Grad students at MU discuss unionizing


COLUMBIA, Mo. - Some University of Missouri student employees say they're still not being treated fairly and their demands are being ignored.

Graduate student employees’ health insurance coverage was suddenly revoked in August of last year. As students protested, the insurance was quickly reinstated but that hasn't solved the student employees' concerns.

The Forum on Graduate Rights and the Coalition of Graduate Workers say insurance is just one of a number of problems it has with the university and the UM System.

Among other things, the group says it wants student teachers to be insured, paid a livable wage, receive full tuition waivers and have more student housing and daycare options for student parents.

The daycare was eliminated with the demolition of University Village.

Eric Scott is with the Coalition of Graduate Workers and is a steering committee member of the Forum on Graduate Rights. He says students are aware that the university is in a state of transition, but says that's no excuse to not to do what the group says needs to be done. He says, “I don't think because they have an interim in front of their titles means they shouldn't do the right thing. And, the right thing is to pay attention to what their employees are demanding.”

He says unionizing is the only way to ensure their demands are met and sustained.

We'll continue to follow this story and have responses from the university, but campus offices were closed Monday for the holiday.
Awaiting answers: As new semester is about to start, MU grad students demands unresolved

By Megan Favignano

Sunday, January 17, 2016 at 12:00 am

University of Missouri officials told graduate student workers the university would decide by the end of January how it plans to cover health insurance premium costs for students starting this fall. Meanwhile, graduate students are waiting for the university’s plans to address several other changes advocated for after a fall semester filled with turmoil.

The uncertainty is even causing some of them to advise undergraduates to look elsewhere to continue their education.

MU graduate student Connor Lewis said he told a student he taught during his first semester as a teaching assistant this fall to look elsewhere.

“I had to say ‘look, the way things are right now, I wouldn’t really recommend looking here.’ I’m hoping that will change,” Lewis said. “Despite everything that’s gone on, I don’t regret my decision to come to the University of Missouri. I’ve had the opportunity to work with some great faculty.”

Lewis said he hopes to be able to recommend MU to others again soon. He believes other graduate students feel the same way.

“They made a choice to come here … and I think it hurts a lot of them that they can’t make that recommendation to other people.”

A task force gave administrators recommendations regarding health insurance last month after spending the semester looking at MU’s options for covering costs for graduate assistants while complying with a recent IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act.

Making MU attractive to the best graduate students is important, especially with its status as a research university. Tracy Kitchel, MU assistant vice provost for graduate and postdoctoral affairs, said graduate students help the university function and work toward its mission.
“Graduate students and graduate assistants play an important role ... from teaching to research to outreach,” Kitchel said.

In August, MU told graduate student employees it could no longer provide health insurance subsidies — a cost of $3,000 per year for students with 20-hour assistantships.

That decision — which was later rescinded — sparked a larger discussion about benefits graduate students have lost at MU during the past few years.

The Forum on Graduate Rights, a student group not affiliated with the university, formed within a few days after MU’s announcement about the subsidies.

The group advocates for better graduate student benefits and gave MU administrators a list of demands in August that included graduate student housing, on-campus child care, increased compensation and fully subsidized health insurance.

“People are paying attention because of what happened in August,” Kitchel said.

Last May, a task force began researching ways MU could improve the graduate student experience. That group released its final report this month.

Matt McCune, a graduate student with the Graduate Professional Council who served on the task force, said the report compiles items for which students have actively advocated.

“Everything has basically already been said in the past by the Graduate Professional Council and by the Forum on Graduate Rights,” McCune said.

“The way the students viewed” this task force “was ‘let’s get everything down in one report and get faculty and administrators to sign on to what we’ve been saying for years.’ ”

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said now that the task force has published its report, the next step is for graduate student leadership groups, the Faculty Council and directors of graduate studies to discuss the report and gather input.

“Ultimately any decisions concerning the task force’s recommendations will be made by the chancellor after consideration of feedback from these various groups as well as Rhonda Gibler, chief budget officer,” Banken said.

The Forum on Graduate Rights has focused on bringing awareness to graduate student issues this semester. A committee of that group has been working to form a graduate student union, which would be called the Coalition of Graduate Workers. That group is now affiliated with the National Education Association, a large teachers’ union.

Lewis, one of the graduate students leading union efforts, said while unions can’t deliver changes overnight, they can improve working conditions for students. The need for more state funding, Lewis said, affects MU and graduate student benefits.
“Part of the solution is going to be that we have to — on top of fighting for better wages — fight for better funding for the University of Missouri,” Lewis said.

WAGES AND COMPENSATION

Graduate student workers are asking for increased stipends — compensation graduate students with assistantships receive in exchange for their work teaching and conducting research for MU.

MU increased the minimum stipend by 8 percent this fall. Even with that increase, the minimum stipend for graduate students with a 20-hour appointment is $10,800, which is less than the federal poverty line of $11,770 for a single-member household. Graduate assistants with 10-hour appointments make a minimum of $7,000.

In its recent report, the task force on the graduate student experience recommended MU increase stipends, specifically suggesting a minimum doctoral student stipend of $18,000 by the 2019-2020 school year and a proportionate increase to master’s students’ stipends.

“Improving the financial position of our graduate students will also allow students time to focus on more activities ... such as writing and obtaining external funding for their research, writing papers or producing other creative works, participating in professional meetings or workshops, and more,” the group’s report said.

An increase to $18,000 would, according to the group’s report, bring MU in line with its peers in the Association of American Universities, an exclusive group of the top public and private research universities.

The task force also recommended stipends be reviewed to ensure the university remains competitive in what it pays graduate assistants.

HEALTH CARE

The report of the task force on the graduate student experience said MU should fully cover health insurance as part of graduate assistants’ compensation package.

The task force that looked specifically at MU’s options for covering the cost of health care premiums recommended creating a fellowship or increasing stipends.

An increase in stipends or a fellowship would be taxable income, whereas the subsidy students traditionally received was not. That should be taken into account as the university raises stipends and creates fellowships to cover premiums, the task force said.

Universities and colleges across the country also have had to figure out how to assist with graduate assistant health care costs while following the IRS’ interpretation of the Affordable Care Act.
Task force member Jacqueline Gamboa, fourth-year doctoral student studying chemistry, said she was shocked to learn several universities just cut the insurance subsidies without looking into other solutions. Like MU, many universities, she said, kept the subsidies for this year.

Gamboa said she believes many institutions are watching MU to see what solutions it comes up with.

“The pushback was from our students. We were the ones who made national news, so now everyone’s watching,” Gamboa said.

Task force member Sara Prewett, doctoral student in educational psychology, said the task force did not find much guidance by looking elsewhere.

“We were hoping that somebody had some really innovative way to provide coverage, and we just didn’t find anything,” Prewett said.

TUITION WAIVER

The Forum on Graduate Rights also is asking for a guarantee that graduate assistants receive a full tuition waiver regardless of their appointment.

Historically, MU gave graduate assistants with at least 10-hour appointments a full tuition waiver.

Last summer, university officials said incoming graduate students with a 20-hour appointment would receive the full tuition waiver but students with 10-hour appointments would receive half a tuition waiver.

“This loss of benefits adds another burden for already struggling student employees,” the Forum on Graduate Rights wrote in its list of demands.

In November, MU officials said the university would put the change in tuition waiver on hold and that it would not affect incoming students this fall because of the uncertainty it caused with recruiting new students for fall 2016.

MU faculty had expressed concerns at multiple faculty meetings and in emails to administrators that the waiver change in combination with MU’s low stipends would negatively affect graduate student recruitment.

A little more than 600 students have 10-hour appointments, and about 2,100 have 20-hour appointments.

Three programs give half of the 10-hour appointments: music, business and journalism.

Stipends come from academic program budgets, and tuition waivers come from the university’s budget.
MU Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin said in a June interview this policy change could save the university $3.5 million to $4 million in five years.

**FEE WAIVER**

Along with tuition waivers, graduate students are asking for fee waivers. Supplemental per-credit-hour course fees vary among schools and colleges on MU’s campus. Engineering students pay the highest of these fees on MU’s campus: $73.50 per credit hour. MU’s fee and tuition proposal to the system’s Board of Curators last month called for increases to these fees for next school year.

Anahita Zare, public relations chairwoman for the Forum on Graduate Rights, said student activism this school year has led more people to understand the financial situation of graduate student.

Supplemental fees, she said, add unnecessary pressure.

“It’s all an additional financial burden,” Zare said. “It limits graduate assistants’ ability to focus on work when there is this financial burden.”

The task force on the graduate student experience report recommends academic programs cover the per-credit-hour charge to graduate assistants as part of their compensation package.

**HOUSING AND FAMILY SUPPORT**

The task force on the graduate student experience also recommends the university improve access to housing and child care for graduate students.

Gary Ward, MU’s vice chancellor for operations and chief operating officer, said a recent study showed 400-700 graduate students would take advantage of designated graduate student housing at MU.

The university is looking for a public-private partnership to address that need. During the December Board of Curators meeting, Ward told the board MU would explore adding child care space to that project.

Previously, MU had on-campus graduate student housing, which included a child care center. MU closed and demolished the complex, called University Village, in 2014 after Columbia Fire Department Lt. Bruce Britt died while working the scene of a walkway collapse.

After University Village closed, the Graduate Professional Council held an open forum on housing options for graduate and professional students.

The group’s report on that forum suggested the university create a task force to form a plan and a budget for the construction of new graduate housing.
The report’s conclusions, which were based on student comments, emphasized the importance of building new facilities to a high standard.

“Graduate and Professional students, especially student parents, strongly feel that they are not valued and their needs are being willfully ignored by University Administration,” the report said.

The task force on the graduate student experience’s recent report also recommended MU offices that provide students with information about housing should have information about options specifically targeted to graduate students.

The task force’s report further said child care options — including coverage during holidays and in the evenings — are needed close to campus.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZING

The Forum on Graduate Rights also is asking MU’s administration to not “hinder or obstruct the holding of a union election.”

After the initial health insurance revelation in August, students began talking about the possibility of a graduate student union. A committee of the Forum on Graduate Rights has been collecting the signatures it needs to hold a union vote, which the group wants to have this spring.

Lewis said graduate student unions at other universities have been supportive of MU’s graduate workers.

“They see themselves as being part of a bigger fight for graduate students to have improved working conditions,” Lewis said.

“That’s what’s been most helpful: realizing that we’re not in this alone, that we’re part of a broader movement of graduate students trying to improve their working conditions.”

Graduate students also are asking the university to improve shared governance and transparency in its decision-making.

In August, the Graduate Professional Council and Graduate Student Association sent a letter to MU administrators that said current shared governance mechanisms are inadequate.

The task force on the graduate student experience report also called for more transparency and improved shared governance.

DIVERSITY

After protests last semester calling for changes to improve the racial climate on MU’s campus, the Forum on Graduate Rights added diversity policies to its list of demands.
The group held a demonstration in November to show its support for Concerned Student 1950, a group that says it represents all black students on campus and draws its name from the first year a black student enrolled at MU.

Concerned Student 1950 called for UM System President Tim Wolfe’s removal.

Wolfe resigned in November, and students began focusing on other items on a list of demands Concerned Student 1950 gave administrators in October.

The list includes more diversity in MU’s faculty and student body and adding diversity into the university’s curriculum.

Eric Scott with the Forum on Graduate Rights said the group advocates for the rights of all graduate students, adding that Concerned Student 1950 includes graduate students.

“We want to point out the intersections between these different problems. While we certainly have lots of problems with the racial climate, there are problems with ableism, with sexism, with homophobia,” Scott said in a November interview.

The graduate student advocacy group’s demands now include a guarantee administration will implement policies aimed to increase faculty and student diversity.

The Forum on Graduate Rights is asking the university to focus more resources on recruiting and retaining a more diverse faculty and graduate and professional student body when it comes to race, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

Graduate student benefits mixed at other universities

By Megan Favignano

Sunday, January 17, 2016 at 12:00 am

Two University of Missouri task forces have spent this school year researching graduate student health insurance options and the graduate student experience on campus. Aside from talking to graduate students on campus, the groups also looked at what other universities offer graduate students when it comes to health insurance and other benefits.
MU graduate students are calling for housing options, on-campus childcare or family support, increased stipends, and guaranteed and fully subsidized health insurance.

After an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act this summer said universities could no longer pay for graduate student employees’ health insurance premiums, universities responded in many ways.

David Francko, associate provost and dean of the University of Alabama Graduate School, said the university became aware of the insurance issue in mid-July. It sent a letter out to students a week later saying the university could no longer pay insurance premiums.

The university — like MU initially — agreed to give students extra funds equal to the fall semester premium, though they were not required to use the money to buy insurance. Francko said the University of Alabama will continue to do so if national lobbying efforts to change the IRS interpretation are not successful.

The University of Arkansas pays 66.6 percent of health care costs for its graduate assistants, who are insured on a separate student plan. Graduate assistantship health insurance premiums for fall 2015 cost $241.15. Louisiana State University graduate students don’t receive a subsidy.

Universities offer a range of options when it comes to child care. Southeast Missouri State University does not offer on-campus child care for students. The University of Michigan, an AAU school like MU, also does not have on-campus child care, but it instead offers a child care subsidy to undergraduate and graduate students through its financial aid office.

Iowa State University, also an AAU school, has child care programs for children ages six weeks to 12 years old. Iowa State spokeswoman Annette Hacker said the campus gives priority enrollment to students, faculty and staff but accepts members of the community as well.

A recent MU task force on the graduate student experience report said its research showed that MU’s doctoral students’ stipends typically are $1,000-$3,000 lower than other AAU institutions.

At the University of Iowa Graduate College, which is of comparable size to MU, student stipend levels are negotiated between the University of Iowa and the graduate employee union and outlined in a contract.

For an academic year at Iowa, a student with a 20-hour assistantship makes $18,261, and a student with a 10-hour assistantship makes $9,130.50. For a fiscal year salary appointment, students with 20-hour assistantships make $22,311, and students with 10-hour assistantships make $11,156.

The minimum stipend for graduate students with a 20-hour appointment at MU is $10,800. Graduate assistants with 10-hour appointments make a minimum of $7,000.
MU protester Jonathan Butler tops MLK Day celebration in Kansas City

Butler was selected to culminate Kansas City's week-long King Day celebration. SCLC chose him to show the struggle has been passed to a younger generation.

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
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Three months ago Jonathan Butler was just another graduate student, hitting the books on the Columbia campus at the University of Missouri.

Monday evening he delivered the keynote address at the main event of one of the largest Martin Luther King Jr. Day observances in the country outside of Atlanta.

In November, Butler went on a weeklong hunger strike that put him at the forefront of a student protest against systemic racism on the campus. The protest led to a football players’ strike, the resignation of the university system president and the reassignment of the chancellor.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Kansas City invited Butler to speak at Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church for this year’s event, entitled “A Legacy of Struggle: A Commitment to Justice and Equality.”

Butler was chosen “to engage the young generation and let them know that we support their effort, that we stand with them,” said Arlana J. Coleman, King celebration event planner for SCLC.
“I think Martin Luther King Jr. would be encouraged to see that young people are getting involved in a positive way,” Coleman said.

Before taking the church stage, Butler talked briefly with The Star about the campus protests that set off a movement for inclusion replicated at colleges across the country, how he came to be a leader in the effort and how his life has changed since then.

Butler is only 25, but he talked like a seasoned community activist and stressed that the protest movement is ongoing, lest what happened on his campus be dismissed as just a moment in time.

He defined himself as “an engaged citizen who is willing to sacrifice for change ... fighting for a more humane, a more democratic and a more holistic society.” He was reluctant to identify himself as a civil rights activist.

Butler said he got his first taste of civic engagement as a young child who was raised in the church and inspired by his grandfather, a church leader in New York, and his mother, who is the leader of a church in Omaha, Neb., where he grew up.

“They really showed me what it meant to care for the people, to care for the community and also to do what is right,” Butler said. “Those strong examples are what really prepared me to serve others, and I think that is the essence of leadership.”

But what he wasn’t prepared for was the backlash that followed the MU protest — from the hate email he and other black student leaders received, to people on social media doubting the sincerity of his hunger strike and accusing him and other student protesters of being weak whiners and lying about overt racial incidents on campus.

“Mean-spirited,” Butler called them.

“I don’t think there is any true way to be prepared for that,” he said. “Again I just leaned on my faith to get me through those times.”

What happened at MU — that the university administration responded — was not only because of the Concerned Student 1950 November protest but because of other small student protests led at different times by black, LGBTQ and Jewish
groups that began popping up on campus ever since a police officer in Ferguson, Mo., fatally shot Michael Brown in 2014.

“That is something really beautiful that came out of post-Ferguson; that there was a community that was built,” Butler said.

He said that since MU protests, which gained national attention, his life has become more public.

“A lot more people have access to my life.” Some, he said, want to criticize everything he says and does while others look to him as an example. He said he doesn’t consider himself a role model, but has received letters and emails of support from people of all ages.

“I think it is just that a variety of people are inspired by the power of the singular voice to make change,” Butler said.

Butler said he is focused on finishing his graduate degree in education leadership but looks forward to continuing to watch for more inclusion on the MU campus.

“I have invested so much in the movement, even prior to all of this exposure. I am truly invested in getting everyone liberated and getting everyone free. Everyone has a life purpose, and I think that’s what my life goal is.”

Mizzou protest leader: We still have a long way to go


KANSAS CITY, Mo. - The 47th annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration took place at the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church in Kansas City and featured a speaker who nearly risked his life for justice.
Jonathan Butler, the University of Missouri graduate student who did not eat for a week last fall until top leaders resigned, spoke to a full house Monday night.

“There is no more time to play around, no more time for paddy cakes, no more time to live in a system that was not built for us,” Butler explained.

Tommy Thomas III was one of the audience members who came to support and hear Butler.

“I think it’s important,” he said. “Because this isn’t just a Mizzou problem, it’s a national problem, and we’re looking something that is centuries old - race relations, equality and injustice.”

Thomas said more action needs to be taken to fulfill King’s dream. "His speeches that he did then are eerily relevant to what's going on now. So it’s really a sign that things haven’t changed as much as we thought that they have and we need to get those changes going,” Thomas said.

Butler knows his hunger strike sparked change in Columbia but believes the country still has a long way to go.

“We are still being gunned down by the police, we are still facing poverty and we are still being denied education, so we are still fighting.

Local government, business leaders oppose MU cuts

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Friday, January 15, 2016 at 2:00 pm

Convinced that a projected drop in enrollment and possible reduction in state funding to the University of Missouri would have a significant effect on the Mid-Missouri economy, local government and business leaders Friday morning agreed to work together to draft a resolution encouraging the state legislature not to punish the university with budget cuts.

Boone County Presiding Commissioner Dan Atwill suggested appointing a committee in light of an ongoing clash between state lawmakers and the university over campus protests last fall that resulted in the resignation of UM System President Tim Wolfe and other controversies that led Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin to step down.
The unrest came as some lawmakers were upset that MU Health Care granted hospital privileges that allowed Planned Parenthood to resume abortions in Columbia and anger among graduate students whose insurance coverage was curtailed by the university.

Friday morning’s breakfast meeting at the Boone County Government Center included the county commission, city of Columbia, Columbia Public Schools, Columbia Chamber of Commerce and University of Missouri officials.

Brian Millner, chief of staff to MU campus interim Chancellor Hank Foley, said MU officials “are working very diligently to repair relationships with the state legislature” and to overcome the legislature’s “trust issues in the ability of university leadership to manage the state’s flagship university.”

“We have heard from legislators and others that the students took over and the students are in charge,” Millner said. “That is not the case. The leadership is committed to answering the questions that have been raised about the university.” He said Foley will explain more about the university’s strategy to address racial tension, graduate student concerns and other topics in Foley’s state of the university address on Jan. 27.

Some legislators have threatened punitive budget cuts against the university. Millner said the state provides 20 percent of MU’s funding.

Columbia Public Schools Superintendent Peter Stiepleman said the threat was “shortsighted” and defended the university as a key component of the area’s economy. He said loss of funding to MU — combined with a 5 to 10 percent decrease in new students this fall — would result in “a ton of unemployed people” in Boone and surrounding counties, making budgets more difficult for entities that rely on a strong tax base to provide education and other public services.

“This is the No. 1 university in the state of Missouri, and they’re toying with the idea of reducing … the funding that you get,” Stiepleman said. “That’s insane.”

Former Columbia Chamber of Commerce Chairwoman Heather Hargrove, who was selected to lead the committee suggested by Atwill, said legislators should not “be taking revenge on funding to the school because you’re ticked off at the administration or faculty right now.”

“You’re going to hurt the current student body and the future student body” that contributes to the local and state economy, she said. “Let’s not forget about 99 percent of the student body … who thinks it’s great to be going to school here and have no problem with the University of Missouri at all.”

Atwill said he would ask each group represented at Friday’s meeting to select one of its members to serve on the committee.

Stiepleman urged that the committee work quickly to have a resolution ready to present at a Feb. 9 hearing of the Joint Committee on Education in Jefferson City. Northern District Commissioner Janet Thompson suggested committee members attend the hearing.
Millner, a former lobbyist and legislative director for the Department of Economic Development, welcomed the formation of a local committee to formally support MU.

“We rely on one another for success in the region,” he said. “We very much need you all to be right with us and by our side as we work to … create a better institution and a better community.”

**Nixon calls for $131 million in new disability spending**

COLUMBIA, Mo. -- Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon will propose $131 million in new spending for developmental disabilities research and care in next year's budget.

Nixon announced his spending proposals for development disability services Friday as part of a preview of his 2017 budget plan, which will be presented Wednesday along with his State of the State address.

Most of the additional money for development disabilities would be directed toward increasing pay for service providers. Nixon is proposing $73 million in federal and state spending to boost pay for providers serving people with disabilities, including a general 3 percent increase and an additional increase for some of the lowest-paid providers.

"They deserve it, and it's the right thing to do," Nixon said. "We've got some very uncompensated (providers) relative to what the market is."

His budget plan includes about $14 million to avert a waiting list for in-home Medicaid services.

*Other parts of his budget plan would expand the University of Missouri's Thompson Center for Autism, which treats people with autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, cerebral palsy, developmental delays and other disabilities.* It would also expand services at the St. Louis region's Mercy Kids Autism Center and launch a new autism center at Truman State University.

The Columbia expansion would allow the Thompson Center to accommodate 2,000 more visits per year and to train 100 more health care providers over the next five years, university officials said.

Funding for case management would increase $1.8 million.
Nixon's spending proposals will go to legislators, who have until May 6 to pass a budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

Nixon said he expects the state's annual revenue to increase by 4.1 percent next year, and using some of the money for developmental disabilities would have a big impact.

Efforts to improve Missouri's mental health and disabilities programs have garnered bipartisan support in the past, Nixon said.

"This is not and never has been a Democrat or Republican issue," he said. "These are human issues. It's about the right of all children to lead happy, full lives."

Sen. David Sater, the Cassville Republican who chairs the Senate Committee on Seniors, Families and Children, said he supports the funding increases, but "it doesn't go far enough."

Provider rates had been set to increase 3 percent during this fiscal year, but they only increased 1 percent after Nixon restricted the funds. Nixon withheld more than $46 million in spending after a court ruled that tobacco companies didn't have to pay Missouri a $50 million settlement.

Sater said Nixon shouldn't have withheld that money.

Autism, developmental disabilities get big budget recommendations from Nixon

COLUMBIA • Gov. Jay Nixon's final budget recommendations as the head of the state's executive branch will include significant investments in developmental disabilities.

Nixon, a Democrat, announced Friday he is recommending lawmakers drop $131 million of state and federal funds into the Department of Mental Health's Division of Developmental Disabilities for the 2017 budget year that begins July 1.

On Wednesday, the governor will present his budget recommendations to the Legislature at the annual State of the State. It will be Nixon's eighth and final time recommending a state budget because he is termed out as governor.

This increase includes $5 million to expand the University of Missouri's Thompson Center to allow for 2,000 more visits each year and the training of 100 more providers over the next five years.

"Here in Missouri, we believe that all children -- including those with autism -- deserve the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential," Nixon said Friday at the center.
His recommendations also include $1 million to launch an autism clinic at Truman State University and $500,000 to expand services at the Mercy Kids Autism Center in the St. Louis region.

It also includes $14 million to keep the waiting list for in-home Medicaid services for developmentally disabled individuals at zero.

Nixon already has proposed a $55.7 million increase for colleges and universities across the state.

Lawmakers will have to sign off on all of Nixon's budget recommendations for them to become a reality.

Nixon proposes funding to expand Thompson Center for Autism

By Rudi Keller

Friday, January 15, 2016 at 12:21 pm

A $5 million appropriation for the Thompson Center for Autism will expand training and treatment and be part of a larger package of spending proposals intended to provide more treatment options, Gov. Jay Nixon said Friday.

During a news conference at the center on Portland Street with Director Stephen Kanne and University of Missouri interim Chancellor Hank Foley, Nixon said he would include the spending in the fiscal 2017 state budget he will present Wednesday to lawmakers.

The budget proposals unveiled Friday also include $131 million in additional state and federal funding for the Department of Mental Health. The money will keep the state current on requests for in-home services for developmental disabilities and allow rate increases for service providers, Nixon said.

“You can’t demand extra work if you don’t provide the resources,” Nixon said.

The Thompson Center was founded in 2005 and has grown from serving 550 families per year to more than 9,000. The $5 million will allow it to provide 2,000 more clinic visits annually and train an additional 100 providers over five years, Nixon said.

Nixon’s budget proposal for the coming fiscal year will be his last as governor, and he will leave office before the fiscal year ends. The university’s overall budget has become embroiled in
election year politics as Republicans threaten to cut spending because of campus protests, ties to Planned Parenthood and faculty workload issues.

A group of 117 Republican lawmakers have called on Foley to fire Assistant Professor Melissa Click for attempting to block journalists covering the protests. Nixon said her actions were wrong but that he “doesn’t micromanage the university” and has not spoken to Foley or interim UM System President Mike Middleton about it.

“This institution is far too important to the future of our state, far too vital to the economic mission, for people to talk about fiscal punishment for personnel decisions,” he said.

Election year politics should not intrude on funding for autism programs, Nixon said.

“I am confident that expenditures like the $5 million that can serve 2,000 more people and provide training areas for 100 more people in these areas, are solid investments for the people of Missouri, and I am prepared to take that discussion anywhere anybody wants to have them,” Nixon said.

The budget also will include $1 million to open an autism clinic at Truman State University in Kirksville and $500,000 to expand services at Mercy Kids Autism Center in St. Louis and St. Charles counties.

The funding for the Thompson center will provide space for expansion, but exactly where hasn’t been determined, Kanne said. The money will pay for space for researchers and for clinical training, he said.

Missouri has been expanding autism services for several years. In 2010, Nixon signed a bill requiring insurance companies to cover services, providing treatment support for 3,500 children.

The center will be taking part in a project to study DNA of families where autism is present in an effort to understand the origins of the disease, Kanne said.

“We cannot get our hands on this disorder unless we have the research,” he said.

MISSOURIAN

Nixon proposes $5 million to expand MU's Thompson Center for Autism

TIM TAI, Jan 15, 2016
COLUMBIA — When Blake Hinkel was diagnosed with autism just shy of his second birthday, his doctors said there was a chance he'd never be able to talk.

**But Blake, now 13, can communicate verbally and read in part because he began intensive therapy, much of it at MU's Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders, soon after the diagnosis, his parents said. Those services would soon be available to more children if the center receives $5 million in proposed funding announced Friday morning by Gov. Jay Nixon.**

The money, part of Nixon's fiscal 2017 budget, would expand the Thompson Center to allow 2,000 more clinical visits per year, Nixon said during a news conference at the center. It also would allow the center to train an additional 100 providers who specialize in autism over five years.

During fiscal 2015, the center served about 2,800 patients over 9,400 visits, spokeswoman Adrienne Cornwall said.

Blake's mother, Lora Hinkel runs a support group for mothers of children with autism and said families have moved to Columbia because of its reputation as a city that understands autism.

"Even though we have an increase in services in the area, there's still such a huge demand for more services," she said. "There are so many children and families that still need additional help, and it just keeps growing because (Columbia is) such a mecca for the services."

The governor's budget also includes $1 million to start an autism clinic at Truman State University in Kirksville, $500,000 to expand the Mercy Kids Autism Center in St. Louis and an extra $131 million in state and federal matching money for the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Division of Developmental Disabilities. Nixon planned to present his proposed budget to lawmakers during his State of the State address next week.

"The demand for (autism) services and training for services far outpaces the supply," Nixon said. He said the $5 million would come from Missouri's general revenue.
Thompson Center Executive Director Stephen Kanne said the center would use the money to find additional space for its clinical research labs and training programs. The money is not enough to construct a new building, he said, so the goal is to find an existing facility near the current one at 205 Portland St. as soon as the fiscal year begins in July.

"We needed to do this two years ago," Kanne said. "It's not going to be a five-year thing. ... We need a space right now."

The center, which opened in 2005 with a donation from MU graduates William and Nancy Thompson, received $5 million in state funding in 2009 to move to its current location. It offers clinical services, conducts autism research and trains care providers. The center also created a program to help autistic teenagers transition to adulthood, targeted at children like Blake.

"(I hope) that he can find an occupation where he's happy, that he really enjoys," Blake's father, Myles Hinkel, said. "It remains to be seen if he can live independently. That would be a goal as well."

Although some state lawmakers, dissatisfied with MU’s handling of issues surrounding graduate and minority students and Planned Parenthood, have threatened to reduce MU’s funding, Nixon said appropriating money to care for people with developmental disabilities should not be a partisan issue.

"I feel very good about being able to work with the legislature to make sure that these long-term investments become part of the budget," he said. "These are human issues. It's about the right of all children to lead happy, full lives."

Kanne agreed, saying it would be "criminal" if political disagreements prevented the Thompson Center from receiving money to expand.

"It would literally break my heart," he said. "It's never wise to take money from kids."
Gov. Nixon proposes $5 million to expand autism center in Columbia

Nixon: Expansion will help train 100 more providers

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon traveled to Columbia on Friday morning to announce that his proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budget will include $5 million to expand the Thompson Center for Autism.

The Democratic Governor was joined by advocates, parents and caregivers at the facility, which is on Portland Street in Columbia. Nixon says his proposed budget will include historic investments in services for Missourians with developmental disabilities.

Nixon told reporters the expansion will allow the Thompson Center to accommodate an extra 2,000 visits annually by expanding dedicated research and training space. He says the funding would also train 100 more providers in the next five years to alleviate the shortage of autism services in Missouri.

"Here in Missouri, we believe that all children - including those with autism - deserve the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential," Nixon said.

MU Interim Chancellor Hank Foley, who joined Nixon at Friday's announcement, says as more children are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders, "the demand for the life-changing services provided at the Thompson Center continues to grow."

Nixon will formally unveil his FY 2017 budget blueprint on Wednesday evening during his final State of the State. Nixon will address a joint session of the Missouri Legislature in Jefferson City.

Nixon says his proposed budget would also invest $131 million in additional state and federal funding for the Missouri Department of Mental Health's Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Under the Missouri Constitution, the Legislature must approve the state budget by early May.

House Speaker Todd Richardson, R-Poplar Bluff, will deliver the GOP response on Wednesday evening.
In 2010, Nixon worked with then-Speaker Ron Richard, R-Joplin, and then-State Sen. Scott Rupp, R-Wentzville, to pass bipartisan legislation mandating the coverage of autism diagnosis and treatment. Richard is now the Missouri Senate President Pro Tem.

Gov. Nixon announces expansion of Thompson Center for Autism

COLUMBIA - Gov. Jay Nixon announced Friday morning the Thompson Center for Autism will be expanded with $5 million in state funding.

The Governor will formally present his budget proposal for fiscal year 2017 during his final State of the State address next week. He will talk about the progress Missouri has made and the work still left to do. Launched in 2005, the Thompson Center helps people in Missouri, people around the country and people worldwide who have autism and/or neurodevelopmental disorders.

"Here in Missouri, we believe that all children - including those with autism - deserve the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential," Nixon said. "The Thompson Center is a shining testament to our shared values as Missourians and joined obligation we have to our most vulnerable citizens. Some folks didn't catch a fair break in life, but deserve the opportunity to live up to their individual God-given potential."

Nixon said thousands of people from around the nation and around the world seek help from the Thompson Center with a disorder that now is estimated to affect one in 68 children born in the United States.

"As more and more children diagnosed with autism, the demand for life changing services this center provides and others around our great state continues to grow," Nixon said.

The governor also announced $1 million will help launch an autism clinic at Truman State University and $500,000 will expand services at the Mercy Kids Autism Center in St. Louis and St. Charles Counties.
Miles Hinkle, a Columbia resident, is the father of two children, Blake, 13, and Jackson, 9. Blake Hinkle was diagnosed with autism around the age of 21 months. His father said the Thompson Center opened shortly after his son's diagnosis. Miles Hinkle has been volunteering and been involved since day one.

He said it's absolutely fantastic what's going to happen with the Thompson Center's expansion.

"The demand is there," Hinkle said. "The fact that you have the flagship, you know, the university who has one of the centers of excellence in the country is going to be absolutely amazing."

Hinkle said he's really excited in particular about the transitional programs the Thompson Center will have.

"You're about to have a tidal wave of kids like Blake who are 13, 14 years old who are going to be 18 or 21 pretty soon and they're going to want to become productive members of the community," Hinkle said. "I think that kind of career skills, job placement type program for people with autism will be fantastic."

Interim UM President honored for leadership, service

By THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Friday, January 15, 2016 at 2:00 pm

**Interim University of Missouri System President Mike Middleton was honored last week for leadership and service to the community at the 30th annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration at Harris-Stowe State University.**

Middleton received the Distinguished Drum Major for Justice Award at the event, which recognizes “outstanding and lasting leadership” and service in the local community, according to the president’s blog.

“I am both honored and humbled to receive the Distinguished Drum Major for Justice Award,” Middleton said in a prepared statement. “I am thankful to my colleagues on the commission for their continued work to celebrate and share the life, legacy and work of Dr. King.”
Established in 1985, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. State Celebration Commission of Missouri organizes celebrations across the state annually. Middleton has served on the commission since 2000.

Academy of Science honors interim MU chancellor

Saturday, January 16, 2016 at 12:00 am

The Academy of Science of St. Louis is awarding University of Missouri interim Chancellor Hank Foley with a science leadership award.

The academy will present the award at its annual dinner in April.

Foley worked as a professor of chemistry and chemical engineering at MU before he became interim chancellor; he also served as executive vice president of academic affairs for the UM System and as senior vice chancellor for research and graduate studies at MU.

Foley and his students have published more than 120 scientific papers, and he has been listed as an inventor on 15 different U.S. patents, according to a news release. In 2013, Foley was elected as a fellow of the National Academy of Inventors; he recently became a fellow with the American Chemical Society.

No final decision on search process for next UM System president

The UM System Board of Curators discussed potentially using an open, closed or hybrid model for the search.

The search for the next UM System president will be largely closed with the potential for public input at the end, but a final decision from the Board of Curators is expected at their Feb. 4-5 meeting.
At a special meeting Wednesday, the board talked about how to proceed with the search. The public meeting was preceded by a closed session in which the board discussed personnel matters, Chairwoman Pamela Henrickson said. Five curators were present.

“The most important thing we can do is doing a good job on (the search),” Curator John Phillips said at the end of the meeting.

Mike Middleton, former MU deputy chancellor and faculty member, is currently serving as the system’s interim president. Former President Tim Wolfe resigned on Nov. 9, 2015 amid student protests and graduate student Jonathan Butler’s hunger strike.

Curator David Steelman said that because of those events, he is “concerned about the next search,” specifically regarding the quantity of candidates.

Henrickson didn’t share Steelman's concern, saying there are many factors that could impact the search and the specific outcome of last semester's events is unknown.

“Whether it affects negatively or positively remains to be seen,” Henrickson said.

Phillips suggested expanding the search committee beyond the board to include around 13 to 15 total people. There would not be an advisory group, which had been a component of the hiring process for Wolfe. Student representative to the board Tracy Mulderig said it’s important that all four UM System campuses are represented. The board did not decide who should serve on the search committee.

Some board members expressed concern at having too large of a search committee, as it could increase the possibility for a leak of information.

Confidentiality of the candidates was a key factor for the board as they discussed different models for the search, including open, closed or hybrid.

Phillips said there was a consensus toward having a closed, or private, search, as it would allow them to reach out to candidates who were already employed.

However, according to a document detailing the different models, “adopting a completely closed search process is likely to generate considerable but understandable resistance by the communities.”

Mulderig argued in favor of a hybrid model, which would start off closed until the search committee settled on finalists. At that point, public forums would be held with the finalists.

The curators did not discuss using a completely open model, which would have kept committee conversations open to the public with regular updates provided to general population.

A major drawback of the open model would be that “stakeholder input will likely be loud and constant, and can affect the pool as the search progresses,” according to the document explaining
the models. “This could lengthen the time to complete the search and creates a risk that the ‘loudest voices’ determine the outcome of the search.”

Phillips also presented a proposed timeline for the search, which he acknowledged was ambitious. The first step is to hire a search firm to identify candidates. The board will then put together the search committee. Similarly to the hiring process for Wolfe, the curators still plan on holding public forums to receive input on the qualifications the next president should have.

While nothing was decided, the curators did hint at what kind of candidate they are looking for. Phillips said the next president “ought to be fully qualified, experienced and successful in academia.”

Henrickson said they are keeping an open mind on the backgrounds of the candidates.

“Of course the chancellors at the four universities are the head academicians, and the president of the university is the president of the enterprise,” Hendrickson said. “There are people who have strong opinions that it should be a businessman and people have strong opinions that it should be an academic, and I think the board is open-minded and wants to choose the best candidate, and we don’t know who it will be at this point.”

Banned Missouri booster says he meant no harm

By Steve Walentik

Monday, January 18, 2016 at 1:00 pm

Two of the most serious NCAA violations the Missouri athletic department has admitted to in the investigation of its men’s basketball program center around an internship program at T3 Solutions in Augusta, Ga.

The company’s founder and president is Christopher Mark Tuley, a Huntsville native and 2000 graduate of the University of Missouri who acknowledged that he is the man referred to as “Representative #1” on the list of admitted violations released by the school on Wednesday.

According to Tuley’s company website, T3 Solutions provides “timely, accurate and actionable information and intelligence support primarily to the U.S. Special Operations Command, U.S.
Central Command, Joint Special Operations Command and the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command.”

Tuley employed four Missouri basketball players and two student managers as part of a two-week internship program held during the break between the spring semester and summer school in 2013 and ’14.

He spoke to the Tribune in multiple lengthy phone interviews and tried to explain how he became the booster who got the Tigers in trouble with the NCAA and why he doesn’t believe he knowingly did anything wrong with his management of the internship program.

“I think I made it clear that there were things that maybe could have been done differently,” Tuley said. “However, we had good intentions and no ill intent.”

Tuley said he first suggested Missouri basketball players could be part of his internship program after a casual conversation with then-MU associate head coach Tim Fuller. Tuley said he met Fuller in 2012 in a chance encounter at a farmer’s market in Augusta. He said the following year Fuller mentioned he was looking for a constructive environment for one of the players to spend the 2013 break.

Such action by a coach does not violate NCAA rules.

After the conversation with Fuller, Tuley said a proposal to have T3 Solutions hire players as interns was made to then-associate athletic director Sarah Baumgartner, who at the time served as the men’s basketball sport administrator at Missouri. Since December 2013, she has worked as the senior associate athletic director and chief development officer at Rutgers. Tuley said his understanding is that Baumgartner sent the proposal to Mitzi Clayton, the associate athletic director in charge of compliance.

“It was sort of a quick pace the first time,” said Tuley, who added that the end of the spring semester was nearing.

Eventually the proposal was assigned to Charles Brunette, MU’s assistant director of compliance.

“Charles Brunette became my point of contact on the rules to what we were allowed to do,” Tuley said. “So we started that conversation probably that week.”

Among other correspondence, Tuley received a form letter — shared with the Tribune and addressed “Dear Employer” — that advised him: “As you may already know, student-athletes and the University of Missouri are subject to the rules and regulations administered by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Under NCAA bylaws pertaining to student-athlete employment, compensation may be paid to a student-athlete only for work actually
performed and the pay rate must be commensurate with the going rate in your locality for similar services.”

Tuley said he does not know who picked the players who participated in the program, though he acknowledged that he requested Jakeenan Gant the second year because he was from Georgia, now Tuley’s home state.

“I thought it would be appropriate that if we were going to have student-athletes that one should be from our state,” he said.

Gant at the time had just finished his senior year of high school and had yet to enroll in classes at MU.

Paperwork submitted by Tuley to Brunette — which Tuley shared with the Tribune — showed that Missouri compliance staffers were notified that Jordan Clarkson, Tony Criswell and Stefan Jankovic would be participating in the program the first year, along with then-graduate student Ricky Bolton Jr., a nephew of then-MU Coach Frank Haith who worked as Missouri’s head manager throughout his uncle’s tenure. Bolton currently serves as the assistant strength coach for men’s basketball at Tulsa. Tuley said there was a change after he submitted the paperwork and that Jankovic did not participate in the program.

Cam Biedscheid — a transfer from Notre Dame who left the MU program on Sept. 30, 2014, before playing a game — joined Gant and student manager Patrick Holman in the program in 2014, according to an email Clayton sent to Coach Kim Anderson on May 29, 2014.

Anderson had been hired to replace Haith only a month earlier. A few weeks before Anderson was hired, the school received a verbal notice of inquiry from the NCAA about potential violations in the men’s basketball program.

However, that does not necessarily mean MU knowingly allowed players to participate in a flawed internship program in 2014. It is possible the alleged internship violations were uncovered later in the 19-month NCAA investigation, after the 2014 interns completed the program.

Missouri athletic spokesman Ryan Bradley said MU could not comment on Tuley’s statements because the NCAA investigation is ongoing. When the NCAA completes the summary disposition process, it will issue a report that will assess blame for the violations and give details of its interviews with all parties in the case.

Tuley provided a picture of Clayton’s email about the 2014 interns to the Tribune. It is unclear how he obtained it, but carbon copied on the message are Mary Ann Austin, Missouri’s executive associate athletic director in charge of compliance, and Brunette.
It begins: “Just wanted to follow-up with you regarding the summer employment arrangement for Cam Biedscheid and Jakeenan Gant. As you are aware, they are working for Mark Tuley at T3 Solutions, LLC, as a summer intern. They are among other college students, students and student-athletes, working for T3 making $20/hour. I reiterated to Mark that the SAs can be paid only for work actually performed and he assured me that they were earning their pay only for hours worked.”

Tuley said he was advised before the first year of the program that the players could not receive special privileges.

Each player and manager was provided with housing at no cost during the internship as well as local transportation and an iPad. Tuley said he provided those same things to all out-of-state interns.

Those are three things specified as “impermissible inducements and extra benefits” he is said to have provided the players through the internship program, in violation of NCAA rules.

The list of violations also states that the players received cash in the amount of $520 and that Tuley arranged for the use of a local gym. Tuley said the cash was provided for gas and food because Clarkson, Criswell and Bolton arrived with no money. He doesn’t deny arranging for the use of the gym for players to work out but said he paid nothing for that privilege.

He said he did not explicitly ask MU if giving the players iPads, paying them the money for gas and food or arranging for them to use the gym was permissible under NCAA rules. But Missouri was aware that housing and transportation were provided, according to an email Tuley sent to Brunette on May 14, 2013, and forwarded to the Tribune.

Furthermore, Clayton’s email to Anderson describes that Holman “was provided a vehicle to use during his employment at T3, but Mark indicated that none of the student-athletes have been provided transportation to eliminate any scrutiny of doing so.”

It does not appear, given the prior awareness of MU staffers, that the housing and use of a vehicle would have been considered impermissible benefits by themselves. But it seems they became viewed that way after the NCAA and school in their review determined that the players had been compensated “for work-not-performed at a business through a summer internship program,” as stated in Missouri’s release.

Tuley disputed that the players didn’t work. He said that he required all of the players to do two “white papers,” which he described as similar to research papers, during their time in the program. He said he first tasked them with investigating what his company’s area of work — geospatial intelligence — is.

For the second paper in one — if not both — of the years, Tuley said the players were instructed to pick a business they thought was under-represented in Augusta. He said the only reason he remembered that was because one of the players wrote about the need for an upscale sports store, a concept similar to a Nike signature store.
“The goal was to get the entrepreneurial mind-set working, and I thought that worked,” Tuley said.

Tuley said he did not closely monitor the players while they researched and wrote the papers nor keep track of how many hours of the two-week program were spent completing the papers.

It is unclear what questions Missouri’s compliance staff asked about the type of work that would be done by the players before the internship started or what answers Tuley provided to questions that were asked. He said he does not remember providing much information about the work requirements of the internship program other than a one-page questionnaire and a written summary before it started.

Tuley also said he wasn’t aware of any NCAA problems with the internship program in 2013, so he operated the program the same way in 2014.

In the third of five listed admitted violations in Missouri’s release, MU stated that because it did not fully vet the summer internship employment opportunity and follow up to request documentation afterward, it was cited with a failure to adequately monitor the internship program.

Tuley, who also was cited for a minor violation for multiple impermissible recruiting contacts with a recruit and paying for a meal for a nonscholastic coach, said he spoke to NCAA investigators for two hours last spring. He said he was left with the impression that they were pursuing information to tie Haith to violations.

“I didn’t have much to do with Frank Haith, so I really couldn’t help them with that,” Tuley said.

He said that during the course of its 19-month investigation, Missouri asked him to turn over 1099 forms for interns who were part of the program in 2013 and 2014. He said he submitted forms from 2014 but said he did not produce forms for the 2013 interns because they were no longer students at MU.

Tuley said Missouri has not communicated with him for months and that the school did not send him season football tickets in August as he had requested.

He said he was first notified almost simultaneous to Missouri’s release on Wednesday that he had been permanently disassociated from the university. Missouri’s announcement said he is prohibited “from receiving tickets, making donations or otherwise representing the university.”

Said Tuley: “I think it’s been portrayed as I’m the guy that pretty much did what he wanted and didn’t consult the University of Missouri, which doesn’t work, because they got in touch with compliance Day 1.”
COLUMBIA (AP) — The University of Missouri System will begin mediation with a labor union that represents service, maintenance and custodial employees.

The university system and the Laborers' International Union of North America Local 773 haven't reached an agreement since their contract expired at the end of August.

University system spokesman John Fougere told The Columbia Daily Tribune on Friday that the mediation set for next Monday and Tuesday was mutually agreed upon.

The university implemented its most recent contract offer earlier this school year after the two groups couldn't reach a contract agreement. Union members voted against that in September.

As part of that proposal, the university changed union workers' pay model to a merit-based system in which pay increases are tied to employee evaluations. Union members previously worked under a system that tied pay increases to longevity of service.
UM System, labor union approach mediation over contract

By Megan Favignano

Sunday, January 17, 2016 at 12:00 am

The University of Missouri and LiUNA Laborers’ Local 773 — a labor union that represents service, maintenance and custodial employees at MU, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and MU Health Care — are set to meet for mediation Jan. 25-26 at MU.

The UM System and LiUNA Laborers’ Local 773 have been unable to reach an agreement since their contract expired at the end of August. UM spokesman John Fougere said the upcoming mediation is a “mutually agreed upon next step” for the university and the union.

“It is our hope that the discussions are beneficial, and we welcome the opportunity to potentially come to further agreement on the outstanding items presented to the union for consideration this past fall,” Fougere said Friday.

Since the two groups were unable to reach a contract agreement, the university implemented its most recent contract offer earlier this school year — an offer union members voted against in September. As part of that proposal, the university changed union workers’ pay model to a merit-based system.

In a merit-based system, pay increases are tied to employee evaluations. Union members previously worked under a step-based system that tied pay increases to longevity of service.

Regina Guevara, a field representative with LiUNA, said union workers worry supervisors might show favoritism in a merit-based pay system.

“If you don’t have a say about your pay because it becomes subjective through an evaluation process, then you’re going backwards,” Guevara said in an October interview. “We’re not asking for much, we just want a say about our pay.”

She said the union and the university system agreed to schedule mediation regarding the merit-based pay system after three union representatives and six stewards met with interim UM System President Mike Middleton and his administrative staff in November.
The union in November submitted a list of items it wanted the university to reconsider, which included reopening negotiations and restoring the old compensation system.

To increase awareness of the contract dispute, union representatives and workers passed out fliers before an MU football game in November.

LiUNA represents 422 union workers at University Hospital, 154 at UMKC and 781 at MU.

MU faculty member to discuss race relations at council meeting

Watch story: http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=32230&zone=5&categories=5

COLUMBIA - The Columbia City Council was set to discuss the potential benefits of a combined approach by city leaders and leaders on the MU campus on race relations at Tuesday night's meeting.

The Council will hear a public comment by the chair of the MU Faculty Committee on Race Relations, Berkley Hudson. Hudson said he hopes to stimulate important conversations about the quality of race relations within the community.

"Conversations about race are very difficult to have with one another," Hudson said. "But that doesn't mean we shouldn't be having them. We need to find a way to share our stories and ideas about race with one another so we can work towards the goals of both MU and the city."

Hudson has served as the chair of the committee since its inception in January of last year. The committee was formed after a student forum on the events in Ferguson in late 2014.

He said the experiences of racial intolerance students have had over the course of the committee's existence aren't unique to MU.
"We don't have a monopoly in that sense," Hudson said. "These are issues that exist all over the United States."

City councilman Karl Skala said he's interested in hearing what the professor has to say.

"I've always felt race relations are an important topic to discuss within our community," he said.

Hudson said he hopes he can work with city council members in the future. He was scheduled to speak at the beginning of the meeting Tuesday at City Hall.

MU celebrates 100th anniversary of library’s dedication

By Megan Favignano

Saturday, January 16, 2016 at 12:00 am

University of Missouri faculty, staff and administrators gathered in Ellis Library on Friday to recognize the library — just as faculty, staff and administrators did 100 years ago.

Rabia Gregory, associate professor of religious studies and chairwoman of MU’s library committee, said the library is critical for the work of many people on campus.

“It is not simply a lab for the humanities or a quiet study space in a historic building filled with books,” Gregory said. “The library provides services essential for all research and teaching.”

As part of a yearlong celebration, MU officials hosted a rededication ceremony in the library’s Grand Reading Room on Friday afternoon. January marks the 100th anniversary of the library’s dedication.

A fire in 1892 destroyed Academic Hall, which housed the University Library. The library was housed in different locations on campus before acquiring its own building.

In 1913, the General Assembly appropriated $200,000 for the university to build the central portion of the current library building.
The architect — James Jamieson of St. Louis — designed the building to make expansions easier, placing large windows at the ends of the hallway on both sides of the building that later became doorways into additions.

The building’s design included metal-framed doors and windows rather than wood to minimize damage in case of a fire.

MU interim Chancellor Hank Foley said he cherishes the days he spent roaming library stacks as a student.

“One of the most delightful aspects of the library that I always found was that unexpected encounter with the book you weren’t looking for or the article you weren’t looking for that suddenly captured your imagination,” Foley said.

Foley said he would love to have seen the library of 100 years ago. Libraries are essential to education, he said.

“The libraries support every college, every department and every student on campus,” Foley said.

Steve Weinberg, journalism professor emeritus, wrote a book detailing Ellis Library’s history in celebration of its 100th year. MU Press Director David Rosenbaum said the book should be available in April.

Today, MU Libraries is composed of Ellis Library — the main campus library — and nine other campus library facilities.

The library system is in a dire budget situation after decades of limited funding, Gregory said.

“Our librarians have gone too long without raises, positions vacant by retirement remain unfilled” and “collections and preservation budgets cannot meet the needs of our growing community,” Gregory said.

During the campaign for a student library fee this fall, Matt Gaunt, director of advancement with MU Libraries, said the library’s budget was not in line with MU’s peer institutions. Students rejected the staggered fee increase in November that would have added $13 million to the MU Libraries budget.

Increased costs combined with minimal funding increases have led MU Libraries to begin looking for areas of its budget to cut.
Obama Calls for Pell Grant Changes to Accelerate Progress Toward Degrees

No MU Mention

To help students make quicker progress toward earning degrees, the Obama administration is calling for a significant expansion of the Pell Grant program that would make the grants available year-round and reward students who take a full schedule of courses each semester.

Together, the two proposals would mean an additional $2 billion in Pell Grant assistance during the 2017 fiscal year, the Education Department said in a news release.

Reinstating year-round Pell Grants — a provision that fell victim to budget cuts in 2011 — would help students finish degrees faster by letting them take more courses during an academic year. Many students now exhaust their annual Pell eligibility after just two semesters and are unable to pay for summer courses. The new proposal would provide nearly 700,000 students with an additional $1,915, on average, next year, the department said.

As an incentive for students to stay on track or accelerate their progress toward earning an associate or bachelor’s degree, the administration is also proposing an “On-Track Pell Bonus” that would raise the maximum Pell Grant award by $300 for students who take 15 credits per semester in an academic year. The bonus would encourage students to take the credits needed to finish an associate degree in two years or a bachelor’s degree in four years. The proposal would help an estimated 2.3 million students next year, the department said.

Both proposals build on the administration’s push for every American to earn a postsecondary credential and get training they need to find a well-paying job in the changing economy.
Pushing on Pell

No MU Mention

The Obama administration wants to expand the federal Pell Grant program by bringing back year-round eligibility for the grants, which was eliminated four years ago, and by creating a $300 annual bonus for Pell recipients who take at least 15 credits per semester.

The two proposed changes announced today would cost $2 billion in the next fiscal year, the U.S. Department of Education said. Both would require approval by the Republican-led U.S. Congress, which will be a tall order for the White House. However, the push to restore so-called year-round Pell recently has picked up some bipartisan backing. It has a chance of returning this budget season, said supporters of the plan.

“This proposal will provide nearly 700,000 students next year who are making real progress toward on-time graduation with an additional $1,915 on average to help pay for college and complete their degrees faster,” the department said in a written statement.

Currently, low-income students who attend college full time and receive Pell Grants often run through the maximum annual grant amount within two semesters, leaving no Pell money for summer courses. President George W. Bush and Congress in 2008 created a fix for that problem, by allowing students to access Pell Grants for the following year to help pay for summer courses.

That eligibility lasted three years. The Obama administration, with bipartisan backing from Congress, cut year-round Pell in 2011. The White House said the annual appropriation had become too expensive. Its elimination was defended as a necessary sacrifice and a way to protect Pell recipients from having their maximum award amounts slashed.

Many in the higher education lobby, particularly private colleges, were willing to see year-round Pell go -- at least quietly -- if it meant avoiding cuts to the then $5,550 maximum award. Advocates for community colleges and public four-year institutions
were livid, however. Those two sectors enroll the most low-income students who benefited from year-round eligibility.

Congressional Republicans typically aren’t allies of increasing spending on Pell. But there is some Republican support for the restoration of the year-round version. For example, Senator Lamar Alexander, the Tennessee Republican who leads the Senate’s education committee, has introduced legislation to bring it back. Senator Michael Bennet, a Colorado Democrat, co-sponsored that 2014 bill.

The White House’s new proposal closely mirrors the original year-round Pell, which has broad, bipartisan support, said David Baime, senior vice president for government relations and research for the American Association of Community Colleges. “It is also something that we strongly support because it will help students stay enrolled and graduate faster,” Baime said in an email, “and many would-be year-round programs were derailed by the loss of the year-round Pell.”

The program would not be as expensive as it was in 2011, according to the department. That’s because Pell Grant spending over all spiked during that time, due in part to the recession. (The federal government spent $22.8 billion on Pell in 2014.) And some supporters of bringing back year-round Pell have argued that not enough budget information about the new eligibility was gleaned to see how expensive it might be. “This is a common-sense idea whose time had come in 2008,” Baime said.

**Federal 15 to Finish**

As has been the case with year-round Pell in previous years, the proposed $300 bonus for Pell students likely will be divisive within higher education.

Some college completion advocates say offering students incentives to attend college full time can boost graduation rates. The Obama administration concurs, saying a $300 addition to the maximum Pell Grant award for students who take at least 15 credits per semester would help an estimated 2.3 million students “stay on track” or accelerate their progress to graduation.

“The bonus would encourage students to take the credits needed to finish an associate degree in two years (60 credits) or a bachelor’s degree in four years (120 credits),” the department said. “Finishing faster means more students will complete their education at a lower cost and likely with less student debt.”

Complete College America has been a supporter of similar policies, which the nonprofit calls “15 to finish” strategies. The group, which receives a good chunk of its funding
from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has advocated for 15-credit incentives at the state level.

Stan Jones, president of Complete College America, said the administration’s proposals were a step in the right direction.

“Our data shows that students who take at least 15 credits per semester are more likely to complete, and Pell should reflect this reality,” Jones said in a written statement. “Efforts to incentivize students to take 15 credits per semester or 30 credits per year would not only make this a better investment for the federal government, it would show a true commitment to boosting graduation rates.”

Complete College America has backed statewide campaigns in Hawaii and Indiana to encourage more students to take 15-credit course loads.

That approach, however, has drawn fire from some community college leaders and from some advocates for adult students, who say 15 credits can be too many, particularly for students who work or are unprepared for college-level work.

Tom Snyder, president of Ivy Tech Community College, which is Indiana’s statewide system, is a critic of 15 to finish. He argued in a 2014 opinion piece for The Huffington Post that 15 credits is not a good fit for everyone.

“No I applaud any effort designed to help students get a degree, I know from experience that 15 to finish will not work with nontraditional students attending community colleges,” Snyder wrote. “In fact it might hurt many students. Students who are 25 or older often have families and need to work full time while attending college.”