Grad Students at Missouri Will Keep Getting Health-Insurance Subsidies

October 15, 2015 by Andy Thomason

The University of Missouri’s chancellor has guaranteed that the institution will continue to subsidize graduate students’ health insurance, the Columbia Missourian reports.

The assurance comes two months after the university abruptly informed its graduate students they would stop receiving health-insurance subsidies because of a recent ruling by the Internal Revenue Service (here’s an explainer on the controversy). A student backlash prompted the university to apologize and reinstate the subsidies.

According to the Missourian, the chancellor, R. Bowen Loftin, said at a faculty meeting on Wednesday that a task force was still discussing how the university would provide the subsidies. Faculty members have asked for a permanent decision, saying their recruiting efforts could be damaged if the health-insurance issue was not resolved soon.

Mizzou Grad Students Will Still Get Health Coverage

October 16, 2015

The University of Missouri at Columbia will offer graduate student workers health insurance next year, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said this week, according to the Columbia Daily Tribune. The news came after weeks of outcry from graduate students over the university’s announcement just days before classes started that it would cancel graduate student
health insurance subsidies. The university blamed its choice on a new federal interpretation of the Affordable Care Act limiting how individual subsidies could be used to buy health insurance.

Mizzou -- unlike most universities, which have employer-sponsored health insurance plans -- offers graduate student workers individual subsidies to buy their own health insurance. A week after the August announcement, amid student protests and questions from faculty members about how they could recruit new graduate students under such circumstances, Mizzou put its decision on hold. Loftin’s announcement this week cements the university’s plan to continue to provide health insurance coverage in some form, at least through next year, but he was short on details about how the university would do it and still comply with the ACA. A university task force will make recommendations on how to do so by the end of next month.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Graduate students, still frustrated, hold grade-in

RUTH SERVEN, 10 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Graduate students held a grade-in Thursday at Jesse Hall in conjunction with graduate worker unions across the country.

On Wednesday, Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin guaranteed health insurance subsidies for graduate student workers. At the grade-in, some of the students said they had heard of the statement but that they were unsatisfied.

"On the one hand, I'm glad to hear it, but on the other hand," said Eric Scott, co-chair of the Forum on Graduate Rights's organizing committee. He then held up a hand-lettered sign which said, "Why didn't you tell us first?"

Throughout the day, graduate students held office hours and graded papers in Jesse Hall.

Aleksandra Kinlen, a second year doctoral student in the Department of History, sat on the floor and graded 98 midterms. Kinlen said she hadn't received any official university email informing her of the insurance guarantee.
"I have no idea what's going on," she said.

The subsidies were originally canceled Aug. 14 and were then temporarily reinstated Aug. 21. Loftin formed a graduate insurance task force in August and asked it to make a recommendation to solve the health insurance issue by Nov. 30.

Rachel Bauer, a member of the task force, said Thursday that she and other graduate students on the task force that she spoke to were not notified before the chancellor spoke Wednesday. Bauer said she thought the statement was made on an understanding of the task force's preliminary, informal recommendations.

Scott said the Coalition of Graduate Workers, the unionization organization formed out of the Forum on Graduate Rights, is effectively a member of the National Educators Association's Missouri chapter. Scott said that the Coalition of Graduate Workers is in the process of formalizing its agreement with NEA and becoming an official union.

The grade-in was held in solidarity with a nationwide campaign called #WeAreWorkers, Scott said. #WeAreWorkers was organized by graduate students workers from different unions, from schools across the country.

Graduate student workers at Columbia University have been organizing a union since January 2014.

"It just made a lot of sense (to unionize). I had just started teaching (a semester before), and it's very clearly work," said Alyssa Greene, a fourth year doctoral student and a teaching fellow at Columbia.

Columbia University's union, the Graduate Workers of Columbia University, is a part of the United Automobile Workers labor union, but because of labor laws governing private universities, they are not recognized by Columbia University's administration.

Greene recommended that graduate students at MU keep organizing.
"Your (chancellor) saying he'll reinstate insurance isn't the same as making a contract," she said. "A personal guarantee isn't enough. If you were in an office in a corporation, and your boss stopped by and said he'd give you a raise, you'd want to see it in writing."

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**ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

**Mizzou reverses course, will continue to pay graduate health insurance**

**University of Missouri-Columbia graduate assistants appear to have won their battle to retain the university-paid health insurance subsidies they were stripped of earlier this year.**

Mizzou Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin told a meeting of faculty Wednesday the university will be able to cover health insurance payments for graduate assistants for the foreseeable future.

Loftin did not offer further details or say what has changed since August, when the university announced — two weeks before the start of the school year — that it would no longer provide subsidies to its graduate assistants to pay for health coverage.

School spokesman Christian Basi said the university will have more details at some point before the end of the year.

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

Many of them are highly recruited and turned down offers from other schools to come to Mizzou, in part, because of the benefits package, including the health coverage.

The school’s earlier decision to roll back the benefits threatened to damage Mizzou’s reputation both inside and outside of Columbia as grad students loudly protested the policy change, staging a walkout and launching a social media campaign.

Faculty also joined the fight, protesting alongside graduate students and writing a letter to the chancellor expressing their opposition.

A main gripe among faculty was that the policy change would put Mizzou at a severe disadvantage in recruiting new graduate assistants.

“The fact is people across the U.S. are watching to see how Mizzou was going to handle this,” said Matt McCune, a research assistant pursuing a doctorate in physics. “There was really no way they could deny us this.”
But McCune said a guarantee from the university doesn’t carry the same weight it once did.

“We were guaranteed health coverage by our departments, and in August that went away,” he said. “It’s hard to really trust a guarantee. If the situation changes, (Loftin) could change his mind again.”

Mizzou initially pointed to the Affordable Care Act as the reason for the policy change. School officials said 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.

Other schools, however, have interpreted the law differently and continued to offer health subsidies without interruption.

By changing the policy, Mizzou stood to save millions. The school spent about $4 million on health insurance stipends for 3,100 graduate students in 2014.

Before this week’s announcement, Mizzou had already somewhat backed off the policy change and agreed to extend the health stipends for another year.

That concession came after intense student backlash and pressure from Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo.

Missouri will pay for grad assistants' health insurance

COLUMBIA (AP) — Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin says the University of Missouri will pay health insurance premiums for graduate student employees next year.

Loftin announced the move Wednesday at a meeting where faculty expressed concerns about recruiting graduate students for next year.
The Columbia Daily Tribune reported reports Loftin said the university would cover insurance costs, but he did not give more specifics.

The university told graduate assistants in August it could no longer pay for their health insurance premiums because of a recent IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act.

But the university later created the task force to find a way to continue covering graduate assistants' health care costs. The task force panel could publish its recommendations in the next month.

Loftin: 'Issues' led to med school dean's resignation

By Megan Favignano

Thursday, October 15, 2015 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said “certain issues” contributed to Patrick Delafontaine’s resignation as dean of the School of Medicine last month, though he did not specify what those issues were.

Delafontaine continues to teach and conduct research for the university. When Delafontaine started last December, Loftin said at a faculty meeting Wednesday, he initially reported to Hal Williamson, who was vice chancellor for health sciences at the time, and Ken Dean, who was interim provost.

Loftin said Williamson brought issues to his attention. Loftin said the need to protect personnel privacy limited what he could say about Delafontaine’s resignation.

“Certain things emerged during the seven months between Dec. 1 and June 30 when Dr. Williamson was the primary person working on a regular basis with Dr. Delafontaine,” Loftin said. “I was aware of certain issues that emerged then.”

MU turned to a consulting agency to examine its structure before hiring a replacement for Williamson. During that time, Loftin said, he worked more directly with Delafontaine.

“The same issues Dr. Williamson had been aware of and reported to me were still ongoing,” Loftin said. “I cannot go into more details than that to respect the privacy of people involved. Over a period of time — Dec. 1 to the early part of September of this year — there was significant consultation with the dean about the issues I allude to here.”
Delafontaine, who resigned last month, said Thursday he was unaware of Loftin’s comments to faculty members. Delafontaine declined to comment further.

Also at Wednesday’s meeting, faculty asked Loftin whether pressure from state lawmakers contributed to the university ending clinical agreements with Planned Parenthood. The agreements allowed students to perform practicums at the Columbia clinic.

Loftin said he asked departments to review their agreements with the clinic and to only keep agreements that were active. One agreement with Planned Parenthood and MU’s School of Social Work was active and was not canceled. Loftin said two new agreements are being established with Planned Parenthood to allow nursing students to complete practicums at the clinic.

“The direction the deans have received is simply: ‘Do you have a demand in your student body for these agreements to be in place and enable them to have practicums at that location? Then do it,’ ” Loftin said. “We’re simply writing them in a way to make sure we’re compliant with the state law.”

Missouri law prohibits public institutions from encouraging women to have abortions or to spend public money on abortions. MU officials reviewed the clinical agreements with Planned Parenthood after the state Senate Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life scrutinized MU’s relationship with Planned Parenthood.

Lawmaker takes credit for ending privileges for Columbia abortion clinic doctor

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, October 15, 2015 at 10:49 am

State Rep. Diane Franklin on Wednesday took credit for the decision to end “refer and follow” privileges at University of Missouri Health Care that has put Planned Parenthood’s abortion services in Columbia in jeopardy.

“We inquired of course about the privileges that were granted, and you saw the result of that,” said Franklin, chairwoman of the Children and Families Committee. “Those refer and follow privileges are going to expire Dec. 1.”

The decision to end refer and follow privileges was made by the executive committee of the MU Health medical staff at a Sept. 21 meeting. Steve Whitt, chief medical officer of MU Health Care, said that when the decision was made public, committee members did not discuss the Columbia clinic but understood the political atmosphere surrounding the meeting. MU also ended several clinical agreements its schools had in place with Planned Parenthood’s local clinic.

UM System spokesman John Fougere said Thursday that Wolfe met with the legislators but “President Wolfe had no involvement at all” in the MU Health committee’s decision.

The hearing Wednesday was held to take testimony about the disposal of fetal tissue from Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis clinic and discuss possible legislation for 2016. Mary Kogut, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri, did not accept an invitation to testify.

Kogut and Laura McQuade, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, issued a joint statement before the hearing.

“The interim committees have done enough damage in pressuring the University of Missouri to violate federal law and cut ties with Planned Parenthood,” they said. “We call on the University of Missouri to stand up to bullying politicians, follow their mission to advance patient-centered care and provide students with excellent educational opportunities by restoring contracts and privileges with Planned Parenthood.”

The hearing produced testimony about paperwork problems at Pathology Services Inc. in St. Louis but no evidence that tissue has been used for research. The company owned by James Miller has a contract to do examinations required by state law.

For most of an hour, Miller described in detail how couriers pick up the fetal material, how it is packed and how it is handled.

“It is preservative that preserves the formation so it can be evaluated, but that is all you can do with it,” Miller told members who asked him to describe the effect of formaldehyde on the tissue.

Attorney General Chris Koster issued a report on Sept. 28 that his office found no evidence Planned Parenthood had acted illegally in Missouri after an examination of all abortion records for the month of June. Efforts toward state and federal probes of Planned Parenthood began in July after the Center for Medical Progress released videos that showed officials discussing the sale of fetal tissue. Planned Parenthood officials said the videos were heavily edited.

Fetal tissue is shipped to a medical waste incinerator unless the parents request it to be returned for burial, Miller said.
Rep. Mike Moon, R-Ash Grove, and vice chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, asked Miller if all the tissue intended for the incinerator gets there. Miller said it is possible not all the tissue makes it, but not probable.

With Koster’s report, abortion opponents had failed to show that anything improper was occurring, Rep. Stacey Newman, D-Richmond Heights, said.

“A few of us are kind of perplexed on why you are actually here,” she said.

Pathology Services Inc. has allowed its corporate registration to lapse on several occasions. Miller blamed a period when pathology reports on abortions were not reaching the state on a change in law that was misunderstood.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

GUEST COMMENTARY: Eliminating inequality, injustice at MU is our responsibility

STEPHANIE SHONEKAN, 1 hr ago

As a member of the MU community and as chair of the Department of Black Studies, it is necessary to acknowledge and amplify the great social justice work that our students are actively engaged in.

For the past two years, they have organized and conducted marches, silent processions, sit-ins, study-ins, die-ins, town halls and discussions, all geared toward addressing national and local problems dealing with race and racism.

I realize that as a black studies scholar, I am in a unique position to understand that these sorts of actions have been effective in shifting the way people think about identity and culture in the U.S. As a field, black studies was founded by this sort of agitation. In the 1950s and 1960s, university administrators had to listen to these voices, and they implemented new programs and concentrations on campuses all over the country. So it is important that we listen carefully to what our students are trying to tell us.
About a week ago, the U.S. lost a great civil rights activist, Grace Lee Boggs, a Chinese American who found great purpose in working to eradicate social inequalities and injustice. Her wisdom is relevant in so many ways to what we are going through here at MU.

According to Boggs, “You cannot change any society unless you take responsibility for it, unless you see yourself as belonging to it and responsible for changing it.” The students who have tried to raise awareness to the racial climate on MU’s campus embody this challenge. They are taking responsibility for the society to which they aspire to belong. They are exerting mental and physical energy and time to drive change in this society.

We should all do the same. As administrators, faculty, staff and students, we all inhabit and make up this unique space called MU. We live, work, learn, teach, do research and, ultimately, hope to grow as an intellectual community. When a part of our community is uncomfortable, we should all feel the weight of that burden to push for meaningful change.

If citizenship is to be measured by the amount of effort and dedication expended on making a society a more just and amenable space for all, then these students are the best citizens that MU has to offer. The work that they are doing for all of us — across race, nationality, gender and sexual orientation — should be commended and encouraged. And at the very least, it should be acknowledged for what it is: a valiant attempt to change our culture and our society for the better.

If our students feel a need to march, protest and raise awareness about their position on this campus and the need to address what they perceive to be a racist environment, our job is to listen, acknowledge, think and design curriculum and programs that address these concerns so that ultimately we can all inhabit a society for which we are proud.

Black Studies is a department that promotes and supports scholarship and critical thinking about global black experiences, but it is also a resource for the rest of the campus as they contend with these important messages that our students are sending us.
Stephanie Shonekan is an associate professor of ethnomusicology and black studies. She is chair of the Department of Black Studies at MU.

Union employees upset with UM System over pay increase

Watch story: http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31014&zone=5&categories=5

COLUMBIA - Normally, getting a raise at work is cause for celebration.

But a group of employees in the UM System say they are not pleased with a recent decision to increase pay 1% across the board.

This pay raise, authorized by UM System officials on Oct. 11 is a merit-based pay increase.

MU, MU Health Care, and UMKC are represented by the Laborers' International Union of North America Local 773, or LiUNA. The union covers around 1,000 staff jobs like custodians and cafeteria workers.

The group held a closed meeting Thursday evening to discuss the UM System's decision and what the union will do next.

Documents obtained by KOMU 8 News show some of the discussion between UM System representatives and LiUNA representatives.

The Union Proposal included a 1% pay raise that was not merit-based.

The UM System Response to the proposal said in part "on or about September 28, 2015, I {University of Missouri System assistant vice president of human resources Kelley Stuck} asked you to provide me a list of the items you believed we had reached agreement on and, conversely, another list of those items as to which no agreement had been reached."

Local 773 field representative Regina Guevera said negotiations between the two sides started in April.
"From the very beginning they {the UM System} said they weren't going to force merit-pay down our throat. Well that didn't happen," Guevera said.

She said she is upset with the UM System, and feels merit-based pay is unfair.

"I'm so frustrated right now, the University has really done an injustice I think," Guevera said.

The UM System said it values its staff and does not want the staff to be "caught in the middle" of the disagreements.

UM System spokesman John Fougere emailed a statement to KOMU 8 News.

"The university has put in hundreds of hours trying to work with the union to reach agreement, focusing on enabling our union eligible employees to gain greater salary through merit increases and expanded pay ranges than what they might have under the longstanding union compensation structure. Our priority is to ensure employee pay is market competitive, compared to like jobs in the recruitment area, evidenced by the fact that we are implementing across-the-board pay increases effective for the current pay period while introducing merit pay at MU Health Care at the same time."

**Majority of male students don't believe sexual assault a problem at MU**

**Eighty percent of undergraduate men at MU believe sexual assault is not a problem on campus.**

Only 19.6 percent of undergraduate males, compared to 37.1 percent of undergraduate females, at MU reported that sexual assault or sexual misconduct is very much or extremely problematic at MU, according to the AAU Climate Survey released Sept. 21. The survey, released Sept. 27, collected data from 27 universities around the country about sexual assault on their campuses.

The same survey results report that one-third of MU senior women experienced unwanted sexual conduct during their time at MU.

17.9 percent of male undergraduates suspect a friend may have been sexually assaulted compared to 28.7 percent of female undergraduates.

Although MU already recognized there was a sexual assault problem on campus,"the survey is an opportunity for us to take a closer look at what the climate actually is here," MU Title IX Coordinator Ellen Eardley said after the survey was announced.
8.8 percent of male undergraduates intervened to stop an incident of sexual assault compared to 12.1 percent of undergraduates females.

“The numbers range on each campus,” Eardley said. “But all of the numbers are too high.”

These statistics suggest that the definitions of sexual assault, harassment or misconduct may be different for men and women at MU. However, a larger population of the women at MU completed the survey than men.

Parker Briden, vice president of public relations for the Interfraternity Council, said IFC is “doing whatever we can” to educate its members about sexual assault, specifically on the topics of bystander intervention and consent.

“(At our regular committee meetings), we have talked about how important is it to educate all members on consent and eliminating sexual misconduct,” Briden said. “We want to do what we can within our own sphere of influence.”

This is the first semester IFC has implemented the peer educator program, Briden said.

“We want our fraternity men to have the best education to prevent sexual misconduct on campus,” Briden said. “We want to use everything in our tool chest to make that happen.”

Mizzou Athletics has been under scrutiny in the past for sexual assault, specifically for the case of Sasha Menu Courey, who was allegedly raped by a member of the football team. Menu Courey took her own life in June 2011.

Since the incident, MU has made several policy changes, including promoting the Title IX Coordinator position to full-time and requiring all UM System employees to report any assault or harassment information to the Title IX office.

A sexual assault communications task force was appointed by former athletic director Mike Alden in March 2014 to review existing Intercollegiate Athlete policies, according to a summary of athletic department educational and communication initiatives.

Alden implemented the “See it, Hear it, Own it” policy, also known as SHO. Student athletes and staff received wristbands and T-shirts with the “SHO-Up!” logo.

The “SHO-Up!” T-shirts are to be worn on the fourth Friday of every month to serve as a visual reminder of student athlete and staff responsibility in response to sexual assault.

Student athletes also participate in regular programs and discussions with Title IX directors and MU Intercollegiate Athlete faculty.

20.5 percent of undergraduate men witnessed someone acting in a sexually violent or harassing manner compared to 27.1 percent of female undergrads.
MU Provost Garnett Stokes will create a task force to take a harder look at the survey results, create focus groups and implement a strategic plan “to make sure that we are building upon the education efforts that have already been ongoing on campus,” Eardley said.

2 percent of male undergraduates believe they are very or extremely likely to experience sexual assault or misconduct on campus compared to 12.3 percent of female undergraduates.

Of female undergraduates at MU, 18.1 percent participated in the AAU Climate Survey while only 9.6 percent of undergraduate males participated in the survey, according to the AAU Climate Survey.

The survey reported that female students are also four times more likely than male students to be a victim of nonconsensual penetration or sexual touching due to force.

This year, many different programs are being implemented for the general student population at MU.

All new and incoming students must participate in one of these programs, the new Not Anymore online training, that “provides baseline understanding about what sexual assault is, what consent is, what healthy relationships looks like, and also provides them information about their rights and their options,” Eardley said.

One of the most important messages of Not Anymore, Eardley said, is bystander intervention, which teaches students how to stand up and say something when they find themselves or their peers in an unacceptable situation.

The training also gives students the opportunity to build up their knowledge by offering follow up discussions and talking more in detail about sexual assault education.

Eardley held a press conference Sept. 21 to discuss the survey results and present strategies on how to confront them.

“The Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center on campus has done an excellent job and it’s an amazing resource that the University of Missouri has had that a number of universities don’t have a resource like this,” Eardley said.

Over the last year, the RSVP Center hired three additional staff members to work on education and prevention as well as advocacy, Eardley said.

The Interfraternity Council is participating in the RSVP Center’s initiative for men peer educators who go out and teach other fraternity men about sexual assault and bystander intervention, Eardley said.
MU gender neutral bathrooms map takes side on statewide issue

Watch story: [http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31008&zone=2,5&categories=2,5](http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31008&zone=2,5&categories=2,5)

COLUMBIA - MU's Missouri Student Association, or MSA, released a Gender Neutral Bathroom's map in early September, in an effort to make all students, regardless of their gender identity, feel safe.

The effort was spearheaded by MSA President Payton Head, who said he got the idea from a friend who identifies as transgender, and is also an MU student.

"The idea of a map was created with the intention of letting students know a place where they can feel safe is," Head said. "We all pay money, you know, we all are walking around this campus, we all are contributing to the state in some way or another, and we have the right to feel safe and included on this campus."

"I feel pretty uncomfortable and unsafe in a lot of the men's bathrooms," said Cole Young, an MU sophomore who only uses gender neutral bathrooms.

He said, if he can't find one, then he would prefer to wait.

"I've been late to class, I've been late to work, I've gone halfway across campus just to use a bathroom that I feel comfortable in," Young said.

He said the importance of having gender neutral bathrooms isn't to necessarily change the physical bathrooms, but the language in order to make it more acceptable of all gender identities.

"All gender bathrooms mean anyone: man, woman, non-binary. Because there's more than just two genders," Young said.

Young, who often does panels to educate the community on transgender issues and discussions, explained that there is a "trans-umbrella." It includes "binary trans" people who identify as either a transgender man or a transgender woman. And then there are people who don't feel that they
belong to a gender. They either feel somewhere in between male and female, or completely outside of both. Those individuals are referred to as "non-binary."

Both Head and Young haven't found that there's been local backlash against the new map; however, Missouri legislator Jeff Pogue, R-Salem, created two bills in March of 2015 that went completely against this effort, and many like it around the state.

House Bill 1338 stated, "All public restrooms, other than single occupancy public restrooms, shall be designated as gender-divided restrooms."

While House Bill 1339 stated, "No state revenues shall be appropriated to or extended upon any entity that adopts or implements any project, program, or policy that creates or attempts to create a gender-neutral environment in a previously gender-divided environment..."

Neither bill passed, but Head is open to discuss any bills similar to them.

"If the state is not behind it, then you need to get on board. Because in the next 20 years, 25 years, the students who are sitting right here... will be the ones behind the desks, making these decisions," Head said.

"I myself believe we're living in a time where we're sacrificing our morals and traditions just to be politically correct," said Skyler Roundtree, the president of the Mizzou Republicans. "A little bit of what his legislation was trying to do was to prevent something more extreme from happening in the future."

However, Young said that regardless of who's against it, everyone deserves to feel safe about something as simple as using the bathroom.

"It's not exactly fair for you to be able to use the bathroom and say, 'well I don't think you should be able to have a safe space, but I also don't think you should be in my bathroom. Because where would we go,'" Young said.

KOMU 8 News reached out to Pogue to get his perspective on the maps, and he didn't wish to comment. He said he isn't sure if he'll pursue the same bills, or any similar to it, next session.
Would you buy a biodegradable phone?

Even low exposure to electronic components in old mobile phones may pose serious health risks. Now researchers are on the path to creating biodegradable electronics by using organic components in screen displays.

Suchismita Guha, a professor in the physics and astronomy department at the University of Missouri, collaborated with a team from the Federal University of ABC (UFABC) in Brazil to develop organic structures that could be used to light handheld device screens. Using peptides, or proteins, researchers were able to demonstrate that these tiny structures, when combined with a blue light-emitting polymer, could successfully be used in displays.

“These peptides can self-assemble into beautiful nanostructures or nanotubes, and, for us, the main goal has been to use these nanotubes as templates for other materials,” Guha says. “By combining organic semiconductors with nanomaterials, we were able to create the blue light needed for a display.

“However, in order to make a workable screen for your mobile phone or other displays, we’ll need to show similar success with red and green light-emitting polymers.”

The scientists also discovered that by using peptide nanostructures they were able to use less of the polymer. Using less to create the same blue light means that the nanocomposites achieve almost 85 percent biodegradability.

“By using peptide nanostructures, which are 100 percent biodegradable, to create the template for the active layer for the polymers, we are able to understand how electronics themselves can be more biodegradable,” Guha says. “This research is the first step and the first demonstration of using such biology to improve electronics.”

An article in Advanced Materials Interfaces describes the work, which the National Science Foundation and CNPq supported.
Researchers are looking for a cure for Duchenne muscular dystrophy

Watch story: [http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31007&zone=2,5&categories=2,5](http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31007&zone=2,5&categories=2,5)

COLUMBIA - **Thursday, a new technology was introduced at MU’s Tech Expo could help find a cure for Duchenne muscular dystrophy, DMD, in the near future.**

DMD is a genetic disorder that causes progressive muscular weakness and irreversible deterioration of muscles. As of right now, there is no cure.

The CEO and Founder of Solid Biosciences, Ilan Ganot, introduced a gene delivery technology that is looking to change that.

Ganot said the gene therapy approach is an attempt to effectively replace a defective gene with a new copy of a functional gene.

He said his company has partnered with a group of individuals at the University of Missouri, led by Dongsheng Duan, a muscle biologist.

Ganot said Duan has lots of experience with animals related to this disease.

"This technology could well translate into a real change for this disease for basically every patient," Ganot said.

Ganot said DMD affects one in 3-4 thousands newborn boys. He also said there usually is no family history of the disease.

He said people who have DMD are usually wheelchair bound by their teenage years and typically die in their 20s.

Ganot's son, Eytani, was diagnosed with DMD three years ago on this day. He said the diagnosis was very unexpected. He said at the time his son was a little slow, but not very different from his age group. He said overtime, the gap between his son and his son's age group has significantly widened.
Ganot gave up his career as an investment banker to start his company in hopes to find a treatment, or even a cure.

Ganot's named his business, Solid Biosciences, after his son. Eytani, means "solid" in Hebrew.

Girls are typically not affected by the disease. Ganot said the disease is an X chromosome defect. Since girls have two X chromosomes, they can carry the gene but not become sick. On the other hand, if the X chromosome in a boy is affected, they will become sick.

The Boston Globe

Study finds state liquor laws saving more women than men

Stricter alcohol laws save lives — but for women more than men.

That’s the conclusion of a study published Thursday in the journal Preventing Chronic Disease. A team led by researchers at Boston Children’s Hospital and the Boston University School of Public Health found that women are less likely to die from alcoholic cirrhosis in states where it is harder to buy booze or where drunk driving is more severely punished.

For men, however, state laws had no significant effect on rates of death from this liver disease.

Experts chalk the gender discrepancy up to hormones. Thanks to testosterone, men are more prone to risk-taking behaviors, which could explain why they might flout state laws by bringing a six-pack to a public park.

"Men are generally more likely to ignore legal restrictions," said David Geary, an evolutionary psychologist at the University of Missouri who was not involved in the study.

Last year, Dr. Timothy Naimi, a physician and alcohol epidemiologist at Boston University, showed that stricter laws reduce binge drinking. But he wanted to know whether these laws help to prevent alcohol-related deaths, as well.

So Naimi teamed up with Dr. Scott Hadland, a pediatrician at Boston Children’s, to look at how state alcohol laws affect deaths from alcoholic cirrhosis.

More than 35,000 American die each year from this disease, which occurs when the liver becomes overwhelmed by the amount of alcohol in the blood and can no longer function.
While booze might cost more in one state than it does in another because of state taxes, there are many other laws that can influence drinking habits: restrictions on liquor ads, times when alcohol can’t be sold, limits on how much can be bought, places where it is illegal to drink, required warnings about fetal alcohol syndrome, and more.

The researchers combined 29 different variables to create a single measure of legal stringency called the “alcohol policy scale.”

Comparing the scale for each state with cirrhosis deaths between 1999 and 2008, they found that a 10 percent increase in the strictness of liquor laws was associated with a 9 percent reduction in the number of women killed by alcoholic cirrhosis.

For men, there was only a 3 percent reduction — an effect so small that it could be attributed to chance.

In some ways, the results were no surprise to Hadland. He knew from his teenage patients that the cost of booze or the severity of drunk driving laws could dissuade them from drinking.

“I’ve really seen how the broader policy environment sends messages to youth,” he said.

Notably, state alcohol laws had little impact on American Indians or Alaska Natives. These groups often have limited access to health care, which could drive up the numbers of people who die from preventable diseases.

Plus, “state law may not diffuse onto reservations as much,” Naimi noted.

Despite these distinctions, the bottom line is that stricter alcohol policies, no matter how much you dislike them, are a good bet in terms of public health.

So if you’re living in Boston and you drive north across the New Hampshire line for cheaper booze, you might just be circumventing some life-saving legislation.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Corn, soybean harvest falls short of last year's bonanza

JENNIFER LU, 14 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Just as he waited for the weather to cooperate in the spring, Tim Reinbott is playing the waiting game this fall.
Although 90 percent of the 300-acre corn crop at Bradford Research Center, a farm and agriculture research laboratory at MU, has been harvested, Reinbott is waiting to cut the remaining corn, which had to be replanted after rains in mid-May and June drowned out the newly sowed kernels in some fields.

Reinbott, superintendent of Bradford Research Center, is also worried about the soybean crop. Due to the rains, the research farm planted its 325th acre on July 15, "the very last day they let us plant under crop insurance," he said.

"Usually, you like to get things wrapped up by the first week of November," Reinbott said. "You hope for October, because once the weather changes on you, you get into some problems. I'm afraid the frost will dictate what happens."

Across Missouri, spring rains delayed soybean planting. While soybeans in some counties have caught up in growth and maturation in time for the harvest, in other counties the beans are still green and maturing.

Wet weather early in the growing season also meant fewer acres of planted corn. Nevertheless, the forecast for yields per acre put both corn and soybeans above the five-year average, although they fall short of 2014's banner year.

Soybeans and corn are the two largest cash crops in Missouri, which had a combined value of $4.5 billion last year.

The late plantings are reflected in a later harvest for soybeans. As of Oct. 11, 71 percent of the soybean crop had lost leaves, a sign of physical maturity, compared to 80 percent at the same time last year.

John Williamson, a sixth-generation farmer in the Missouri River bottoms near McBaine, said he was fortunate to have planted all 1,100 acres of soybeans.
"We did lose some of the crops in places where water stood in the field," he said, but he estimated that 90 to 95 percent of his soybean crop survived.

Williamson began harvesting his bean fields at the end of September. He expects to finish this weekend, when the possibility of frost is in the forecast.

Although he hasn't weighed them yet, Williamson estimated a return of between 40 to 50 bushels per acre, which he described as good.

Last year, Missouri averaged 46.5 bushels per acre on soybeans.

This year, Missouri led the Corn Belt in acres of unplanted soybeans and corn — the main reason the harvest lags behind last year's, said Robert Garino, a state statistician at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Columbia.

Weeks of steady spring rain that cut short the end of the corn planting window and postponed the start of the soybean planting window kept many farmers from sowing as many acres as they had intended to plant. The lost acreage because of bad weather is called prevented planting.

This year, prevented planting acres totaled half a million for corn and 1 million for soybeans, Garino said.

In other words, for every 7 acres of corn planted in Missouri, 1 acre was not, according to USDA data. Soybeans fared worse. For every 5 acres of soybeans planted, 1 acre was not.

That's twice as many unplanted acres for corn and four times as many unplanted acres for soybeans compared to last year.

Keith Schnarre, who grows corn and soybeans on his Centralia farm, said that while the corn was planted on schedule, he didn't get all his beans planted until the second week of July. He began harvesting them earlier this week.
"We got just a few acres of beans prevented," Schnarre said. "We put in 95 percent of the soybean. We got all our corn in."

He declined to say how many acres he planted or his expected yield per acre, but said that both figures were lower than last year.

"Last year was a super bumper year," he said. "This year's over. You start again next year."

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

A University Debates How to Carry Out a Divisive Guns-on-Campus Law

By Katherine Mangan OCTOBER 15, 2015

NO MU MENTION

On August 1, 2016 — exactly 50 years after a student named Charles Whitman climbed into the University of Texas tower and shot 46 people, killing 14 of them — a new law on concealed firearms will take effect here. Already, emotions are exploding.

The law, known as SB 11 or "campus carry," will allow people who hold concealed-handgun licenses to bring their weapons into public-university buildings, including classrooms and dormitories, across the state.

The legislation applies to private four-year colleges as well, but they can opt out. Starting in 2017, it will apply to community colleges too.

The fact that the rollout coincides with the anniversary of one of the most infamous mass shootings in history isn’t lost on either supporters or opponents of the law.
Against this backdrop of fiercely held and conflicting beliefs, a 19-member committee, appointed by the flagship campus’s president, Gregory L. Fenves, is struggling to devise recommendations on how to carry out the new law.

The committee’s work, which is likely to be closely watched in states, like Wisconsin, that are facing the prospect of similar laws, shows how polarizing the debate over guns on campuses is.

Texas law has, for 20 years, allowed licensed gun owners, who generally have to be at least 21, to carry concealed handguns on campus grounds. The change that has people here on edge is that the law would extend that into campus buildings. As a last-minute compromise, lawmakers added a provision to give universities the discretion to set "reasonable rules and regulations" that would establish limited gun-free zones, as long as those rules do not have the effect of prohibiting license holders from carrying their guns on the campus.

In addition to meeting with students, faculty, and staff, the working group has been studying the experiences of seven other states, including Utah and Colorado, with similar right-to-carry laws. None of the other states, however, give universities the wiggle room that the Texas law does to designate gun-free zones, said Steven J. Goode, a law professor and chairman of the working group. "We’re on our own there."

The group plans to submit its recommendations to Mr. Fenves by the end of November. He and his staff will devise rules that, to go into effect, must be approved by the system’s Board of Regents, probably at its February meetings. (The regents could also amend the rules.)

**Powerful Voices Ignored**

Mr. Goode said his group had received more than 3,000 comments about the law, with the overwhelming majority from people who oppose it.
Opponents of the law are pushing for widespread restrictions that would ban guns in classrooms, dormitories, and faculty offices. Among them is Javier Auyero, a professor of Latin American sociology who wants the working group to dedicate a few buildings for faculty members and students who aren’t comfortable teaching or learning in a classroom with guns.

Mr. Auyero, whose research focuses on interpersonal violence, said that lawmakers who approved the campus-carry law ignored objections from officials like the chancellor of the University of Texas system, William H. McRaven, a four-star admiral and Navy Seal who oversaw the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, and the chief of the Austin City Police, Art Acevedo.

"I suspect they know a thing or two about situations in which guns are involved," Mr. Auyero said.

A few supporters of the law also spoke up at one of two public forums that have been held over the last month.

Justin Stone, a first-year law student who holds a concealed-gun license, said people like himself are trustworthy.

"We are not vigilantes," he said. "We are not a danger to this campus. We are not the bad guys you read about in the news."

Another supporter of the law, Tina Maldonado, is a senior administrative associate in the campus’s Applied Research Laboratories. She told the panel that holders of concealed-handgun licenses are law-abiding citizens who should be trusted with their weapons.

Ms. Maldonado, who is also a firearms instructor, said some of the deaths that occurred in the recent mass shooting at Umpqua Community College, in Oregon, might have been avoided if someone other than the killer had been armed.

"There was no one licensed to carry in any of those classrooms," said Ms. Maldonado, "no one to protect themselves against that monster."
But those views are in the minority here.

**Petitions and Protests**

As of Wednesday a petition asking Gov. Greg Abbott to repeal the law had attracted nearly 7,000 signatures.

In addition, more than 600 faculty members on the Austin campus had signed a petition objecting to allowing guns in their classrooms.

Among those protesting the new policy were 52 members of the flagship’s psychology department, who signed a statement this week saying there was no evidence that having concealed guns on campuses would make students safer.

"Shootings give rise to situations marked by panic, confusion, and terror, conditions under which judgment, especially among individuals who are untrained and inexperienced in such situations, is impaired," the statement read.

Many of the professors joined protests on the campus, wearing orange T-shirts proclaiming "Gun Free UT." They said they were particularly worried about allowing guns in the psychology building, which, in addition to classrooms, houses a day-care center and a student-staffed mental-health clinic.

"One of the issues that has been bedeviling us is what to do about mixed-use buildings," Mr. Goode said. "What about a building with labs containing chemical or explosive materials, where an accidental gun discharge could cause a catastrophe? Should that lab be off limits, but guns allowed in a classroom wing? Will you have a sign here and not there? At some point, it becomes impractical."

Both Mr. Goode and Mr. Auyero said they worried the campus-carry debate would hurt the university’s reputation and make it harder to recruit faculty members and out-of-state students.

A teaching emeritus professor of economics, Daniel S. Hamermesh, publicly resigned last week, citing the law as a reason he’s stepping down.
Meanwhile, the bill’s sponsor, State Rep. Allen Fletcher, a Republican, said fears of the bill’s impact were overblown. Very few students will be carrying guns, he said, and fraternities, which are off campus, will be off limits.

"We have seen television ads depicting wild fraternity parties, clubs, and bars, none of which have anything to do with this bill," Mr. Fletcher said in a prepared statement in May, when the Texas House approved the measure. "Students 21 years of age and older have been lawfully and responsibly carrying in Texas for over 19 years, they’ve been able to carry their concealed handguns in public and on campus grounds, but the moment they step foot in an academic building they became criminals."

In an interview on Wednesday, he warned the university not to come back with rules that ban guns in most classrooms.

"It’ll be a waste of a lot of people’s time if they come to us with a blanket ban saying no guns in classrooms," Mr. Fletcher said. "Guess what — they don’t get to make that decision. The people of Texas get to make that decision, and they already did."

In addition to the discussions about gun-free zones, the Austin committee is studying how concealed guns should be carried. One possibility is requiring that the weapon be holstered, the trigger covered, to minimize the chances that it will accidentally go off. In states with concealed-gun laws, the committee found three examples of guns’ accidentally discharging, including one case in which a professor literally shot himself in the foot when a gun in his pocket went off.

Meanwhile, the committee will continue to struggle to find middle ground between two camps with strongly held beliefs — a stance that keeps the campus safe while complying with the law.

"Some people think the carrying of concealed handguns makes a place safer, and others think it makes it less safe," said Mr. Goode. "There is not a lot of communication between those groups that is effective. We just have to live with the fact that we’re trying to craft a policy in the face of two very different views."