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David Mitchell Appointed as Chair of University of Missouri System's Diversity Task Force

The University of Missouri system has appointed an associate dean to lead its diversity task force.

The university said in a release Thursday that David Mitchell, associate dean for academic affairs, will chair the university system's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force. Mitchell is also chair of the Missouri State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Mitchell's appointment follows the November resignations of the university system's president and the chancellor of its Columbia campus amid student protests over complaints about racial issues.

Michael Middleton, interim university system president, says Mitchell has a record of campus leadership and community involvement that will help the university system address "the difficult issues that have so challenged our university."

The task force will recommend possible revisions in university rules and policies.
Mitchell to helm Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force

By Megan Favignano

Thursday, December 17, 2015 at 2:00 pm

David Mitchell, associate dean for academic affairs and associate professor of law at MU, has been appointed chairman of the University of Missouri System’s new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force.

The task force will assess and make recommendations for current UM System programs, policies and practices. Mitchell said Thursday in a news release that the task force will help the UM System address the societal problem of racism and other inequities.

The task force is one of eight diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives the UM System’s Board of Curators approved in November after weeks of student protests about MU’s racial climate.

Other board-approved initiatives include hiring a chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer for the system and having a similar role at each of the system’s four campuses.

Mitchell, who joined MU in 2006, also serves as chairman of the Missouri State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Mitchell received the UM President’s Award for Community Engagement this year for his work to help facilitate dialogue after the events in Ferguson last year.

Mitchell earned his doctorate, law and master’s degrees from the University of Pennsylvania after receiving his bachelor’s degree from Brown University.

UM System appoints MU law professor as chair of diversity task force

CAMERON EVANS, 12 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Interim University of Missouri System president Michael Middleton announced Thursday the appointment of MU law professor and associate dean for
academic affairs David Mitchell as the chair of the UM System’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force.

The systemwide task force is one of eight initiatives proposed by the UM System's Board of Curators in November as a response to concerns about diversity and discrimination within the system. The task force will address issues including race, gender, sexual orientation, "religious bigotry" and where those issues intersect, Mitchell said Thursday.

"This is not just about race," Mitchell said. "I think for too long we have been narrowing diversity to a single-issue topic. It's important not to ignore groups that have gone underrepresented and marginalized."

UM System spokesman John Fougere said the task force is still figuring out how they will address these issues.

Mitchell said the task force may have preliminary recommendations that can be enacted, and the anticipated date of completion is Aug. 31, 2016, "yet, more time may needed to affect profound change."

“Today is the first step of establishing a chair," Fougere said. "Getting the task force populated is the next step."

Mitchell said task force members might include campus diversity officers, representatives from the UM System's Intercampus Student Council, Interfaculty Council, the Intercampus Staff Advisory and alumni.

The task force will hold "listening and learning sessions" with faculty, students and staff across the system’s four campuses, Mitchell said.

"In the sessions, general community members will have the opportunity to express their concerns and their issues with the system," he said.
Using data collected by external auditors, the task force will look at the system's demographics, hiring and finances "to consider what we've been doing has been as inclusive as possible and whether or not equity is considered an important issue, as well as diversity," Mitchell said.

"Not only will composition of the task force be reflective of the university community, they will be committed to receiving input and recommendations for revisions to current policies and practices," Fougere said.

In addition to being a professor and a dean at MU, Mitchell also chairs the Missouri State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, and he has served as a Missouri Supreme Court Faculty Fellow researching ex-criminal re-entry in Missouri.

Mitchell received the University of Missouri President’s Award for Community Engagement in 2015, which recognized his work in facilitating dialogue after the events in Ferguson, Missouri. He is also a past recipient of the Gold Chalk award and Legion of Black Collegians Minority Faculty and Staff Appreciation Award, according to the news release.

Middleton said Mitchell’s record of campus leadership, community involvement and scholarly expertise will serve the UM System well as it addresses the difficult issues that have challenged MU. On Nov. 9, then-UM System President Tim Wolfe and then-MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin resigned.

The creation of the task force and Mitchell’s appointment are two of the eight initiatives the curators announced in November. The other steps are:

- Conducting a full review of all UM System policies as they relate to staff and student conduct.
- Ensuring that each UM System campus has a campus diversity, equity and inclusion officer that reports directly to the chancellor.
- Providing additional support for students, faculty and staff who have experienced discrimination and disparate treatment.
- Providing additional support for the hiring and retention of diverse faculty and staff.
Establishing campus-based task forces to develop diversity, equity and inclusion strategies, plans and metrics.

Launching a diversity, equity and inclusion leadership and training and development program, which includes the Board of Curators, the president and administrative leadership, followed by broader faculty and staff training.

UM System announces new head for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force

COLUMBIA, Mo. — The University of Missouri System has announced a new head for their newly created Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force.

University of Missouri System Interim President Michael Middleton announced the appointment of Dr. David Mitchell as the chair on Thursday, December 17.

"The university is fortunate to have an individual of Dr. Mitchell's stature providing leadership to our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force," President Middleton said. "His distinguished record of campus leadership, community involvement and scholarly expertise will serve the UM System well as we address the difficult issues that have so challenged our university."

Dr. Mitchell is the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Law at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and has been teaching at the University of Missouri since 2006.

Dr. Mitchell and the task force will assess and make recommendations to the current programs, policies and practices in the UM System.

"The University of Missouri System, with its four campuses around the state, offers a clear and visible example of the importance and value of diversity, equity and inclusion. It was necessary
for the university, consisting of one campus when it was founded, to change in order to properly serve the geographically distinct parts and diverse citizens of Missouri. It accomplished this goal then by expanding the number of campuses" Dr. Mitchell said. "Now, the task force has a unique opportunity to once again respond to challenges the UM System faces to improve the education, research, economic development and service that we provide to the state by addressing the institutionalization of the societal problem of racism as well as other inequalities and inequities. The task force’s work will demonstrate our renewed commitment to embracing the values of diversity, equity and inclusion."

The task force is part of eight initiatives announced by the UM System Board of Curators back in November. The others include:

Hiring a first-ever Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer for the UM System by February 9; a nationwide search is underway;

Conducting a full review of all UM System policies as they relate to staff and student conduct, which is currently underway;

Ensuring that each UM System campus has a Campus Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer that reports directly to the chancellor, which has already been achieved;

Providing additional support for students, faculty and staff who have experienced discrimination and disparate treatment;

Providing additional support for the hiring and retention of diverse faculty and staff;

Establishing campus-based task forces to develop diversity, equity and inclusion strategies, plans and metrics;

Launching a diversity, equity and inclusion leadership and training and development program, which includes the board of curators, the president and administrative leadership, followed by broader faculty and staff training.

Interim UM System President optimistic for MU's future
COLUMBIA - **It's been decades since Michael Middleton walked MU's campus as a student, but now he says he's prepared to fix the still-systemic diversity issues he faced as a 20-something.**

"I have an opportunity to try my best to make my university what it ought to be," Middleton said.

He said he knows he has a lot of work to do. His first stated goal is to put the structures and mechanisms in place to manage inclusion, equity and diversity issues on all four campuses and the hospital system.

“It’s a complex problem. I think it starts with being honest with each other. Recognizing that we have all been programmed to behave in ways that are not conducive to civil tolerance, fair treatment of each other,” Middleton said.

Since Middleton took over several things have happened: There are now chief diversity officers on each UM campus. He is in the process of searching for a system-wide diversity officer, and he will also form a system-wide task force that will review university best practices and regulations from around the country in order to put together a plan to educate the community, enforce rules and get people to think "intelligently and honestly" about how people ought to relate to someone different from oneself.

“We all, from all persuasions, have got to come to grips with that conditioning that we have been through throughout history, and then come together and try to work through it," Middleton said. “You can’t do it if you’re uncomfortable or afraid, or intimidated. That is not the way universities are supposed to operate. Our goal is to make this place a comfortable, hospitable, learning environment for everyone.”

He called MU's recent national attention a "black eye." However, he said it was necessary to get the university community to make the issues a priority.

“We want to be better than that. We deserve to be better than that. And I think that everyone’s commitment to make us better than that is going to produce some significant results," Middleton said. “My optimism is based on my knowledge of the people we have here concerned about this issue who want to help, and want to make it work.”

The student group #ConcernedStudent1950, which began the movement against former UM System President Tim Wolfe, is pleased with the UM Board of Curators' decision to appoint Middleton to the position.

“He shows genuine concern for the well-being of us as students," said #ConcernedStudent1950 member Marshall Allen.

However, Allen said a big misconception of the movement is that removing Wolfe was its only goal.
“His resignation was the start for putting the university and the well-being of minoritized and marginalized students in the hands of someone who’s more capable,” Allen said.

The group had presented a list of demands to Wolfe and the curators. Wolfe's removal was only one of those demands.

Allen said: “If you don’t show concern and care for the students, the chancellor’s not going to show concern or care for the students; If the chancellor doesn’t show concern and care for the students, the administration’s not going to show concern and care for the students; If they don’t show concern or care for the students, the deans aren’t going to, then the faculty, then the students, then the staff; and it continues on this vicious cycle of negligence.”

The group also demanded an increase in the number of black faculty on MU's campus.

“We need more people in these places, we need more administrators and faculty who can identify with a lot of the stuff that we’re going through on campus," Allen said.

He said the group is aware there are a lot of people that still don't understand the movement, and all of the actions of the group. However, he puts their goal very plainly:

“We’re just simply pushing for something we believe in, which is the liberation of our people," Allen said.

MU student Veronica DeStefano said, “This is setting a new standard for what leadership at Mizzou is going to look like. The fact that people feel the need to stand-up for what they believe in, because they want to have that for everybody else on this campus, means that there is a lot of trust, and love, and compassion for this university.”

DeStefano said she is also hopeful that MU’s campus will continue to champion inclusivity.

“I would hope that it would bring more just like, enrollment number-wise, more diversity because, right now, it’s pretty white-washed." DeStefano said.

She said the protests and events on campus opened a lot of people's eyes to what students of color feel, and what they need.

“I try to listen, and understand, and let those who need to speak, speak. Because I know that maybe me speaking isn’t going to be the best thing to do because my voice is not the one that is being held back all the time,” DeStefano said.

Going forward, DeStefano said she is eager to see more education on racial issues for all students, which is also on Concerned Student's list of demands.

“If people aren’t educated, there’s not going to be any change," DeStefano said.
UM interim president to make $477,544 annually

By Megan Favignano

Thursday, December 17, 2015 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri System interim President Mike Middleton’s contract was finalized Wednesday. The interim president will make $477,544 annually — the same salary as former President Tim Wolfe.

Wolfe resigned as president last month after weeks of student protests over MU’s racial climate, and the Board of Curators named Middleton interim president. Middleton’s contract and base salary is retroactive to Nov. 12, when the curators appointed him to the position, UM spokesman John Fougere said.

Middleton’s contract states he will work as interim president until a permanent president takes office. However, Middleton’s employment is “at will” and can be ended by either Middleton or the UM System at any time.

On top of Middleton’s monthly base salary of $39,795.30, the interim president also will be eligible for additional compensation based on his continuity and longevity of service and his achievements in the role.

The Chronicle of Higher Education reported the typical public-college leader earned a little more than $428,000 in fiscal year 2014.

While working as interim president, Middleton will receive a monthly housing allowance of $2,400. Additionally, the university system will provide Middleton with an automobile for him to use “for all purposes deemed appropriate.” If Middleton does not accept the vehicle, he may instead choose to receive an automobile allowance.

The housing allowance and provided vehicle also were components of Wolfe’s contract. The position’s duties are the same in Middleton and Wolfe’s contracts. Both contracts state the president and interim president are chief executive and academic officer of the university and should devote their effort and time to further the interests of the university.
Middleton has said he will focus on creating a structure for the university to address issues that led to recent turmoil. He said having long-term mechanisms in place to handle concerns students express will allow the university to focus on its mission.

The UM System is summarizing a recent student listening session at which Middleton, curators and MU interim Chancellor Hank Foley heard concerns from more than a dozen MU student groups.

“There’s a time for demonstrations and protests and other activities to get the attention of administrators, and there’s a time to come to the table and help work out solutions,” Middleton said in a Nov. 30 interview. “The students recognize that listening session provided a time for them to come to the table and be constructive.”

Middleton plans to use the student input as a guide to his duties or tasks as interim president. Fougere said the curators plan to meet in January to begin setting parameters for the search for a permanent president.

If Middleton still is employed by the university after serving as interim president, he will be expected to assist the university, his contract states, and consult with curators or counsel as requested.

**MISSOURIAN**

Interim UM System President signs contract, will earn $40,000 per month

KASIA KOVACS, 20 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — **Interim University of Missouri System President Michael Middleton will earn nearly $40,000 per month for his base salary, according to a contract he signed Wednesday.**

The contract states that Middleton, who took over as interim president Nov. 12, is expected to stay in his position until a permanent president is found.

Middleton is also in line to earn up to $25,000 in performance-based and deferred compensation payments, according to the contract.
No timeline has yet been announced in the search for a new system leader, but the UM System Board of Curators will meet in January to “discuss the parameters and details of the search,” said UM System spokesman John Fougere.

According to the contract, Middleton’s retirement benefits will be suspended while he serves as interim president, but they’ll be restored once he ends that role.

Middleton, who retired from his position as MU deputy chancellor in August, was picked to lead the UM System after predecessor Tim Wolfe resigned. Wolfe's resignation followed a student's hunger strike, a strike by Missouri football players and campus protests fueled by racial tensions.

Middleton spoke during the public portion of the curators meeting in St. Louis on Friday, saying that the UM System plans to hire a diversity and inclusion officer within the next two months. He acknowledged problems other than race relations including challenges with graduate student rights, canceled Planned Parenthood contracts and frustrated faculty members.

MU nursing school receives donation for diversity

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — The nursing school at the University of Missouri has received $122,500 for diversity scholarships and programs.

The Columbia Missourian reports that the donation will create the Gregory and Diane Lind Diversity in Nursing Program. It will offer scholarships to undergraduate minority students pursuing nursing degrees beginning in spring 2016. The program also will provide annual stipends to student ambassadors who serve as mentors and coaches for underrepresented minority nursing students.
Gregory Lind received his master's degree in nursing from MU in 1980 and said he hoped his gift would promote diversity in the nursing school.

The Linds live in Seattle where Gregory Lind operates a primary care walk-in clinic he founded in 1990.

MU nursing school receives $122,500 endowed gift

By THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Thursday, December 17, 2015 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri’s Sinclair School of Nursing received a $122,500 endowed gift that will help create a new program for minority students.

The Gregory and Diane Lind Diversity in Nursing Program — named for the two Seattle residents who gave the gift — will award scholarships to minority students pursuing undergraduate degrees in nursing.

Gregory Lind, an MU alumnus, said in a news release that he and his wife hope to help nursing students have a sense of belonging in their educational environment.

Diversity and inclusion have been the subject of campus discussions this semester, with UM System President Tim Wolfe resigning after weeks of student protests about MU’s racial climate.

Judith Miller, dean of MU’s nursing school, said the gift will contribute to the school’s effort to increase diversity.

The programs and scholarships will be offered starting in the spring. The program will give financial aid to minority nursing students who complete a two-credit elective course on academic success. It also will provide annual stipends to student ambassadors who serve as mentors to minority nursing students.

Gregory Lind graduated from MU’s nursing school in 1980 with a master’s degree. In 1990, he founded a walk-in primary care clinic. The clinic serves about 70-90 patients per day.
Group Calls for Sensitivity Training at University of Missouri

The St. Louis chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations has called on the University of Missouri to implement sensitivity training after a Muslim student filed a lawsuit alleging that a biology professor directed a slew of sexually suggestive and religiously offensive remarks at her.

Chapter Executive Director Faizan Syed on Wednesday called for mandatory cultural sensitivity training.

University officials announced in November mandatory diversity, inclusion and equity training for all faculty, staff and incoming students.

Fatma El-Walid filed the lawsuit on Nov. 30, claiming that biology professor Michael Garcia directed offensive language and sexual comments toward her during the spring semester. The alleged incident was anonymously reported to the university.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported that an attorney for Garcia has said that his client denies the allegations.

Mental health services working to meet student demand for more counselors of color

ELISE SCHMELZER, 1 hr ago
COLUMBIA — She started going to the MU Counseling Center her first semester at MU for a variety of reasons: a depression diagnosis a few months before school started, trouble transitioning to college life and a "toxic" environment on her residence hall floor.

Part of the toxicity was just the grating of different personalities in a new environment, said the textile and apparel management student, who asked to remain anonymous. The other part was a series of incidents that left her feeling singled out and targeted for her race, like the time her roommate told her the only reason she'd received a partial scholarship to attend MU was because she was half black.

While she said it was nice to have someone to talk to, she felt the counselor, a white man, didn't help her deal with the racist incidents. He seemed to misunderstand them and brushed them off.

Part of the problem was a lack of time with the counselor, she said. Another part was simple: He couldn't understand her experience as a mixed-race woman and never went deeper into the subject of racism.

During the November protests that forced the resignation of top administrators, Concerned Student 1950 made a variety of demands related to mental health services at MU, including calling for the hiring of more counselors of color. Overall, MU isn't doing too badly by the numbers. Of the 45 mental health professionals who work in the university's mental health services, nine are not white — or about 20 percent. In comparison, 23 percent of the MU student population isn't white, according to university statistics.

But most people seek help through the Counseling Center, where just four of the 31 counselors are nonwhite: two are African American, one is Chinese and one is Latino, said center director David Wallace. At Behavioral Health Services in the Student Health Center, five of the 14 staff members who see students are nonwhite: two are Indian American, one is Indian, one is Pakistani and one is Chinese, director Craig Rooney said. None of them, however, are black.
While race isn't the only factor that affects student counseling, the directors said, both programs are working to create counseling staffs that will meet the needs of the diverse student body they serve.

The students in this story asked to remain anonymous because of the stigma of mental illness and because they said they feared backlash for talking about the racist incidents.

Building bridges

Seeing a face similar to his or her own can be comforting when a student is deciding whether to attend counseling, though it's unclear whether the races of the counselor and student greatly affect the outcomes of counseling, Rooney said.

One black student who attended counseling sessions at both the Counseling Center and Behavioral Health Services said she wished she had been able to talk to a counselor of color because it would have made her more comfortable.

The journalism student was struggling to make strong friendships outside of a negative group of friends from high school and started to go to sessions at the Counseling Center the second semester of her freshman year. The counselor, a white man, encouraged her to stop hanging out with her high school friends and seek new ones, but the student didn't want to feel alone in a sea of new, mostly white faces.

"Being here at Mizzou and being black you need a group of friends, a core group of people to talk to who understand you," the junior said. "I don't think he understood."

After four sessions at the Counseling Center, the student decided to go to Behavioral Health Services where she was prescribed medicine for depression and anxiety and attended counseling that she said was more helpful — though that therapist was also white.

A 2011 analysis published by the American Psychological Association compared dozens of studies on the effect race has on counseling. It found that while many people have a strong
preference for a therapist of his or her own race or ethnicity, visiting a counselor of the same race had "almost no benefit" to the outcome of the counseling.

Many other factors influence the success of counseling, Wallace said. Ultimately, success doesn't depend on techniques or methods but on the counselor's ability to develop a genuine relationship through listening and affirmation, he said.

"Counselors listen nonjudgmentally with empathy, and they work to empower the client through support and affirmation rather than taking on the role of giving advice," he said in an email. "Counselors work with things all human beings know: pain, hurt, sadness and anger, hopefully along with happiness and the joy of living as well. Counseling helps to develop a relationship of trust and acceptance that bridges the gaps in different backgrounds or experiences."

The mental health professionals at both Behavioral Health Services and the Counseling Center participate in ongoing training to help them work with students on issues such as racism, sexism and homophobia. While training on these issues is part of most graduate programs, Rooney said, ongoing training is important as counselors work with students from different backgrounds and develop their own identities.

Moving forward

The Counseling Center has several vacancies, including openings for three psychologist positions, one of whom will work as diversity coordinator. Wallace hopes to fill these positions with counselors of color and other diverse identities for the fall 2016 semester.

Behavioral Health Services, which currently employs no black counselors, said it plans to put "extensive effort" into promoting future open positions with organizations that serve African-American counselors, Rooney said. At the moment, however, the program doesn't have the money to hire any new counselors, he said.

It can be hard to recruit black psychologists and counselors because of Columbia's small size and relatively small community of black professionals, Rooney said. Similarly, Wallace said it was
difficult recruiting from a limited pool of candidates and convincing potential hires to move to a small Midwestern city.

Since the student protests in November calling for more counselors of color, the Student Health Center has begun to make changes. Concerned Student 1950 organizers did not respond to requests for comment about why the need for more counselors of color was important to their movement.

On Dec. 3, the Student Health Center formed a diversity committee that will guide ongoing inclusion efforts such as leading diversity training, reviewing the organization's policies as they relate to diversity and communicating with other diversity efforts on campus, Rooney said. The committee members — all staff members of the center — were expected to be chosen this month and begin work over the holiday break.

For the textile and apparel management student, the changes are coming too late. She stopped going to the Counseling Center when the center said she had used up the number of appointments allotted to her. She tried to go back to the Counseling Center the second semester of her freshman year when she started having suicidal thoughts, she said. Group counseling was recommended instead of private sessions, but she didn't think her problems would get the attention they needed in a group, she said.

“This (racial climate on campus) is far too complex of a situation to go through in a few weeks or a semester," she said.

Without the money for a therapist outside of the school or a car to get there, she stopped going to counseling altogether.

“After that I just gave up on finding help in Missouri," she said. "I get better advice from my mom.”
Gov. Sam Brownback is accused of playing politics with Kansas African American Affairs Commission

Governor rejected three selections for executive director of the commission

Former commission member says the three were disqualified for not being Republican

BY EDWARD M. EVELD
eeveld@kcstar.com

TOPEKA - The Kansas African American Affairs Commission has been without an executive director for seven months, and some say it’s because Gov. Sam Brownback’s office held up the selection process for partisan reasons.

Former commission members said the board last summer interviewed several potential leaders for the commission and chose three. The selections were presented to the governor, but none was approved.

“These people were disqualified only because they were not Republicans,” said James Barfield of Wichita, who was involved in the selection process before his commission appointment expired in June. “The administration wants to micromanage the board, to use the board not to address issues it’s supposed to address but to enhance the Brownback administration.”

The governor’s office went as far as to push for Felita Kahrs, a Republican and the wife of Jeff Kahrs, chief of staff at the Department for Children and Families, said Barfield. She wasn’t qualified because she wasn’t available to work full time, he said.

While gubernatorial appointees typically hail from his party, there shouldn’t be a political litmus test for the executive director of a minority advisory commission,
critics say. On the commission, the governor controls three of the seven appointments.

Eileen Hawley, Brownback’s spokeswoman, said that she couldn’t discuss the specifics of interviews or hiring decisions but that the administration strives to select the best candidate to serve the commission and Kansas citizens.

“The primary role of the commission and its executive director is to enhance awareness of issues of concern to the African-American community and to effectively share with them information about policies, programs and available grants,” she said.

“It is important the executive director be able to work with all members of the Legislature and to collaborate with diverse communities across the state in advancing the important work of the commission.”

In response to Barfield’s comment about Kahrs, Hawley said, “Any individual may apply for a job with the commission.”

Besides the three commission members appointed by the governor, four leaders of the Legislature each appoint a commission member. No more than four members are to come from one political party.

The commission is authorized to choose an executive director subject to the governor’s approval. Typically, the commission has provided more than one name to the governor’s office.

The advisory commission was created by the Legislature in 1997. The statute says the commission “may appoint, subject to the approval of the secretary of human resources, an executive director who shall be qualified by education and experience to assume the responsibilities of such office.” The commission was moved from the human resources department to the governor’s office in 2004.

Patrick Woods of Topeka was a commission member until September and was involved in the process to pick a new executive director. Mildred Edwards resigned the executive director’s post in May and took a position at Westar Energy in Topeka.

Woods said the commission in June sent three names “to try to be as accommodating as possible to the governor’s office.” Woods was appointed to the commission by Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, a Topeka Democrat.
Barfield was appointed by former House minority leader Paul Davis, a Lawrence Democrat who ran unsuccessfully against Brownback in 2014.

The governor’s office didn’t give a reason the commission’s selections were rejected, Woods said.

“That was not about politics on the part of the commission,” Woods said. “Our statutory duty is not to do what’s best for the governor or the Republican Party. Our duty is to recommend programs that will improve the lives of African-Americans in Kansas. If they’re not committed to that, that’s their problem, not ours.”

Glenda Overstreet of Topeka was one of the three commission selections. She is a former president of the local and state NAACP organizations and has a doctorate in business administration.

Overstreet said she had a telephone interview with governor’s office staff, including Kim Borchers, the governor’s secretary of appointments. The interview was “very abrasive,” Overstreet said.

Borchers “wanted to know why I had never supported Gov. Brownback in any of my articles,” a reference to op-ed columns she writes for The Topeka Capital-Journal, Overstreet said. “My articles are opinion that deal with issues, not supporting any candidate or person.”

Overstreet said she is a registered Democrat but doesn’t think that makes her ineligible for the position.

“We have to appoint someone the community will embrace, someone who really has a passion for working with the community,” she said.

The two other people selected by the commission were Mark McCormick, executive director of the Kansas African American Museum in Wichita, and Andrea (A’Jay) Scipio, a staff director with the commission in Topeka.

“The way it appears to me is it’s almost as if the governor is trying to dictate who they select,” Hensley said. “It’s unfortunate they’re playing politics with a very important commission.”

And, Hensley said, it’s bad timing.
“This comes at a time when the Black Lives Matter movement is really picking up momentum, along with the race relations issues at the University of Missouri and KU,” he said.

Hawley said the commission has since forwarded the names of two additional selections to the governor’s office and they are under consideration.

Business Loop CID examines debt, future projects after sales tax passes

BLAKE NELSON, 15 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The half-cent sales tax for the Business Loop 70 Community Improvement District will start showing up on receipts April 1, and the district will start receiving revenue in June. Meanwhile, the district's board of directors is trying to hammer out the details of what it's going to do with its money.

Over the past two years, the district has accrued about $199,000 in debt. That includes a $51,000 loan from Landmark Bank, $17,085 to the city to certify the district's petition when it was created last April and $130,000 in attorneys' fees.

That debt, and other projects the district hopes to tackle, were discussed Thursday during the district's monthly board meeting at the Parkade Center.

Carrie Gartner, the district's executive director, said some of the sales tax revenue will be set aside to address debt and that some revenue would immediately be invested into the Business Loop. Gartner said she didn't know specifically how much would go toward paying down debt or toward projects within the district.
A few possible plans were discussed, including partnering with MU's Museum of Art and Archaeology to hang banners along the Business Loop and working with the city to landscape concrete medians near Hickman High School.

But more detailed plans are on hold until the board hires a consultant and receives more feedback from a community survey on its website.

The survey had 220 respondents by Monday. When asked what the district's top priority should be, making the Business Loop "more attractive," business "development, recruitment and retention" and "infrastructure improvements" were the top three responses. Respondents also listed "old" and "ugly" as the top two words that described the Business Loop.

The survey was created by the district using SurveyMonkey.com. When asked if the district could validate its responses to prevent one person from filling out multiple surveys, Gartner wrote in an email that the site had an option to limit survey responses to one per computer.

Turnover on the board

Almost three weeks after the sales tax takes effect, the district's board might add several new members.

Board members Gary Ennis, Dan Rader and Dave Griggs are all serving one-year terms that will end April 20. All three could apply for another term. Applications to serve on the board are expected to be available early next year, and applicants will be voted on by current board members; Gartner may not vote.

The Columbia City Council must ratify all new board members as a group.

Board applicants must be at least 18 and either own a business or property on the Business Loop or be a registered voter living within the district's boundaries. Thirteen registered voters are estimated to live in the district. Seven district residents returned ballots during the 4-3 vote to create the sales tax.
Managers of businesses on the Business Loop may also serve on the board. James Roark-Gruender, who manages the adult store Passions on the Business Loop, attended Thursday's board meeting. He said he was worried about negative publicity surrounding the district and its impact on local businesses.

Roark-Gruender said in a phone interview that he was interested in serving on the board, citing the need for the district to broaden its membership.

"The people on that board tend to be on all the other boards," Roark-Gruender said.

The district spends about $7,000 each month, Gartner said. Most of that goes to Gartner's salary, which is $70,000 a year, plus benefits. The district does not pay rent in its Parkade Center offices; the family of Chris Burnam, who sits on the board, owns the center.

Gartner said she hopes the sales tax will eventually bring in between $10,000 and $30,000 per month for a total of $225,000 a year, though the exact amount of project revenue is uncertain. The district will also eventually receive about $50,000 per year from a property assessment.

Last Thursday's election approving the sales tax came after several months of uncertainty. Soon after the district was created, it postponed an election when Jen Henderson, then the district's sole identified voter, became critical of the proposed tax. Several more voters were discovered in September, an election was scheduled in October and the tax passed by a single vote last Thursday.

"It was an odd first year," Gartner said.

The district's board of directors meets publicly every third Thursday of the month at 8 a.m. in the district's offices in the Parkade Center, 601 Business Loop 70 W.
Binge drinking is WORSE than first thought: Risk of 'tremendous liver damage is 13 times higher in people who binge regularly'

Binge drinking is bad for your health - the statement is no revelation.

But now, scientists have warned consuming chronic quantities of alcohol in short time periods is worse than they once feared.

Regularly binge drinking combined with chronic alcohol consumption significantly increases a person's risk of 'tremendous liver damage', a new study found.

Excessive alcohol consumption is a global public health issue.

In the United States, binge drinking is the most common form - so common, in fact, that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports approximately one in six adults binge drinks about four times each month.

The CDC defines binge drinking as consuming five or more drinks on an occasion for men or four or more drinks in around two hours for women.

Professor Shivendra Shukla, the Margaret Proctor Mulligan professor of medical pharmacology and physiology at the University of Missouri School of Medicine, said:

'Heavy binge drinking by those who habitually consume alcohol is the most common cause of liver damage in chronic alcoholic liver disease.

'We know that this behavior causes large fatty deposits in the liver that ultimately impair the organ's ability to function properly.

'However, we wanted to understand the mechanism that causes this damage and the extent of the harm.

'Our research focused on different forms of alcohol abuse and the results of those behaviors.'

Professor Shukla's team studied mice to examine the extent of liver injury caused by chronic alcohol use, repeat binge episodes and a combination of both.
Over a four-week period, the researchers found that mice exposed to chronic alcohol use and repeated binge consumption exhibited the highest levels of liver damage.

Professor Shukla said: 'Either chronic alcohol use, or acute repeat binge episodes caused moderate liver damage when compared to the control group not exposed to alcohol.

'This outcome came as no surprise.

'However, in the mice exposed to both chronic use and repeat binge episodes, liver damage increased tremendously.

'Even more shocking was the extent of fatty deposits in the livers of those exposed to chronic plus binge alcohol.

'It was approximately 13 times higher than the control group.'

The highly amplified fat accumulation was in part caused by metabolic changes within the liver. These changes not only significantly increased fatty liver deposits, but increased stress on the organ while decreasing the liver's ability to fight the stress.

Professor Shukla also pointed out that chronic and excessive alcohol use should not be associated only with liver damage.

'Drinking alcohol excessively can create an inflammatory response to the liver and other organ system in the body,' Professor Shukla said.

'If those organs work at a lower level of function, then a whole host of physiological processes can be affected.

'It is important for us to understand the extent of damage caused by alcohol abuse, which also can lead to other health issues such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some forms of cancer.'

The study is published in the journal Biomolecules.
MADISON • As recommended by prosecutors, Deneshion M. Swope, 26, was sentenced Thursday by Associate Judge Neil Schroeder to 40 years in prison for first-degree murder in the death of a Mizzou college student here two years ago.

Jarrett D. Mosby, 21, of Collinsville, was found dead Dec. 23, 2013, in a car at West Second and Bissell streets in Madison.

Police said he had picked up Swope, of East St. Louis, who may have tried to buy marijuana from him. Investigators said an argument followed, and Swope shot Mosby several times near 10th and State streets, then moved the car before fleeing.

Officials said Mosby was unarmed and had no drugs in his system. He was majoring in business at the University of Missouri at Columbia, and was home over the winter break to visit his young son.

Swope was already on probation for federal gun charges. He pleaded guilty of murder Nov. 3. He could have received up to 60 years in prison, and under Illinois law must serve every day of his sentence.