and questioned why the issue was being raised.

“This is a nonissue and contrived for one purpose — to take attention away from the current scandal of Planned Parenthood and abortion providers selling fetal parts for profit,” Brunner said.

Embryonic stem cell research is protected in Missouri under a constitutional amendment passed in 2006. The state’s leading anti-abortion group, Missouri Right to Life, has called for lawmakers to ban embryonic stem cell research at public universities. **A project underway at the University of Missouri uses embryonic stem cells to research the causes of preeclampsia, a common pregnancy complication blamed for 50,000 maternal and child deaths annually.**

Hanaway, Brunner and Kinder, along with former Navy SEAL Eric Greitens and state Sen. Bob Dixon, R-Springfield, are seeking the GOP nomination for governor in 2016. The only major Democratic candidate, Attorney General Chris Koster, on Tuesday said he would oppose a ban and that a fight over embryonic stem cell research in 2007 was one of the reasons he switched to the Democratic Party.

Koster challenged his Republican rivals to take a stand on embryonic stem cell research. In a news release, Koster said a ban would deter top-flight researchers from coming to the state and would intrude improperly on academic freedom.

Missouri Right to Life is seeking to use the furor over videos attacking Planned Parenthood for supplying donated fetal tissue for research to renew the debate over stem cells. In an interview last week, legislative liaison Susan Klein said the group was opposed to embryonic stem cell research on ethical grounds and that the goals of any individual research project did not make it acceptable.
Kinder on Wednesday was the first GOP candidate to say he supports a ban since Missouri Right to Life issued its call for legislative action.

Greitens and Dixon could not be reached for comment. Dixon was a House member in 2007 and voted against efforts to include restrictions on embryonic stem cell research in appropriation bills and other legislation.

Black students protest racial climate on campus at MU Student Center

By ROGER MCKINNEY

A few dozen black students joined by a few white students on Thursday participated in a protest march at the University of Missouri Student Center.

"No justice, no peace. White silence is violence," they chanted as marchers made their way around the building several times. They carried signs, including those reading: "I am not here to assimilate" and "Thomas Jefferson is a racist."

Reuben Faloughi, one of the student organizers of the march, said causing a stir was part of the point.

"People are too comfortable," Faloughi said. He said there's no reason why anyone should be called a racial slur on the MU campus.

Danielle Walker, another student organizer, said the march was a reaction to what she said was the administration's lackluster response to Missouri Student Association President Payton Head being called a racial slur last month. Several black students say they've experienced similar treatment on campus.

She said the administration and the campus community can expect more protests.
She said that in 2015, she should not have to fear for her safety on campus because of her skin color.

Faloughi was impassioned as he spoke inside the student center, straining his voice as he stood on a chair.

"Why are black people angry?" Faloughi said. "This is righteous anger."

He said MU students of color experience physical, mental and emotional violence and he knows some who have considered suicide because they don't feel like they're a part of the campus community.

Faloughi carried a sign asking "Are you anti-racist?" He said after the march that it's not enough for people to claim they're not racist; one must act and speak against racism. He said white people must acknowledge they've had privilege that black people haven't had.

"You don't have to be actively racist to be racist," Faloughi said.

He said he and the other marchers are disappointed in the administration's response to not only racism, but sexism and homophobia on campus.

A notice about the Black Studies Fall Conference scheduled for Oct. 22 in the Mark Twain Ballroom at Memorial Union was distributed as the march ended.

Christian Basi, MU spokesman, said Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and his administration would continue to meet with and work with students about their concerns. He said the website transparency.missouri.edu outlines some of the measures and initiatives officials have taken.

Students ended the march outside the student center in a circle, repeating the phrase: "It's our duty to fight for our freedom. It's our duty to win. We must love and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."
Students Hold “Racism Lives Here” Rally on MU Campus

By ALICE WILSON · OCTOBER 1

Students today protested the lack of inclusion African Americans students feel on the MU campus.

Around 50 students marched early this afternoon through the student center chanting, “No justice, no peace. White silence is violence.” The number of marchers grew throughout the march, from about 20 to more than 50.

The march was followed by a rally outside the student center as protestors called for the administration to increase efforts in student inclusion.

“It’s not just racism. It’s homophobia, it’s trans people of color, it’s Islamophobia. They say they are for the students, well we are the students,” Danielle Walker, an MU graduate student, said.

These protests follow the statement made by MSA president Payton Head describing the racism and discrimination he has faced on the MU campus.

“My sign says ‘is it ok, white Mizzou, for black students to walk on campus at night?’ Why in 2015 do I still have to ask if it’s okay for my skin complexion to walk on this campus at night?” Walker said.
MU Spokesperson Christian Basi spoke about the ways the university has been working with the protesters and student groups.

“Chancellor Loftin and several administrators have met with student representatives on campus and will continue to meet and work with those student representatives on campus to educate the entire campus community about the issues that were voiced today,” Basi said. “We have made some progress on many of the items that have been asked over the past year.”

Basi said the website transparency.missouri.edu has all of the information about how MU is handling the requests for further inclusion and support from the protesters and other student groups on campus.

KRCG-TV (CBS) – Columbia, Mo.

Students march through MU Student Center

A group of Mizzou students marched through their student union to speak out against racism on their campus. part of an ongoing effort in the black student community. The marchers of today’s racism lives here protest would not talk to us on camera. We randomly asked Mizzou African American students if they thought their campus had a racism problem. I think there is a racism problem. Because there's so many whites here and the black people have to ban together. I feel like it's not that relevant on campus. With the things going on in the news people probably feel any little thing happened here they make a big deal out of it that's black Mizzou and white Mizzou. They don't do stuff together. Racism might be on campus a little bit. I know two friends that dealt with it. University officials sent KRCG a statement in response to Thursday’s racism lives here march. News Bureau spokesman Christian Basi said, the chancellor and several administrators have met and will continue to meet and work with student representatives on campus to educate the campus about the issues voiced on Thursday.

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=f9f93bf6-a3f4-4233-91c2-47fb5c2fdd3d
Students march through MU Student Center in protest of racial injustice

NANA NASKIDASHVILI, 10 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — About 40 students protested Thursday throughout the MU Student Center, carrying banners and shouting about justice and the racism they say they face everyday.

"White silence is violence, no justice no peace," they shouted for minutes on end.

The rally participants marched alongside tables packed with students who were studying and eating lunch. Some students ignored them, some smiled and some started to repeat the words of the rally participants.

The protesters went up and down multiple staircases and walked through wide and narrow corridors, trying to make their voices reach everybody in the building.

The protest was a part of Racism Lives Here, which is a recent movement at MU open to anyone who feels that there is racism at MU, said Reuben Faloughi, a 24-year-old doctoral student on the Psychological Sciences faculty. Thursday's protest was the second event held by the students. The first was held Sept. 24.

The students' voices were loudest when they addressed the students in the center's main lobby.

“I don’t like to scream, I don’t like to yell. But nobody wants to listen. Nobody listens on the forum, nobody listens on the email,” Faloughi shouted angrily. “Students experience violence on this campus. ... I've been in conversations where black students have thought about committing suicide, suicide because they ... don't feel like they belong."
"We are one bad decision away from a killing on this campus because it is segregated."

Danielle Walker, 25, spoke of the racism she's personally felt.

"My hair has been called dirty. I’ve been called ghetto. I’ve had people not wanting to sit next to me. I have people not wanting to work with me in class. So, yes, we clearly have a racism problem here on campus," said Walker, who has attended MU since 2008.

Protesters said they have several demands they want MU’s administration to pay attention to.

“We want to see a hate crime policy initiated. We want our chancellor to formally make an announcement that we do have a racial problem here on campus and that they are seeking to make sure it gets addressed properly," said Walker.

Faloughi said he wants the MU administration to do its job and make the campus a comfortable place for all students, saying it has done a lackluster job of addressing the racial issues of the past year.

Brittani Savage, 19, said there were no true organizers of the protest.

"It’s just a group of students that are really pissed off. ... We either are told it’s not that bad or told that we are just making a big deal out of nothing. And it’s ridiculous. It is a big deal, and it does affect everyone’s lives," Savage said.

Rally participants said they plan to continue to protest until MU administration responds to their demands.

Thursday’s rally ended outside the student center with protesters standing in a tight circle and shouting the protest's final words.

"It is our duty to fight for freedom. It is our duty to win," they said, quoting a passage from black activist Assata Shakur's autobiography. "We must love and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."
Second “Racism Lives Here” event calls for administration to act on social injustices

Protesters reminded onlookers that the rally stemmed from “righteous anger.”

By Madison Plaster

Oct. 1, 2015

“Do I have everyone’s attention?” said Danielle Walker, graduate student and organizer of “Racism Lives Here.” “We will be chanting, ‘No justice, no peace! White silence is violence!’”

Over 50 students gathered at 1 p.m. Thursday outside Mort’s in the Student Center to spread awareness about racism in the demonstration called “Racism Lives Here.” Led by Walker, the event followed the first “Racism Lives Here” march Sept. 24 at Speakers Circle and Jesse Hall, when participants reacted to the slow response regarding a hate crime against Missouri Students Association President Payton Head.

Many held signs with phrases like “I am not here because of affirmative action,” “Are you anti-Racist or nah?” and “#BlackLivesMatter.” Some held signs in reference to other minorities such as “Queer and Trans POC Lives Matter,” and historical protests such as “#Bacons Rebellion 1676,” an allusion to the resentment against the governor of Virginia for unfair treatment of his citizens.

The march looped around the different floors of the Student Center and ended outside, with their chant echoing throughout the building.

About 15 minutes into the demonstration, the group gathered in a semi-circle behind the Student Center surrounding Walker.
“Let us be clear that until the administration takes a serious stance on racism on our campus, we will be marching until we are guaranteed justice,” Walker said. “They say they are for the students. Well, we are the students.”

The group continued their march back into the Student Center, where they assembled outside the front of the Mizzou Store. Many people stopped to watch, including Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Cathy Scroggs, who stood in front, and Mark Lucas, director of the Department of Student Life, who observed from the second-floor balcony.

“Attention Mizzou: It has come to our attention that our administrators don’t understand how serious we are about racism on our campus,” Walker said, as the other demonstrators yelled their support. “So until they take our claim serious, prepare for things like this happening almost every day. As long as people of color, students of color, are made to feel uncomfortable on this campus, we’re marching.”

Graduate student Reuben Faloughi moved forward to speak out against the way administrators and the university handle cases of reported racism as Scroggs, directly in front of the group, looked on.

“For those that know me, you know that this is not my normal personality,” Faloughi said. “I don’t like to scream. I don’t like to yell, but nobody wants to listen. Nobody listens in a forum. Nobody listens in an email, OK?”

The passionate speech was met with a large crowd of silent observers. Faloughi even stood up on a chair for most of his speech.

“Students get served violence on this campus: physical, emotional, spiritual and fucking mental,” he said. “I’ve been in small group because students don’t have a space on this campus. No, those centers downstairs aren’t for everybody. They don’t always feel welcome. I’ve been in conversations where black students have thought about committing suicide — suicide — because they don’t belong. They don’t feel like they belong.”

Walker said the attendance of Scroggs and Lucas is not a sign of improvement.

“All the claims they were making is not anything new,” Walker said. “They were very aware that students of color on campus are in a hostile environment. Their lack of
inaction is what continues to propel us to host events like this. No, there's more than just their presence.”

Faloughi said he is upset about what he said is the university ignoring the issue of racism. He and three other students wrote a letter to Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, Dr. Scroggs and other high level administrators detailing their disappointment over the lack of progress since last year.

“In the letter, we expressed outrage regarding the physical, emotional and mental violence on campus, their response to last year’s call to action, and this year, showing no tangible progress on any goal to address the racial climate on campus,” Faloughi said. “The response to the email didn’t go good. It was like we got slapped in the face. They told us to join ABGPS (Association of Black Graduate and Professional Students), MSA, GPC, and forwarded us to the transparency website. They did understand that students, particularly Black students, were talking about suicide --- the loss of life. And they forwarded me to a website that has no meaningful information and student organizations that they don't even listen to? That was like giving me the middle finger. That shit hurt. That was racism.”

Many demonstrators, including Walker and Faloughi, proclaimed their frustration in the way other people perceive their protests.

“Listen, I don’t want to see that shit, ‘Why the black people angry?’” Faloughi said. “This is righteous anger.”

“Racism is everywhere, so we have to fight it wherever we find it,” a student said. “Most of the time, when I’m in class, I feel inclined to talk about race because most people in the class are uncomfortable, and it’s getting rid of the uncomfortableness in talking about race and really opening up the history that we have that people are trying to ignore, and that’s the first step in getting rid of racism and things like that.”

Participants and event organizers still think that the administration has not done enough to confront hate, discrimination and racism at MU.

“I think that the administration needs to talk directly with students,” a former MSA member who asked to remain anonymous said. “I think that the administration has failed in the past year or so in setting up forums but not actually igniting any movements on
campus. I think a dialogue is important, but I think that if students still feel like their lives are in danger on campus, we’re failing as an institution, and I think that we need to actually start seeing where students think changes need to be made, and making these changes.”

At the end of the rally, the event organizers called everyone in for a group hug, as they did last week, and referenced Walker’s earlier statement that the fight is not over.

“I want to thank everyone that came out today,” Walker said. “It’s not over today. The struggle still continues. We will continue fighting. My sign says, ‘Is it ok white Mizzou for black students to walk on campus at night?’ Why, in 2015, do I still have to ask if it’s ok for my skin complexion to walk on this campus at night?”

Curators discuss retiree medical benefits, MU Accelerator Fund

By MEGAN FAVIGNANO

The University of Missouri Board of Curators discussed retiree medical benefits and a program designed to bolster startup businesses to kick off its regular meeting Thursday in Kansas City.

The curators started a two-day meeting Thursday at the University of Missouri-Kansas City with an agenda that included discussions about UM system finances and a slew of projects at the system’s four campuses.

The board discussed the MU Accelerator Fund but was not expected to vote to approve the fund until Thursday afternoon. The fund would be part of the Missouri Innovation Center and would provide mentoring and funding to entrepreneurs working to launch their businesses.

The curators also discussed a study of retiree medical benefits Thursday morning, largely retreading information they discussed during their June meeting. They also talked about how other universities handle the issue.
Vice President for Human Resources Betsy Rodriguez in June said the UM System cherishes its retirees but that it also is balancing the costs of those benefits.

The curators are set to vote on projects at each UM campus, including Schrenk Hall renovation at Missouri S&T, Stewart Hall renovation at MU and contract approval for MU to purchase genotyping services.

MU is requesting board approval for a sole-source contract with GeneSeek Inc. for genotyping services at a total cost of $732,750 — all funded by grants. The contract will help MU complete research needed for four of its grants, said Jerry Taylor, a professor of genetics and animal sciences.

The research examines the DNA of cattle to identify differences in the proteins that cattle produce in their cells and to determine how those protein variants affect production.

“The reason for doing this is so that we can build DNA testing diagnostics that the cattle industry can use to breed cattle that are more feed-efficient, fertile and resistant to the pathogens that cause respiratory disease,” Taylor said.

Gov. Jay Nixon’s recent proposed tuition freeze is not listed as a discussion item on the board’s agenda. UM spokesman John Fougere said the board typically hears presentations on tuition rates and votes on tuition and fees in December.

The board will get an update on the status of the UM System’s fiscal year 2015 budget. The curators also will hear a report on the internal quarterly audit and six-month audit follow-up.

Fougere said the UM System does not plan to make any public announcements after the board’s meeting this week.

The board held a special executive session on Sept. 20. The meeting’s agenda said the closed session was held for “consideration of certain confidential or privileged communications with university counsel, negotiated contracts and personnel matters.”

The university must disclose any final votes from closed sessions within 72 hours of any meetings. No announcements were made after the Sept. 20 meeting.
Safety on the University of Missouri campus

POSTED: 10:47 PM CDT Oct 01, 2015

The University of Missouri police department said campus safety is of utmost importance and that no college campus is immune to crime.

"We have a very safe campus, but we know that crimes can and still do happen, so that's why we need people to be aware at all times," said Major Brian Weimer with MUPD.

MUPD puts on a Citizens Response to Active Threats (CRATS) course several times a year at the request of groups in the community.

Weimer said the course helps prepare people for all kinds of situations at school, in the workplace or any public setting.

"It's a great class that's available to members of our community," Weimer said. "It's important that everyone has a plan in their head, so for instance, when you're sitting in classes, know where the exits are. If you hear something you think is gunshots, be thinking of what you're going to do so that if something happens, you've already kind of thought it out."

He said coming up with these types of plans is covered in the course.

"If you can't get away, then perhaps you're going to have to barricade yourself into an area and if that's not going to work, some things you can do to fight and survive," Weimer said.

Anyone interested in the CRAT course can sign up [here](#).
Officials Discuss Active Shooter Training at MU

MU officials say they regularly train to deal with active shooters. Campus police recently developed a training course similar to active shooter drills specifically for students and members of the community. The spokesman, Christian Basi, says students and staff may sign up for free for those courses which can be tailored to their needs. Taking a training course can help you decide what course of action to take if you’re faced with an active shooter situation. Students should feel free to contact MU police or MU's counseling center or other campus resources if they are worried about someone or if they see or hear something that concerns them. at the university of Missouri, Garrett Bergquist, KRCG 13.

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — The University of Missouri has joined a nationwide coalition dedicated to making it easier for high school students to apply for college.

The Columbia Missourian (http://bit.ly/1KU8MEA ) reports that the 80 college Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success aims to accomplish this goal by creating a website that allows students to create a digital portfolio of their school careers, look at financial aid opportunities and submit applications.

Coalition officials say the portfolio side of the site will go live January 2016, and the application side in fall 2016. Students starting classes in fall 2017 will be able to apply using the new site. Chuck May, University of Missouri director of admissions, said the site will be free for all students. However application fees will still apply.

"We want to give (students) an additional level of support while they're going through the application process," May said.

May hopes the tools will encourage students to prepare to apply earlier. He said some students don't realize just how early they should begin preparing.

"The college admission process today can be stress-inducing and we know it can present barriers for all students, especially for those who are the first in their family to attend college," Zina Evans, vice president for enrollment management at the University of Florida, said in a coalition release.

Leigh Spence, director of counseling at Battle High School in Columbia, said says hopes an easier application process also will increase the number of schools to which students apply.
Missouri law professor sues school over campus gun ban

Oct. 1, 2015


One of the University of Missouri’s very own legal eagles is suing the school over its policy banning firearms on campus.

Royce de R. Barondes, who has taught business and corporate law at the school in Columbia since 2002, is looking to give his employers a lesson in constitutional law by challenging a policy he said violates his federal and state rights. Barondes, who also teaches a course on firearms law, has "extensive knowledge and training on the lawful use and safe handling of a firearm," according to his legal case, filed in state court, and believes carrying a firearm helps ensure his safety on the 35,000-student campus.

"[The gun ban makes] law-abiders more vulnerable to attack by law-breakers — [and] unlawfully and unconstitutionally violates plaintiff’s individual rights to keep and carry a firearm for self-defense," reads the lawsuit, filed late last month.

“We do have a policy that allows students or guests to store firearms at a secure police facility on campus.”

School spokesman Christian Basi told Fox News on Thursday that the school could not comment on pending litigation, but said the university has taken steps to accommodate gun owners on campus.

“We do have a policy that allows students or guests to store firearms at a secure police facility on campus,” he said, explaining that students who hunt on weekends, as well as gun owners with permits to carry them elsewhere in the state, can store their weapons until they depart campus.
Barondes, who could not be reached for comment, has a concealed-carry permit. But the school maintains its policy prohibiting anyone on campus from possessing or discharging a firearm anywhere on school grounds supersedes the rights granted by his permit. Barondes fears he could lose his job if he is found to be carrying a gun on his person or even in his car, according to his legal team.

The suit, which names school President Tim Wolfe as defendant, invokes both the Second Amendment and a Missouri measure passed in 2014 that states that any gun regulations be subject to "strict scrutiny" and that Missouri residents' right to bear arms is "unalienable."

Missouri is one of 20 states with laws explicitly banning conceal-and-carry on campuses, according to the Crime Prevention Research Center, citing the National Conference of State Legislatures.

New medical coding system could affect doctor visits


Posted: Oct 1, 2015 11:22 AM by Haley Hughes, KOMU 8 Reporter

Updated: Oct 1, 2015 7:07 PM

COLUMBIA - Doctors might seem a little stressed during your next visit thanks to some changes that took place Thursday.

Doctors and hospitals are starting to use a new coding system, also known as ICD-10 or International Classification of Disease.

**Prior to Thursday, MU Health Care Bryan Bliven said health providers used a system of roughly 13,000 codes. Now, he said there are 68,000 codes a doctor can use to make a diagnosis.**

Codes are used to describe a patient's visit on insurance claims for reimbursement purposes.

Bliven said if someone comes in with a burn on their arm before they could not identify which arm. Now, the new system allows for more specificity.
He said there are still some challenges this new system may cause.

"There is a lot of unknown, you're sharing the information, you're sending it out to your biller saying here is the work we have done for this patient and will they be ready to accept the new format?"

He said most of the world has already been using ICD.

"The United States is one of the last to implement it, but the only ones to tie it into the billing and financial side of it." Bliven said.

MU Health Care has a partnership with Cerner Corporation called the Tiger Institute for Health Innovation that allows it to be one of the first to test ICD-10 technology prior to Thursday's launch.

Bliven said MU Health Care has been working on it for quite some time, and it was actually supposed to be launched at this time last year.

He said doctors have been trained on the new technology and it has been used in test environments.

Boone Hospital Center spokesman Ben Cornelius said Boone Hospital Center and all of the BJC Health Care hospitals are also well positioned to achieve a successful ICD transition.

How often should you get a mammogram?
It's complicated

Oct. 1, 2015
Joan Raymond
TODAY

Watch the story: http://www.today.com/health/how-often-should-you-get-mammogram-its-complicated-t47351

For most women age 40 or older, getting a mammogram is a yearly ritual — kind of like paying taxes.

You may not enjoy it, but you do it. Because there has long been one simple mantra: mammograms save lives.

In 2009 mammography screening recommendations took an abrupt turn when the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) released its final mammography guidelines. According to the task force, women, ages 50 to 74, were told they would reap the most benefit from biennial screening — not annual. And, among other recommendations, women in their 40s were advised to make
decisions about mammography's benefits and potential harms, along with their doctors.

Those changes caused an almost epic showdown between the task force and some physician and advocacy groups. Even politicians got involved.

Today, largely due to congressional action, most U.S. women don't pay a dime for their yearly breast x-rays beginning at age 40.

But it's been six years. And this past April, the task force released updated mammography draft recommendations.

The draft has a familiar ring: Women ages 40-49 should weigh the potential benefits and harms of mammography in concert with their doctors, and women ages 50-74 should get a mammogram every other year.

The task force also found "insufficient evidence" to support recommending mammograms in those 75 and older, or for the use of 3-D mammography (tomosynthesis) for screening. They also found insufficient evidence to support the screening of women with "dense" breasts with ultrasound or MRI, for example.

To be clear, these are "draft" guidelines and the task force is currently reviewing public comments before releasing its final recommendation to be published in the Annals of Internal Medicine.

Those comments could number in the "thousands," explains Dr. Richard Wender, cancer control officer for the American Cancer Society, which is in the process of updating its own guidelines.

Woman's battle with breast cancer inspires husband to take a wild ride

"Mammograms aren't perfect," says Wender. "They don't prevent every death from breast cancer. But right now getting a mammogram is still the most effective thing a woman can do to reduce her risk."

He is quick to add: "The task force recommendations confirm that."

A Delicate Balance

Indeed, the task force does not say that mammograms are ineffective. But there is worry among some experts that mammograms, especially for younger women (40-49), may no longer be covered completely, leading some women to skip the test.
There are also concerns that biennial screening simply isn't enough. And then there's the issue of so-called over-diagnosis and stage-zero cancer, also called ductal carcinoma in situ. Largely due to mammography, DCIS now accounts for about 20 to 25 percent of all breast cancer diagnoses. Some experts believe DCIS may never cause a woman any issues, but doctors don't have any tool to tell women whether her condition may progress. Therefore, all cases of DCIS are treated.

It's important to understand that making any kind of screening recommendations is a delicate balance between risk and benefit. And mammography is fraught with emotion, some politics and seemingly never-ending mixed messages.

"What we want women to know is what that science tell us about what screening provides in terms of benefits and of harms," says USPSTF vice chair Dr. Kirsten Bibbns-Domingo. "We want to do is empower women to make informed choices."

And though the task force did receive "lots of comments" regarding the mammography screening draft, it's important to know not all the comments were negative, says Dr. Michael LeFevre, immediate past chairman of the USPSTF, with some people saying the task force didn't come down hard enough on mammography's limitations.

Sifting Through the Studies

The USPSTF's new 2015 draft recommendations (which are given letter grades) are based on a mind-boggling number of studies and computer models all relating to mammography's benefits and potential risks among women, ages 40-74, and women, ages 50-74.

According to the task force analysis, women, ages 40-49, who are not at high-risk of the disease, should make an individual decision, since false-positive tests and unnecessary biopsies are more common in this age group. This recommendation is given a "C," which means the task force "selectively recommends" the service and that doctors are advised to offer the test to patients based on their "professional judgment and patient preferences."

But the task force does say: "Women with a parent, sibling, or child with breast cancer may benefit more than average-risk women from beginning screening between the ages of 40 and 49 years."

Women who are 50-74 should get a biennial screening. That's given a "B" rating: basically, there's more benefit to getting screened in this age group, and getting a
mammogram every other year provides just about the same benefit as annual screening.

"Most people reviewing the science of mammography have reached the same conclusion that mammography can reduce the chance of a woman dying from breast cancer, and all would say that benefits (of mammography) increase with age," says LeFevre, professor, Family and Community Medicine at University of Missouri.

"I want to be very clear. We never said there are no benefits to women in their 40s, but the net benefits are smaller and the potential risks are greater."

An analysis of biennial mammography screening was conducted by six independent modeling research teams from eight academic institutions, all of whom are part of CISNET, the NCI-funded Cancer Intervention and Surveillance Modeling Network and researchers from the Breast Cancer Surveillance Consortium. This analysis — and others conducted by this group — help inform task force mammography recommendations.

This specific analysis found, among other things, that screening biennially from ages 50-74 achieves a median 25.8% breast cancer mortality reduction — averting 7 breast cancer deaths per 1,000 women screened and leads to 953 false positives.

Starting biennial screening at age 40 averts one more death from breast cancer and generates 576 more false positive tests and one more over-diagnosed cancer for every 1.000 women screened.

Here is a simpler way to look at it: for every 1,000 women screened every other year in their 40s through age 74, versus 50 through age 74, one additional breast cancer death will be averted, from eight to seven. But the so-called harms are high: 576 additional false positive tests, 58 unnecessary biopsies and two additional over-diagnosed tumors.

**But What About Me?**

All of these numbers raise the critical question: What if you were that one woman whose death was averted?

That's tough to answer, says medical oncologist Dr. Jame Abraham, director of the Cleveland Clinic's Breast Oncology Program. An individual woman really shouldn't determine whether to screen or not to screen on any one study, a meta-
analysis of many studies, or any computer model, which looks at the population as a whole. Rather, women need to evaluate their own individual circumstances.

"Medicine is not a linear science, it is an art," says Abraham, who has served as the principal investigator of more than 50 clinical trials. "What I do know is that mammography is a low-cost and low-risk procedure that saves lives. I err on the side of caution."

And although he is a scientist who appreciates the back-and-forth volleys of scientific discourse, he also treats breast cancer daily and knows the cost to women and their families.

"My wife is 44-years-old and is not at high-risk for the breast cancer," Abraham says. "I love her and I tell her to get a yearly mammogram."

**Still Some Concerns**

Groups like the American College of Radiology and Society for Breast Imaging are concerned about the draft guidelines.

Among their issues, is their belief the task force "... limited its consideration" to science that underestimate the benefits of regular screening, while inflating claims of over-diagnosis.

"I respect the task force and their specialties but there is not one breast cancer or breast imaging specialist on that committee and we are the best equipped to evaluate these studies," says Dr. Debra Monticciolo, chair of the ACR's Breast Imaging Commission.

Among those studies cited by the ACR as showing mammography's benefits is a recent Pan-Canadian Mammography Study of more than 2.7 million women. The study showed an average mortality reduction of 40 percent, which was the same for women 40-49 as for older age groups. An analysis published in the American Journal of Roentgenology shows that at current mammography screening rates, annual screening starting at age 40 saves approximately 6,500 more women's lives each year in the U.S. than the USPSTF recommendation of screening every other year starting at age 50.

And as far as anxiety about false positives? They point to two JAMA studies showing that short-term anxiety regarding results rapidly decline over time and that nearly all women who experienced a false-positive exam support screening.

The American Cancer Society has some concerns about the "C" rating for mammograms among those women ages 40-49, since "...coverage for
screenings that receive a 'C' rating from USPSTF is not mandated under the Affordable Care Act," according to a statement from the society's Dr. Wedner.

The society also "...strongly supports coverage of breast cancer screening for women in their 40s, and will work to ensure that coverage remains available for screening when a woman and her doctor decide it is in her best interest," he said in the statement.

**Remember - Mammograms Do Have Value**

The best advice is to talk to your doctor about your own personal risks and the benefits and potential harms of mammography, by age.

"As a woman, and a consumer of healthcare and guidelines as well, I do understand that it can be difficult for both patients and their doctors," says the task force's Bibbins-Domingo, professor of medicine and of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco.

Although different physician and advocacy groups have different guidelines regarding mammography, all of them have a woman's good health as their top concern, she says.

And no one — not the task force, cancer experts or any guideline from any group — say that mammograms lack value.

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**Do You Blame a Higher Power When You Get Sick?**

'Negative spiritual beliefs' may lead to worse health, compared to positive beliefs, study suggests

THURSDAY, Oct. 1 2015 (HealthDay News) -- Feeling abandoned or persecuted by a higher power could be bad for your health, new research suggests.

Counseling people to overcome such negative spiritual beliefs could help decrease pain in some and improve their overall health, according to the study authors.

"**In general, the more religious or spiritual you are, the healthier you are, which makes sense,**" author Brick Johnstone, a neuropsychologist and professor of health psychology at the University of Missouri, said in a university news release.
"But for some individuals, even if they have even the smallest degree of negative spirituality -- basically, when individuals believe they're ill because they've done something wrong and God is punishing them -- their health is worse," he added.

The study included nearly 200 people who had health problems such as cancer, chronic pain or traumatic brain injury, and others who were healthy. Those who felt abandoned or punished by a higher power had more pain and worse physical and mental health than those with positive spirituality, the investigators found.

The study was published recently in the Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health. "Previous research has shown that about 10 percent of people have negative spiritual beliefs; for example, believing that if they don't do something right, God won't love them," Johnstone said.

"That's a negative aspect of religion when people believe, 'God is not supportive of me. What kind of hope do I have?' However, when people firmly believe God loves and forgives them despite their shortcomings, they had significantly better mental health," he concluded.

More information
The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about spirituality and health.
SOURCE: University of Missouri, news release, Sept. 23, 2015

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Immigration reform activist Vargas calls for allies at MU

KENDALL FOLEY, 9 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Jose Antonio Vargas is calling for major immigration change on a national level, and he's including MU. It's the incremental progressions that really count, he said during his speech Thursday night in Jesse Hall.

The nationally recognized filmmaker and immigration activist has put himself at the forefront of the immigration-reform movement by launching campaigns, speaking to crowds and attending political events. On Thursday, he made his way to Jesse Hall to speak about his journey and what it means to fight his battle.
Vargas came to America when he was 12 years old. He grew up here, went to school here, attended college here and has worked as a journalist here with nationally recognized publications.

But his life in America was an undocumented one, and that took a toll on him, he said Thursday. So about five years ago, he said he decided to "liberate himself from his own fears."

"Against the advice of about 27 lawyers, I wrote in journalistic detail everything I had to do to stay here in this country as an undocumented immigrant," he said. "And then I waited."

He's still waiting.

"I heard from Stephen Colbert and Bill O'Reilly but nothing from the government."

Vargas said he knows his public declaration was a taunt: "Come and get me." But so far, no one has.

"I spent my entire 20s and teenage years being so scared of this government," he said. "Now I find that maybe they're even more scared of me than I am of them."

That fear Vargas talked about is what he said drove his decision to stop living under the burden of his own identity and to create an unavoidable obstacle in the way of America's immigration avoidance.

Vargas said he's forcing difficult conversations about immigration and revealing that undocumented Americans are within the country and a part of it.

"More than ever, we need you to be allies," Vargas told the crowd.

Late in the speech, Vargas engaged MSA president Payton Head in a conversation about what needs to be done on MU's campus.
"If we don't acknowledge that respect is not something that is happening here on our campus on a daily basis, we cannot get past that," Head said. "There are so many students, like myself, who are uncomfortable on this campus every single day."

"Those of us with privilege have to speak up," Head said.

In bridging the conversations about immigration and racism, both Head and Vargas said people must engage outsiders in the conversation or nothing will ever change — Americans must preach beyond the choir.

Public seminars on function of local government to begin Thursday


Posted: Oct 1, 2015 9:48 AM by Christian Piekos, KOMU 8 Reporter

Updated: Oct 1, 2015 10:48 AM

COLUMBIA - A series of seminars on the many functions of local government in Columbia kicks off Thursday afternoon.

The seminars, which are booked for the month, will take place each Thursday afternoon in October and are being led by the Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy.

Thursday's seminar will feature Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid and City Manager Mike Matthes. But, throughout October, the following speakers will present:
October 8: Police Chief Ken Burton, Citizens Police Review Board Member Kate Busch

October 15: Fire Chief Randy White, a representative from Columbia/Boone County Office of Emergency Management

October 22: Parks and Recreation Director Mike Griggs, a representative from the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services

October 29: Community Development Director Tim Teddy, Regional Economic Development Inc. Director Stacey Button

**MU Graduate Instructor Dana Angello is at the helm of each session.**

"I am very passionate about educating people about government and getting them involved, so we can hold government accountable," Angello said.

Angello said there are few programs available to educate and inform the public on the purpose of local government.

"It's so difficult to find information about local government; there are very few classes on it," Angello said. "Hopefully that will spur them to become more engaged citizens."

Angello thinks local government influences the lives of Columbia residents more so than any other level of government. She said she wants people to leave the sessions feeling more equipped to work with and understand how local government works.

"They'll have more of a context on how government is supposed to run, or understand where they can go if they have a complaint, or how to participate someway in the democratic process," Angello said.

Angello said she hopes those who attend the seminars have an epiphany on how local government plays a role in their daily lives.

"Hopefully, they have an 'ah-ha' moment of how much it affects their life," Angello said. "Maybe realizing that there were some things they were confused about, that they no longer are."

Angello said each seminar is going to start off with attendees getting to know one another, followed by presentations from the speakers, and ending with question and answer sessions.

Angello said each session is capped at 20 people due to budgetary concerns, and all seminars are currently full.

"I hope in the future, we'll have a larger budget or maybe we can find ways to cut the cost a little bit," Angello said.
Paperback Sales Increase while Ebook Sales Decline

By NINA AMEDIN - OCTOBER 1

Some readers are moving away from digital reading and becoming a cross-reader: a person that utilizes both print and digital forms of material. The Association of American Publishers said eBook sales fell 10 percent within the first few months of 2015.

During the great recession, book sales dropped and the e-reader and eBooks emerged. One of the most memorable collapses during this time was Borders book store being bought out by Barnes & Noble. This year the book market is seeing a turnaround in sales.

Doug Wilson, co-owner of Village Books in Columbia, said that he noticed this trend as early as two years ago when his e-book readers began purchasing the same title in print form.

“Readers would go ahead and buy a physical copy,” Wilson said. “We always thought that was a little on the odd side. This is how they were determining that the e-version didn’t have any tangibility to it. It wasn’t something that they considered part of their collection.”
Wilson said that there are too many ways to fall out of the digital experience and that the mind can wander too far when reading an e-book.

The University of Missouri Press publishes many scholarly books. UM Press Director David Rosenbaum said that they did not experience a huge decline in sales when e-readers and eBooks first came to the market.

According to Rosenbaum, only about 10 percent of their sales come from eBooks. He said they still see a large amount of paperback and hardcover readers.

Neither form of reading is expected to fall completely in the near future. However, the Association of American Publishers did find that Paperback sales grew 8.4 percent in the first five months of 2015, compared to the same months in 2014, while eBook sales are down 10.2 percent year-to-date.

Under the Microscope - Five-Year Study Reassesses Missouri Deer Population
Researchers from the University of Missouri are working with the Missouri Department of Conservation on a five-year study of white-tailed deer in the state. The study's goal is to find the survival differences of deer living in north east counties compared to south central counties.

The team of researchers are tracking the movements of deer using GPS collars in Nodaway, Gentry, Andrew, DeKalb, Wright, Texas, Douglas and Howell counties. Once the study is over, the Department of Conservation will use the data to reevaluate deer population management through strategies like hunting.

KBIA’s Michaela Tucker spoke with Jon McRoberts, the project coordinator and wildlife researcher at the University of Missouri, about the progress of the study as it approaches the end of its first year.

Why is it important to reassess the deer population?

The white tailed deer is easily one of the most recognizable wildlife species in Missouri. It's one that occupies a lot of thought for wildlife watchers, white-tailed deer hunters, insurance companies with vehicle collisions, farmers. And so because of that and because the species means so much to so many groups out there, we need to be able to understand the ecology of the species to the best of our ability.

I know that you're using GPS collars on the deer, why was that an important aspect of this research?

Recently, the GPS technology became available. It's much more accurate, it's much more cost efficient. The collars we put on deer take a location every
five hours. And so I can sit at my office in the university with a cup of coffee, after we get the collar on, that's the tricky part, and then receive those data remotely. We can get a precise location much more easily, accurately, and so it's a game changer for wildlife research.

How did you get the GPS collars on the deer?

We use two methods, one's called a Clover Trap. And that's a netted, aluminum frame trap the deer will walk in to eat corn that we've baited the trap with, hit a trip wire and the door closes on them. That’s one method. The other way is something called a **rocket net** and this is an explosively propelled, 40 by 60 foot net and so we prepare a capture site and put a bait pile out and then set the net up and are in a ground blind near the net site, and we wait in the net when the deer come in and have their heads down eating, we can shoot the net. It's a way to get multiple deer at one time. Using the Clover Trap or the rocket net, once we have a deer in hand, we'll blindfold it, we'll take morphometric measurements, we'll get the collar on, we'll take a tissue sample, we'll collect blood. And with our research crews, who became very experienced doing this, we could process a deer anywhere seven to ten minutes usually, sometimes even more quickly.

Now that deer-hunting season has started, what should hunters do if they see a deer with a GPS collar?

What we're encouraging hunters to do is not let the presence of the collar influence their decision to harvest that deer. One of our most important goals from this study is to be able to quantify annual survival of deer. And so, if that collar, if the presence of the collar, influences a hunter's decision to harvest or not harvest that deer, then it will bias our survival estimate. So the message we have to hunters is if you see a collared deer, and there are eight counties in the state where we have been collaring deer, don't let that presence of that collar influence your decision.
What will happen in the next year of the study?

We have two study sites. At each site, our goal is to have 90 deer, 90 adult deer, collared at one particular time. Our specific goals will change each year, depending on what carries over from the previous years. But one thing’s for sure, we'll be capturing deer each year of the project.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU kicks off Shakespeare celebration with an innovative take on 'Romeo and Juliet'

TAYLOR TWELLMAN, 1 hr ago

COLUMBIA — At the close of rehearsal, director Kevin Brown gathered the members of his cast for a final pep talk. It was just eight days before their first performance of "Romeo and Juliet," Shakespeare's classic tale of star-crossed lovers.

“Don’t blink because it will be over when you do,” Kevin Brown told the actors, reminding them to savor their last week before the play opens Friday.

Brown is a professor in the MU Department of Theatre, which is commemorating the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death this year. "Romeo and Juliet," which runs through Sunday, is the first production. It will be followed in November by "Want's Unwisht Work," a Shakespeare-inspired farce set in "a house of feminist study" in Athens, Georgia.

In the spring, the department will be produce Shakespeare's robust comedy "Much Ado About Nothing" and "Rosencrantz and Gildenstern Are Dead," the satire by contemporary playwright Tom Stoppard about two minor characters in "Hamlet."

“It is kind of like the six degrees of Shakespeare, if you will,” Brown said.
On Friday morning, more than 800 students from central Missouri, a number nearly equal to the theater's capacity, will attend a special performance of "Romeo and Juliet." It is part of an effort by the Theatre Department and the University Concert Series to reach young audiences.

**Putting a play together**

Shakespeare wrote "Romeo and Juliet" early in his career, and it has become one of his most frequently performed plays — on stage, in film and TV as a ballet and even on the ice. IMDb, the movie database, lists nearly 200 titles using Romeo and Juliet or a variation. Brown said the play has been translated into more languages than any other play.

His adaptation, he said, will “stay faithful to the text but make it so a contemporary audience will enjoy it.”

Brown and the cast of 22 have been in rehearsals four hours a day, five days a week since the beginning of September.

This is his fifth production for the Theatre Department, and he has worked with many of these actors before, including Alex Givens, who plays Romeo. But Brown said he loves to introduce a different type of directing — he calls it organic — to new cast members, such as freshman Leah Huskey, who is Juliet.

In contemporary theater, the director blocks, or stages, the actors during a rehearsal. The director will tell the actors where to move for proper dramatic effect, ensure sight lines for the audience and work with lighting design for each scene.

Under organic direction, Brown pushes the boundaries by also giving actors a chance to develop their own characters.

During a typical rehearsal, he said he likes to begin by letting the actors "get the show on its feet." Then he watches the actors work out their own ideas, which may push them in unfamiliar directions.
On Tuesday night, for example, he gave instructions to the cast: "Start reading the scene. When you feel motivated to move, then move."

Huskey, who has acted in productions since middle school in Ashland, Missouri, said the approach can be intimidating at first.

"I am very timid when it comes to improvising," she said. "But it really is freeing when you are just like, 'I am going to do what feels right.'"

Givens said he has grown accustomed to Brown's style: "It is a little hard for a lot of actors to be told, 'OK, guys, see what you feel on stage.' But ultimately it is good experience for actors."

**Behind the scenes**

While Brown and his cast were in rehearsal the past month, others in the department were preparing costumes and sets. For "Romeo and Juliet," the set production staff has recreated 16th-century Verona, with stone walls flanking the tile-roofed Capulet house. A marble staircase leads to Juliet's balcony.

Costumes are in Elizabethan style — colorful velvet or brocade gowns for women; cloaks, breeches and feathered caps for men.

“The costumes and the set are going to be gorgeous," Brown said. "We are going with a very gilded and floral look. As the tragedy goes on, the color kind of gets sucked out of the show, so it should be really cool."

He has been involved with theater for more than 25 years, directing dozens of shows, including five for the MU Theatre Department. He said he started acting when he was 8, under his father, who taught theater in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

"After that, on family vacations, I would make my cousins preform plays with me for the rest of our family," he said.
In high school and college, Brown became a stage technician, production manager, stage manager, actor and then director. He graduated from the University of Colorado in Boulder where he earned both master's and doctoral degrees in theater. He joined the faculty at MU in May 2010 and teaches script analysis, digital media and performance classes.

Brown said he was surprised by how many aspiring actors auditioned for the Shakespearean work.

“We had over 50 actors come to audition, which is more people auditioning than I have ever seen,” he said.

"You know, I had to turn away some great actors. Everybody that is in the show is top notch. I really treat them as a professional ensemble.”