Protesters interrupt University of Missouri curators meeting

COLUMBIA, Mo. • **Two dozen students twice showed up to the University of Missouri Board of Curators meeting on Thursday offering support for instructor Melissa Click and calling on the university to put in place policies that would make the Columbia campus more welcoming to minority students.**

The first demonstration took place during a break in the meeting. None of the six curators was in the room.

Administrators from each of the four campuses in Columbia, St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla watched in silence.

Students came back about 20 minutes later when the meeting had reconvened.

Board chairwoman Pamela Quigg Henrickson initially pounded her gavel, calling for order, but students shouted over her and were eventually allowed to speak.

The students read the eight demands originally made public in November by the student-activist group, Concerned Student 1950, calling for increased minority participation in university decision making and greater effort to make the Columbia campus more inclusive to all students.

Students again offered support for Click, an assistant communications professor who gained national notoriety in November when she was caught on video attempting to block student journalists from filming a demonstration.

Students had gathered on the on the quad at the University of Missouri-Columbia to celebrate the resignation of university President Timothy M. Wolfe.

Wolfe had become the subject of campus protests over what many considered a lackluster response to racist incidents on campus.

Since then, Click has become a darling to some and the target of intense criticism from others, including some lawmakers calling for her to be fired.
On Thursday, student demonstrators praised Click for her courage in sticking up for minority students.

“I stand with Melissa Click because she found potential in students more important than a paycheck,” one student said.

The students chanted, “We have nothing to lose but our chains,” as they left.

When the demonstration was over, curator David L. Steelman said he appreciated hearing from the students.

“I don’t consider that a distraction,” he said.

In an otherwise uneventful meeting, the board offered more insight into the process it will use to find a new president.

The board came under fire last month when it announced the selection process will be largely secret, with the names of potential candidates not disclosed, at least in the early stages of the search.

Henrickson, the board chairwoman, said the secrecy allows for a wider search. The rationale is that universities generally poach top executives from other schools, and candidates would be reluctant to let current employers know they are seeking other jobs.

Critics say secret searches rob students, faculty and the public from knowing how diligent boards are, and the criteria they favor in looking for top talent.

On Thursday, the board gave student board member Tracy Mulderig a voting role in the search. Student board members have been left out of previous searches.

The board also announced it will choose one member each from the Intercampus Faculty Council, the Intercampus Student Council and the Intercampus Staff Advisory Counsel to serve on the search committee.

“Diversity and campus representation will be taken into account,” curator John R. Phillips said.

Lastly, the board announced it will hold public forums — likely in April — for finalists in St. Louis, Columbia, Kansas City and Rolla.
Student protesters interrupt Missouri curators' meeting

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Two dozen black protesters twice interrupted a meeting of the University of Missouri system's governing board to read a list of demands for improvements in diversity.

The demonstrators on Thursday stood side-by-side, their arms locked, outside a room on the Columbia campus when the Board of Curators were starting a finance committee session. They returned later to interrupt the meeting as it was in session.

The protesters also yelled support for Melissa Click, the assistant communications professor suspended last week for her confrontation with student journalists during race-related protests in November.

The protests led to the resignation of President Tim Wolfe and Columbia campus Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

Members of the protest group Concerned Student 1950, who helped lead last year's protests, did not answer questions from reporters.

About two dozen demonstrators representing the Concerned Student 1950 group interrupted the University of Missouri Board of Curators meeting Thursday afternoon by reading the demands they gave school officials last fall and making statements in support of suspended Assistant Professor Melissa Click.
Curators Chair Pamela Henrickson tried futilely a few times to gavel them into silence, then gave up as she and the other curators on hand listened, mostly in silence.

“If we don’t get it, shut it down,” the students shouted after the demands, which included calls for increasing the share of black faculty members to 10 percent by the 2017-18 school year and a 10-year strategic plan due May 1 to “increase retention rates for marginalized students, sustain diversity curriculum and training and promote a more safe and inclusive campus.”

Of the demands made last fall, only the removal of University System President Tim Wolfe has been met. Wolfe resigned Nov. 9. On that same day, assistant professor of communication Melissa Click was captured on video calling for “some muscle” to remove reporters covering the demonstrations. Click was suspended by the curators last week after misdemeanor municipal assault charges were filed. Prosecution has been deferred under a deal with city prosecutors.

“We stand with Melissa Click because it is the right thing to do,” one of the demonstrators said.

“We love this university, which is why we are critical of this university,” another said.

The curators had just resumed the open part of their session and were in a Finance Committee meeting, discussing the recent downgrade in the outlook for UM’s debt, when the Concerned Student 1950 group began their demonstration. The downgrade, giving the school’s debt a negative outlook, was due in part to the administrative turmoil surrounding Wolfe’s departure and that of Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, who resigned Nov. 9 as well.

After the students had left, Curator David Steelman of Rolla said he was glad the group had made its presence known.

“I appreciate the opportunity to hear from those folks. I do not consider that an interruption,” Steelman said.

MISSOURIAN

Black rights activists repeat demand for racial equality in rally, march into UM curators meeting

DAVID SOLER CRESPO, 15 hrs ago

Updated Information:
This story has been updated to include more details of the group’s demonstration as well as comments made in support of MU professor Melissa Click.
COLUMBIA — **At least 18 black rights activists marched across campus to interrupt a UM System Board of Curators Finance Committee meeting Thursday. Speakers reiterated the group's demands for racial equality and offered support for MU communication assistant professor Melissa Click.**

The rally started about 12:30 p.m. near the MU Student Center, proceeding to Reynolds Alumni Center where the Board of Curators was holding its regular February meeting. Concerned Student 1950 asked for support at the rally via Twitter, but it wasn't clear whether it was organized solely by members of the group.

The rally made its first stop at Speakers Circle. MU senior and Black Studies major Kendrick Washington read Concerned Student 1950's list of eight demands, which include a handwritten apology from former UM System President Tim Wolfe and more representation for people of color at MU.

Activists recalled times when they experienced racial discrimination as tours of prospective students strolled through campus.

"Racism lives here, but so do we. We need you," the prospective students were told. "Please come to Mizzou."

The demonstration then moved toward the Reynolds Alumni Center. One videographer was asked to stop filming by a small group who requested privacy. Demonstrators locked arms and prayed before entering the building.

Once inside, the group stood, and Washington again read the list, this time to the curators.

After Washington read the list, the group chanted: "If we don't get it, shut it down!"

Imani Simmons-Elloie, an MU senior studying finance, asked some of the activists to explain their support for Click. Simmons-Elloie described Click as the "real definition of an ally."
Click was filmed Nov. 9 asking for "some muscle" to remove independent videographer Mark Schierbecker from a rally on MU’s Mel Carnahan Quadrangle. The incident occurred inside a human wall intended to create a barrier between student demonstrators and journalists. Other students spoke in her defense, saying she respected the group's movement and thanked her for her involvement.

Click was suspended with pay on Jan. 27, pending an investigation by the UM Board of Curators for her role in the demonstration. The curators govern the four-campus system.

The group left the curators' meeting, briefly congregated in the building lobby and then returned to the meeting and repeated their actions: Washington read the list of demands, and Simmons-Elloie again asked demonstrators to speak in support of Click.

This time, board Chairwoman Pam Henrickson banged her gavel on two occasions while the list was being read. Washington raised his voice each time and continued to speak.

The group left the meeting about 1:50 p.m. with chants of "Ashé ... Power" and an Assata Shakur mantra the group has often invoked: "It is our duty to fight for our freedom."

Curator David Steelman spoke after the group left.

"I appreciate the opportunity to hear from these folks," Steelman said. "I don't consider that an interruption."

He paused and continued a discussion about a recent financial outlook released by Standard and Poor's: "All right, I think there were questions."

The student rally then moved through the Mel Carnahan Quadrangle, where Concerned Student 1950 camped in November, and returned to the student center. Students already inside were directed to "stand up against discrimination."

The rally ended downstairs in the Multicultural Center. Washington said no future demonstrations have been planned.
The demonstration was followed at 2:10 p.m. Thursday by a news release from the Missouri Legislative Black Caucus. "The UM Board of Curators' lack of action shows there's no genuine concern to address long-standing historical issues," Black Caucus chairman Brandon Ellington, D-Kansas City, said in the statement.

Concerned Student 1950 protesters interrupt Curators meeting, say they support Click


COLUMBIA, Mo. — UPDATE: February 4, 2006, 6:35 p.m.

University of Missouri Curators were caught by surprise during their Thursday meeting as a group of student black protestors shouted a list of demands.

Members of the Mizzou black student group Concerned Student 1950 and several other protestors interrupted the Curators while they were having a budget presentation.

Protestors shouted, "If we don't get it, shut it down! If we don't get it, shut it down!"

Concerned Student 1950 is the same group of black Mizzou students that protested racial problems on their campus in November that led to the resignations of the University System President and the MU Chancellor. Curators allowed the students to shout a list of demands for about 15 minutes that included more black faculty and staff by 2018 and a statement from former University President Tim Wolfe admitting he committed gross negligence while in office. The students also showed their support for suspended MU Professor Melissa Click. A video of Click went viral on the internet after she confronted a student journalist during a Mizzou racial protest in November.
Protestors said, "While people were parading around this campus calling us n***ers, nobody was willing to listen. Nobody was willing to do anything to counter this oppression. She stood with us!"

"With Melissa Click, there's something different about her than everybody else that I've met at this University for the most part. She has seen me as one full person, not as a black girl, not a little ghetto girl, not three-fifths a person but a person!"

The Curators sat quietly during the demonstration. Curators said they allowed the protest because listening to students is part of a Curators' job.

The Curators continue their meeting on Friday when they plan to talk about their search for a new University President and their budget negotiations with Missouri lawmakers.

The Curators also met on Thursday with members of the Missouri Legislative Black Caucus to address documented racial disparities of minorities on the Mizzou campus.

ORIGINAL STORY:

Two dozen members of the student group Concerned Student 1950 interrupted the University of Missouri Board of Curators' meeting to show support for suspended Associate Professor Melissa Click.

That meeting was being held at the Reynolds Alumni Center Thursday afternoon.

Demonstrators stood side-by-side with locked arms outside of the room where the curators was starting a finance committee session.

Curators allowed the students to speak for about 15 minutes.

The Curators sat quietly as several students and community members took turns explaining why they support Click, according to KRCG 13 reporter Mark Slavit.

After several chants of protests, the group left the meeting peacefully.

The Curators allowed the protesters to interrupt the meeting because listening to students is part of a curators’ job.
Concerned Student 1950 protesters disrupt UM curators meeting, share list of demands


COLUMBIA, Mo. - ABC 17 News has crews at the University of Missouri system Board of Curators' meeting on Thursday, where protesters with the Concerned Student 1950 group called on leaders to increase the number of black faculty members and students.

Demonstrators also proclaimed their support for MU's controversial assistant communication professor. Melissa Click is still employed but suspended with pay after she tried to physically remove a student photographer from last fall's campus protests, which were on public property.

Curators approved a recommendation to form a Presidential Search Committee. Membership will include the Board of Curators, the Student Representative to the Board of Curators, and representatives from faculty, student and staff.

Curators are meeting at the alumni center on Thursday and Friday about a range of issues, including an update on the search for a new UM system president, student housing rates and retiree benefits.

Concerned Student 1950 interrupts UM Board of Curators meeting


COLUMBIA – Concerned Student 1950 protesters interrupted the UM Board of Curators meeting Thursday to present their demands to leaders.
Protesters came in with signs saying “Wake Up,” “No Justice, No Peace” and “#IStandWithMelissaClick.”

One university leader banged her gavel to silence the protesters, but they continued on with their protest.

“I stand with Melissa Click because she knows that just because the media has to make a deadline doesn’t mean they can disrespect stories, narratives and communities,” said one of the protesters.

Another protester said, “I stand with Melissa Click because, unlike reporters, she has respect for us.”

Group leaders presented a list of demands to curators including:

- A demand for Tim Wolfe to write a handwritten apology to Concerned Student 1950 and to admit his gross negligence consenting to physical violence.
- A demand for the university to abide by the agreement they made in 1969 for the betterment of the black community.
- A demand for curators to enforce racial awareness and inclusion in the curriculum throughout all campus departments. A board made up of students, staff and faculty of color must oversee this enforcement.
- A demand for the University of Missouri to increase black faculty and staff to 10 percent for the academic year 2017-2018.
- A demand for leaders to implement a strategic ten-year plan by May 2016 to increase retention rates for marginalized students and a safer campus.
- A demand for the university to increase funding for the counseling center for the purpose of increasing funding for mental health professions, particularly those of color, and to increase counseling center awareness.
- A demand for an increase in funding, resources and personnel for social justice outreach on campus and increasing campus wide outreach and visibility.

Other group members then came forward and shared why they stand in support of former MU professor Melissa Click before the group left chanting “I said power.”

Concerned Student 1950 interrupted the meeting twice. The UM Board of Curators continued with their financial presentation after the protest.

During the meeting the curators discussed the university’s budget and credit rating. S&P reaffirmed a strong AA+ credit rating for the university and assessed the UM enterprise profile as very strong with consistently solid operations, stable resources and a reasonable debt burden.

Members of the finance committee said the university’s credit rating was in the top ten credit rating of higher education.
The Board of Curators also discussed retiree benefits and the search for a new University of Missouri president. Both will require open forums before moving forward.

Curator John Phillips lead the discussion on the presidential candidate search. Phillips said the board will put together search committees within the next month.

“Number one, we hope to make sure that each campus has a representative on the search committee and number two, there will be diversity reflected by the additional members,” Phillips said during the meeting.

These committees made up of UM faculty, students and staff to help decide the new president. The open forums will be held during the first week of April, according to Phillips.

The board voted and approved the search committees at Thursday’s meeting. The board will meet again on Friday.

**the maneater**

**UPDATED: Concerned Student 1950 protests outside Board of Curators meeting**

The students returned to protest once the curators had entered their public session.

_Students and members of Concerned Student 1950 protested Thursday afternoon outside a UM System Board of Curators meeting in support of suspended communications professor Melissa Click._

The demonstrators initially met in the Student Center before making their way to Speakers Circle. While in the Student Center, students chanted and held up signs that read things such as “Wake up,” and “Ain’t nobody messin’ with my Click.”

At Speakers Circle, the group read off their list of demands for the UM System that have not been met, including a handwritten apology from former UM System President Tim Wolfe. At one point, a demonstrator asked a Columbia Missourian reporter to stop reporting, and the group used their signs to block the reporter from recording footage of the event.

The group then marched to Reynolds Alumni Center, where the curators were meeting, and linked arms outside the public meeting room at about 12:50 p.m., although no curators were present. The curators had been scheduled to begin the public portion of the meeting at 12:45 p.m., but remained in closed executive session until 1:20 p.m.

Group members again read aloud their demands for the UM System. Students then listed reasons they supported Click, whom the curators suspended pending further investigation Jan. 27.
“Because she is the real definition of an ally. There are many wannabe allies and fake allies, but she is a real ally.”
“She represents what this university claims to represent: respect, responsibility, discovery and excellence.”
“Because unlike that reporter, she understands how the First Amendment works.”
“We love this university, which is why we are critical of this university.”

The demonstrators closed with the Assata Shakur chant they’ve used at past protests before exiting the Alumni Center.

“It is our duty to fight for our freedom,” they chanted. “It is our duty to win. We must love and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

The curators reconvened at 1:20 p.m. for the first part of their public meeting. About 15 minutes later, the students returned.

Interrupting a speaker presenting on the UM System’s credit ranking, the students again read their demands and spoke in support of Click.

“I stand with Melissa Click because she's not the problem,” one student said. “You all sitting here not doing anything are the problem.”

Chairwoman Pam Henrickson used her gavel to try to gain order, but the curators did not respond to the students. After about 15 minutes, the students left, chanting “Ashé power.”

“I don’t consider that an interruption,” curator David Steelman said as the meeting resumed.

MISSOURIAN

Despite interruption, UM System Board of Curators discusses credit outlook, presidential search

KATIE KULL, 12 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The UM System Board of Curators Finance Committee meeting had only been in session for about 30 minutes when the door swung open and about 18 black rights activists marched into the Reynolds Alumni Center.
Kendrick Washington, an MU senior and Black Studies major, read a list of demands issued in October by the civil rights group, Concerned Student 1950. The curators and UM System staff listened intently while the group talked about why they stood with recently suspended MU assistant professor Melissa Click and why they were concerned for the future of MU.

The protesters left, and the meeting continued.

"I appreciate the opportunity to hear from those folks," curator David Steelman said. "I don't consider that an interruption."

After a pause, he said, "All right, I think there were questions."

The questions were in regard to the Standard and Poor's AA+ credit rating outlook, which came up negative for the system Tuesday. The finance committee explained the negative outlook but remained optimistic about the future of the system's credit.

The Standard and Poor's rating system, which has a maximum rating of AAA, measures an institution's capacity to pay for the debt they have incurred. A higher rating means lower interest rates — similarly to a high credit score for a personal loan. At this time, the UM System is about $1.6 billion in debt because of investment in projects such as the MU Power Plant, the geothermal plant, housing, expansion at the Missouri University of Science and Technology and the health care system.

At the beginning of January, Standard and Poor's adopted new criteria for measuring credit outlooks, specifically in higher education institutions. Thomas Richards, UM System treasurer and chief financial officer, said the change in the S&P system was likely the cause for the negative outlook.

"They adopted a methodology that was much more formula-driven, ratio-driven and trying to be more objective," Richards said. "We think that might have played a role in this, just know we were one of the first institutions to be rated with the new methodology."
Richards indirectly dismissed a notion that the negative outlook was due to the recent resignations of the UM System President Tim Wolfe and MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, saying the financial officers had talked to Standard and Poor's, who had assured them the rating was due to the new methodology. But the report from Standard and Poor's did touch on the departures of Wolfe and Loftin amid student protests over the handling of racial issues MU's campus.

"The rating has not been changed, the outlook has been changed, but the rating is still the same," Richards said. "Even if we were to move at some point into the AA category, it still is at the very top tier of higher education institutions."

The curators unanimously approved other Financial Committee items including renovations for Stewart Hall at MU's campus, a $25 million project for a replacement for McKee Hall, also on MU's campus, and a 63,000 square-foot Applied Learning Center for the Trulaske College of Business.

"And that concludes one of the more interesting Finance Committee meetings," Steelman said, referring to the protests earlier in the meeting.

After the Finance Committee, the Compensation and Human Resources Committee presented reports on updated health insurance benefits for MU retirees. But the board didn't take any action on the item.

The curators also unanimously approved a composition and nomination process for the presidential search committee in the wake of the resignation of former UM System President Tim Wolfe.

They agreed to an expanded presidential search committee. The previous group's membership were curators, an advisory committee and a student representative to the curators.
Curator John Phillips said in the last search the advisory committee "didn't really sit at the table and didn't really participate in the search." This time, the advisory committee will have voting power to narrow the search and "equal input" in the process.

The representatives for the advisory committee will be drawn from three categories: intercampus faculty, student and staff advisory councils.

The curators on the search committee are Maurice Graham, Phillips and Steelman.

The board asked for one nomination in each category from each of the four UM System campuses. The board will then select two representatives from the faculty and staff advisory council nominations, and they will select one member from the student council representatives, since there is already one student representative on the Board of Curators.

"Diversity and campus representation will be taken into consideration," Phillips said. "The board reserves the right to request additional nominations."

Phillips said the curators hope to have selected additional members for the selection board by late February. In early April, the presidential search committee plans to conduct public forums to discuss the presidential search process and potential qualifications for the candidates. Curator Donald Cupps asked if it would be possible to somehow televise the forums and provide a phone-in line so those who couldn't physically go to the event could still provide input.

The board could vote on search terms by the next curators meeting in mid-April, according to a draft of the selection process timeline.

**Auditor Galloway to begin performance review of UM System operations**
State Auditor Nicole Galloway will audit University of Missouri System spending and policies as part of an expanded look at higher education and how state and institution decisions impact the tuition and other fees paid by students.

Galloway told an editors and publishers meeting in Jefferson City of her plans to audit the UM System, a decision that comes as lawmakers consider a bill requiring her office to audit the entire university system on an annual basis. Galloway has the authority to audit colleges and universities, but the office has not included the state schools on a regular schedule.

The audit will use the university’s financial audits as a base for the review and examine how money is spent, Galloway said in an interview. It will focus on the office of the president and the Board of Curators.

“This is our performance-type audit where we look at efficiencies and adherence to policies,” she said. “It has been a long time since the system was audited at that level.”

UM receives the largest share of state funding of public colleges and universities, with an appropriation of more than $434 million for the current fiscal year. Its administration also has been in turmoil, with the resignation of President Tim Wolfe on Nov. 9 during Columbia campus protests over race relations.

The decision by Standard & Poor’s this week to downgrade its outlook for the university to repay its outstanding debt also played a role in her decision, Galloway said.

“That sparks your attention, and these are things we look at and consider,” she said.

In a statement issued shortly before noon, interim UM President Mike Middleton said the university welcomes the review and wants to be open and transparent in its operations.

“The University of Missouri System prides itself in being excellent stewards of the resources entrusted to us, including taxpayer, donor and tuition funds, which has been demonstrated by the $77 million saved by the UM System due to efficiencies and effectiveness measures in just the past two years alone,” Middleton said.

Galloway also said she will audit the operation of a 2007 state law that limits tuition increases to the rate of inflation and requires schools to either give up a portion of their state aid or seek a waiver to exceed the cap.

The audits stems from ongoing reviews of the Department of Higher Education and implementation of a law passed in 2014 requiring distribution of state aid to be based on five performance measures. All four issues impact how much students pay for their educations, Galloway said.
The Department of Higher Education audit and how performance funding measures are being used was begun last spring, Galloway said. In addition to making sure that money is being spent according to law, she said the auditors are looking at how effective state spending and policies are in keeping higher education affordable.

The state funds 27 higher education institutions — 13 community colleges, the State Technical College in Linn and 13 four-year universities. The Department of Higher Education, the higher education commissioner and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education are responsible for coordinating and implementing higher education policy in the state. Four out of the 13 state universities in Missouri are part of the University of Missouri System.

University of Missouri administration to get state audit

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — State Auditor Nicole Galloway is launching an audit of the administration of the University of Missouri system.

Galloway said Thursday that the audit will review the administrative spending and policies of the Board of Curators and the president of the four-campus system.

The audit comes after a tumultuous several months at the university that included protests by a black student group at the Columbia campus, a threatened boycott by the football team, the resignation of the university president and video of a faculty member threatening journalists covering the protests.

Galloway said the audit is part of a broader effort by her office to look into higher education oversight and affordability for students.

She discussed the audit initiatives during a Capitol event hosted by The Associated Press and Missouri Press Association.
Jefferson City, MO — Missouri State Auditor Nicole Galloway announced two audits have been added to the state's higher education.

The audits will examine affordability in all state-funded universities and the University of Missouri System Administration.

The affordability audit will review the states 13-four year universities with the Missouri Higher Education Student Funding Act.

Galloway said this is intended to impact education costs.

The UM System audit will include a review of the systems administration including the UM System President and the Boards of Curators.

Galloway said an individual event or instance didn't prompt the audit.

"I mean what were focused on is again, how revenues are coming in...in the financial area and decisions made at the top and how they are sent," Galloway said. "We're focused on college affordability and the decisions made at the system level that impact students."

Senator Eric Schmitt R-Glendale, is sponsoring a proposal for the UM System to be reviewed by the state auditor on an annual basis.

System officials told a Senate panel at the end of January they do not oppose state audits.

They said they already conduct at least 50 internal audits a year along with a broad external audit.
"There's been some confidence that people have lost in the University System and I think that this audit could help restore some of that we can find out maybe everything is being done exactly the right way, but maybe it's not," Schmitt said. "If it's not, we can try to all work together to move together with reform."

Galloway said they will not do a financial statement audit, but rather a performance audit on the system.

"In the performance audit we look at the efficiencies of their operations and of their spending," Galloway said. "We look at adherence with rules, laws, policies that they might create to govern themselves and if there are any statues to dictate how they they're operating we would look in compliance with that as well."

The UM System audit was just started and the affordability in all state-funded universities audit began last month.

There are a total of four state audits that are on-going in Missouri Higher Education.

The others include an agency-wide audit on the Missouri Department of Higher Education and an audit of higher education performance-based public funding.

It's unclear at this time when each audit will be finished.

State auditor focusing on University of Missouri system officials


The Missouri state auditor, Nicole Galloway, announced on Thursday that she will audit the University of Missouri System administration.

The Democratic auditor confirmed her office will release more details about the review later in the day Thursday in Jefferson City.

Galloway says the audits are designed to increase transparency and accountability across Missouri’s higher education institutions.
Can Missouri legislators shelf petty politics and fill university vacancies?

Three of nine Board of Curators seats are vacant

Missouri Senate leader is in no hurry to fill them

Time to put the state’s welfare ahead of politics

The Editorial Board

Three of the nine seats on the University of Missouri’s Board of Curators have been vacated since November, leaving a shorthanded group to go about the essential work of searching for a new president for the four-campus system.

But key members of the Missouri General Assembly don’t regard that situation as urgent. Senate President Ron Richard told reporters this week he doesn’t intend to hold confirmation hearings for curator nominees until next January.

That of course is when a new governor will replace Jay Nixon, a Democrat. Richard and other Republicans want to wait in hopes that a candidate from their party will inherit the governor’s office and the nominating privileges.

Is it too much to ask for Richard and other lawmakers to put the good of the state ahead of politics?

The flagship university system has endured a tumultuous few months. It needs to shore up its governance, get strong new leaders in place and begin winning back the trust of students, families and alumni.

All of that begins with getting the Board of Curators up to full strength and broadening its diversity. Right now all six curators are white attorneys. They are
hard-working, smart citizens, grappling with a monumental task. But the board needs a much greater range of expertise and life experience.

Nixon could appoint curators on an interim basis after the legislative session ends in May. But that prolongs the uncertainty. The university system can’t remain in limbo until next January. It also can’t afford to absorb punitive budget cuts, as legislators are threatening.

Lawmakers need to look at the big picture. A strong university system is the best way to keep bright young people in Missouri. It is a driver of economic development and the source of ideas and solutions to problems.

If ever there were a time for Nixon and Republican legislators to have a meeting of the minds, it is on the need to expeditiously fill the vacant curator seats with highly qualified leaders.

Missouri legislators press to keep university seats vacant

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — Missouri's Democratic governor pledged Thursday to circumvent the Republican-led Legislature if needed to fill vacancies on the board that
oversees the state's flagship university, further escalating the tensions of legislators already frustrated about the handling of racial issues that culminated in the resignations of the system president and campus chancellor.

The only two black members of the Board of Curators, which runs the University of Missouri's four-campus system, resigned last week amid the turmoil. That left three of the nine seats on the board vacant, but GOP leaders have said they have no interest in filling the vacancies before next year, when Gov. Jay Nixon is out of office.

"We're not in a hurry to do anything for the University of Missouri," said Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard.

Speaking to reporters during an Associated Press and Missouri Press Association event at the governor's mansion, Nixon said he would "not hesitate at all to make interim appointments" when legislators are out of session.

Tensions with the Legislature started building in the summer, when the University of Missouri and Republican lawmakers butted heads over the Columbia school's ties to a local Planned Parenthood clinic that enabled the center to start providing medication-induced abortions.

Then in November, the Columbia campus was the site of protests that resonated across the nation over what activists said was administrators' indifference to racial issues. The Columbia chancellor and system president resigned after the protests escalated, including one student's hunger strike and an announcement by members of the football team that they would refuse to play. One Republican lawmaker proposed but later withdrew a bill to strip scholarships from college athletes who refuse to play.

Legislators had more criticism last week when the Board of Curators suspended — but didn't fire — assistant communications professor Melissa Click, seen in a video asking for "muscle" to help remove a student videographer from a protest site on campus. More than 100 lawmakers have called for her firing.

Click, who reached a deal with prosecutors to do community service instead of facing charges, didn't return messages Thursday from the AP seeking comment.

"We want to see the university in a more stable place and in a place where we're seeing more positive stories coming out of Columbia than more sort of controversy and division," GOP House Speaker Todd Richardson said last week.

Some lawmakers also took issue with a letter circulated by the former system president, Tim Wolfe, that argued the "University of Missouri is under attack and current leadership from the board on down is frozen."
Rep. Caleb Jones, a Republican who represents Columbia, said it looked like an attempt to "armchair quarterback."

Current curators Phillip Snowden and David Steelman declined to comment to an AP reporter Thursday on the system's relationship with the Legislature, which Richard described as "terrible."

"It's apparent to me that no one is in charge," Richard said Thursday during the press event at the governor's mansion. "So we'll be in charge."

Richard has said the University of Missouri is primed for a budgetary "haircut," and last week said that there will be a serious discussion of its budget.

Lawmaker criticism extends beyond the Columbia campus. Richardson said some are upset that the University of Missouri-St. Louis recently bought a public golf course. Mistrust of how state money is spent is at such a high that a Senate Republican proposed a yearly state audit of the entire system.

System spokesman John Fougere said officials have been "working tirelessly with our state legislators to rebuild confidence with them in the University of Missouri System." In a House committee hearing Wednesday on state funding for public colleges and universities, the system's interim President Mike Middleton tried to assure lawmakers that their concerns are being addressed while urging them not to cut funding.

Middleton cited Click's suspension, the creation of a free-speech task force and work on diversity initiatives, among other actions.

"I certainly hear your concerns and take them very seriously," Middleton said.

Political pressure provides backdrop as curators ponder presidential search

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 2:00 pm
The University of Missouri Board of Curators, short-handed and lacking in diversity, will hold its two-day regular meeting Thursday and Friday in Columbia with creating a presidential search committee a major point on its agenda.

With two resignations over the last week and three since the Nov. 9 departure of President Tim Wolfe, the board is down to six of its nine voting members and isn’t likely to obtain any replacements soon. The Republican leader of the state Senate, President Pro Tem Ron Richard of Joplin, has said he isn’t willing to confirm appointments until a new governor takes office in January.

That is two months after the end of the proposed timeline for selecting Wolfe’s replacement. Interim UM System President Mike Middleton, who was appointed Nov. 12, said again Wednesday after a legislative hearing on the university’s budget that he is not seeking a permanent appointment.

“I am not a candidate for anything,” Middleton said.

It has been a frustrating period to be in charge, he said.

“I’ve been in this job three months and all I have done has been looking backward to find who is responsible for the turmoil we have been through,” Middleton told reporters. “I would much rather look forward and try to build something.”

The board’s only black members, Yvonne Sparks and David Steward, recently resigned, and both cited the demands of their day jobs for giving up their post. The remaining members include one woman, Chair Pamela Henrickson, and are all in their late 50s or older.

The meeting that began at 10 a.m. Thursday will include a discussion of the search for a search firm, the format of public meetings to discuss the search and the timeline for completing it. The agenda was amended Wednesday to include a discussion of Standard & Poor’s downgrade of its outlook on UM finances.

The proposed timeline anticipates selecting the search firm late this month, with public forums in early April. Final candidate interviews and finalist meetings with campus groups would take place from September to November.

Along with curators, the search committee would include the board’s student representative, and a student, faculty member, staff employee and alumni representative selected from campus nominations.

Wolfe resigned to quell ongoing campus demonstrations by Concerned Student 1950 over racial issues. Protests included a hunger strike by graduate student Jonathan Butler and a strike of athletic events by the Tigers football team. Wolfe’s departure came amid a semester of discontent that also swept out Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.
A letter by Wolfe, addressed to friends, included accusations curators acted on personal agendas. It also laid bare Wolfe’s contempt for Loftin, accused Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, of pressuring Wolfe to keep political foe Josh Hawley out of the attorney general’s race and asked for help obtaining a better financial deal.

Any more unexpected departures would leave the board with a bare quorum qualified to conduct business and only three votes necessary to carry a motion. If his nominees are unable to obtain Senate confirmation, Gov. Jay Nixon will not be able to appoint anyone with authority to act until lawmakers adjourn their session in May.

With the Senate unlikely to confirm any interim appointments and two other members’ terms scheduled to end Jan. 1, the incoming governor will have the power to appoint a majority of the board on the day he or she takes office.

The Republican legislative majority is making the leadership of the university a major topic of this year’s session. The employment of Assistant Professor Melissa Click tops the list, which also includes faculty teaching waivers and audits of university finances. During his appearance before the House Appropriations Higher Education Committee, Middleton gave a bullet list of topics where UM has taken action to appease GOP critics.

Committee Chairwoman Donna Lichtenegger, R-Jackson, the wife of former curator John Lichtenegger, said the presidential selection will be a test of the remaining curators’ leadership.

“I think they are really engaged now and that is a good thing,” she said. “I actually think it could be helpful in that it shows them that we want to see some responsibility out of the curators that are there right now.”

The university is trying to secure its share of Nixon’s 6 percent proposed increase in higher education funding, which would increase state aid by $26.8 million to almost $461 million. The curators have already promised not to increase tuition next year in return for the boost, which is now in jeopardy. The Columbia campus also faces a $20 million to $25 million tuition revenue shortfall if an expected drop in enrollment materializes.

The curators have met six times in special meetings since Wolfe announced his resignation. State Rep. Stephen Webber, D-Columbia, said he will be looking for a firm direction that addresses the issues raised by Concerned Student 1950.

The curators should also oppose legislative interference with university affairs, Webber said.
University of Missouri curators give students, faculty and staff votes on presidential search committee

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 5:52 pm

The search committee that will help select a new president for the University of Missouri will have two voting student members, two voting faculty members and no representatives selected by alumni, the Board of Curators decided Thursday.

The curators unanimously approved a revised proposal for the committee that eliminated an alumni representative chosen from nominations by each campus’ alumni association. Instead, the six curators themselves — who are all alumni of the Columbia campus and who will all have seats on the search committee — will satisfy the need for alumni representation, board Chair Pamela Henrickson said.

The student members will be the student representative on the board, Tracy Mulderig or her replacement, and a student who will be selected from four nominees, one from each campus, submitted by the Intercampus Student Council. The two faculty members will be selected from four nominees provided by the Intercampus Faculty Council. A staff member chosen by the Intercampus Staff Advisory Council will also have a seat on the committee.

The board’s action elevates the role of students, faculty and staff from an advisory one. Curator John Phillips, chairman of the Compensation and Human Resources Committee, said that during the last presidential search, that wasn’t the case.

The large advisory committee took part in formulating the job description but little else until finalists were announced, he said.

“In between they were kept advised loosely but they really didn’t sit at the table,” Phillips said. “This board has been considering adding people to the committee so we can reach some constituency groups.”

Every person named to the committee will have a vote, which gives students a voting role for the first time, Phillips said.

“As we go through the search process they will be at the table and essentially have input to narrow the search,” he said.

The board is selecting a permanent replacement for Tim Wolfe, who resigned Nov. 9 after several weeks of campus protests over racial issues on the Columbia campus. The group staging
the protests, Concerned Student 1950, interrupted the curators meeting to repeat their demands, which included a major role in selecting Wolfe’s replacement.

They asked that all future presidents and chancellors be selected by “a collective of students, staff, and faculty of diverse backgrounds.”

Whether the final selection will be made by the search committee or the curators alone has not been decided, Phillips said in response to a question from Mulderig.

“That is not for this discussion and is not teed up for today,” Phillips said.

The board is down to six of its constitutionally mandated nine members due to the resignations of Yvonne Sparks, David Steward and Ann Covington of Columbia. Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard, R-Joplin, told publishers and editors gathered Thursday in Jefferson City that he does not intend to confirm any board appointees submitted by Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat, during his final year in office.

“If they're not reform minded, they need not apply,” Richard said.

Along with the three vacancies, Mulderig is serving a term that ended Jan. 1 but may continue until her replacement is confirmed. Two other curators leave office Jan. 1. The current timeline calls for the presidential search to be completed sometime in November.

Nixon, speaking to the journalists via television connection from a trade mission in South America, said he would fill the vacancies with interim appointments, if necessary, after lawmakers adjourn in May.

“I appreciate the positioning by” Richard “but we'll be working to make sure we get this board filled with folks,” Nixon said. "We'll do it in a timely fashion."

**MISSOURIAN**

Legislators face questions about MU anger, Medicaid expansion at Columbia town hall meeting

ELLEN CAGLE, CRYSTAL DUAN, 21 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — State representatives discussed cuts to MU funding and Medicaid expansion Thursday night at a town hall meeting at Daniel Boone Regional Library.
Four Boone County representatives — Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, Stephen Webber, D-Columbia, and Chuck Basye, R-Rocheport — attended the event, which was hosted by the League of Women Voters. The representatives took part in a question-and-answer session with constituents, who raised concerns that the General Assembly is involving itself unnecessarily in MU affairs.

Much of the evening's discussion was focused on the legislature's attitude toward MU. Missouri lawmakers have "volatile" anger toward MU, Basye said, but the four agreed that MU's funding should not suffer at the hands of the legislature.

“It is short-sighted and petty for the legislature to harm academic opportunities for students for the next 40 years because they’re angry in 2016,” Webber said.

The legislature's only role regarding MU is to confirm members of the UM System Board of Curators, he said.

Kendrick said MU’s current funding is insufficient for its employees and any funding cuts will result in a tax on the middle class.

Basye said funding cuts would directly affect students and low-level employees. "I know from experience that it will not hit the targets intended," he said.

Rowden said anger at MU from the legislature developed from a "perfect storm" of events over the past year, including the loss of graduate students' insurance, the severed ties of MU and Planned Parenthood and the racial protests.

"Cutting funding to the university and some sort of retaliatory statement is unfair, it is short-sighted, and it's unnecessary," Rowden said.

He told those in attendance he cares about MU's funding, citing increases to higher education funding in previous years.

"The University of Missouri is still a great place to send your students," he said.
Basye said he supported the termination of MU assistant professor Melissa Click and assistant Director of Greek Life Janna Basler. Basler and Click incited national controversy after attempting to block student reporters from photographing campus protests in early November. Basye, Rowden and 98 other Republican legislators signed a letter urging the curators to dismiss the two employees.

"It would be a step in the right direction to soothe some of the anger down in Jefferson City with some of my colleagues," he said.

Many of the constituents at the event also urged representatives to support Medicaid expansion.

Dina van der Zalm, an MU graduate student, asked Rowden about the “evolution” of his stance on Medicaid expansion. Rowden responded that he wouldn’t support Medicaid if other funding was affected. Currently, expanding Medicaid would cost $800 million from the 2016 fiscal budget, which would take away funding from other areas, he said.

Patty Hendren, who works in Moberly with constituents that need Medicaid, said that many people fall into the “coverage gap” of making too much money to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to afford Medicare.

“These folks are not lazy people,” Hendren said. “They work two or three jobs, and they still cannot get health insurance. As I work with these individuals (who didn’t get preventive coverage), and they ask me what am I supposed to do, what do you want me to tell your constituents?”

Webber, the only one to respond, said, “I don’t know what to tell your constituents.”

“With a legislature that refuses to make it possible for people to have a job that pays a living wage, and then turns around and says we’re not going to give you health care, there’s no answer,” Webber said. “It’s just an abject failure on the legislature that working people go to work every day and don’t get health care.”
Lawmaker criticizes University of Missouri on diversity efforts

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. - A state lawmaker has filed a bill that would bring more urban education opportunities to the state. Rep. Curtis said he believes the University of Missouri System has not been the best choice for students even before the campus unrest this past fall.

Rep. Courtney Allen Curtis' measure is going to be heard by the Special Committee on Urban Issues this Monday. It would be a collaboration between students and teachers at Harris-Stowe State University and Lincoln University that would help increase urban education throughout the state.

Here is Curtis' full statement about his reasoning behind the proposal:

“I have been active towards meeting with leaders of the University of Missouri trying to discuss minority issues and how we can improve urban education and welfare. During my time as a student to my first term as a representative, I have been adamant in creating more educational opportunities for minorities. Unfortunately, each time we reach out to their leadership, they continue to give off the impression that this is not an issue of importance. They had this mentality before the events of November 2015 and from the meetings we have had with them since, they still continue to not have much devotion to fixing this ongoing problem. Their minority board members have since resigned. It is apparent to anyone following that very little has been done from leadership standpoint to genuinely promote diversity. They have played a major role in the drop in enrollment. Until they fully take responsibility and honestly try to fix the source of this problem and not just their tarnished image, this will not change,” said Curtis.
Some local lawmakers against University budget cuts


Some local lawmakers are standing up for the University of Missouri and are against cutting its budget, saying it's unnecessary and petty.

While some Missouri lawmakers have threatened to cut back the University of Missouri's budget, local representatives disagree and say it's a bad decision.

ABC 17 News spoke with representatives Caleb Rowden and Chuck Bayse before Thursday night's Town Hall meeting in Columbia. Both say the budget cuts would be bad for the local and state economies. They also say those funding cuts would ultimately hurt the students and staff at the University.

Representative Rowden said he thinks the current University leaders are doing a good job at explaining the state of Mizzou right now. He says that's what they have to do moving forward.

Representative Bayse says they need to make some changes. "I think a step in the right direction would be the termination of Professor Click and Jenna Basler," said Bayse. "I think it's clear they should not be the face of that organization and as long as they're there, they are going to be."

On Wednesday, Representative Stephen Webber told ABC 17 News a budget cut would prevent families from providing their children with accessible education.

Mizzou expects enrollment to fall following campus unrest

University of Missouri-Columbia officials are projecting 900 fewer incoming freshmen this fall compared with fall 2015, which could in part be due to recent unrest on the campus.

Several incidents of alleged racism on campus led to protests, a hunger strike and ultimately the resignations last fall of University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe and Mizzou
Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin. Loftin previously had come under fire when graduate students lost some benefits and over the school's ties to Planned Parenthood.

Applications and tuition deposits are down at the campus, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reports. The figure of 900 fewer incoming freshman is a projection and could change drastically by next fall, officials told the newspaper.

Barbara Rupp, director of admissions at Mizzou, told the Post-Dispatch that the university had been predicting a decline based on demographic trends such as fewer high school graduates. While that pattern could explain much of the projected enrollment decline at Mizzou, Rupp said that some of the projected drop is "undoubtedly part of the aftermath of last fall," the newspaper reports.

Campus recruiters working in the Chicago area are hearing the same concerns from prospective students more often, she told the newspaper, with those concerns tied to the perception of Mizzou as a symbol of strained race relations. Tuition deposits from out-of-state students are down 25 percent since last year, according to university data, the Post-Dispatch reports.

If the university's enrollment projections prove correct, the campus could see a loss in revenue of about $20 million, according to the newspaper, citing information from Mizzou CFO Rhonda Gibler.

IRS building in Jefferson City temporarily closes


JEFFERSON CITY - U.S. Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer sent a letter on Wednesday to the IRS Commissioner expressing his concern over the closure of the IRS building in Jefferson City.

The building, which originally closed on January 25 will remain closed through February 15.
Business owners in the area as well as the building landlord did not know the reason for the closure.

People who were expecting to use the IRS services described their experiences as "frustrating" due to the timing of the closure during tax season.

Andrew Zumwalt, an assistant extension professor at MU works with people on tax issues. He said the closure could be due to budget cuts.

"It's tough to say what the impact of the closure is. The IRS has been hit with a lot of budget cuts lately so I know they've had to scale back some of their hours and such, so it's unclear what the exact impact is," Zumwalt said.

KOMU contacted a spokesperson from the IRS, but had not heard back by Thursday afternoon.