MU gets $20 million to expand research involving St. Louis area nursing homes

The University of Missouri nursing school announced today it has received nearly $20 million in federal funding to expand its research that has been successful in reducing hospitalizations among nursing home residents in the St. Louis area.

The grant is the largest the MU Sinclair School of Nursing has ever received and the second largest in the university’s history. The goal of the research, which will involve 32 area nursing homes, is to create a model for others to implement.

“Having the opportunity to expand this program showcases the university’s commitment to improving nursing homes and care of older adults not only in Missouri, but across the nation,” said Judith Fitzgerald Miller, dean of the nursing school.

The research initiative launched in 2012 as a partnership with between the university, 16 St. Louis area nursing homes and federal and state Medicare and Medicaid programs.

The initiative involves placing an advanced practice registered nurse, who works with staff and health providers to coordinate care, at each nursing home. Also, federal regulators agreed to standardize Medicare Part B payments for treatments, which were higher if the patient was in a hospital.

“The disparity in payment, between what hospitals are paid and the significantly less amount nursing homes are paid, leads nursing homes to hospitalize residents who could have been cared for in the home,” said distinguished nursing professor and
leading researcher Marilyn Rantz. “This inequity means that decisions about resident care can come down to money, not what is best for the patient.”

The first phase of research resulted in a more than 34 percent decrease in potentially avoidable hospitalizations.

The federal grant will allow the initiative to expand to an additional 16 nursing homes. The homes must have systems in place to manage diseases most often requiring hospitalization: pneumonia, dehydration, congestive heart failure, urinary tract infections, skin ulcers and asthma.

Nursing homes in the first phase include: Alexian Brothers Lansdowne Village, Alexian Brothers Sherbrooke Village, Delmar Gardens North, Delmar Gardens of Chesterfield, Delmar Gardens of Creve Coeur, Delmar Gardens of Meramec Valley, Delmar Gardens of O'Fallon, Delmar Gardens on the Green, Delmar Gardens South, Delmar Gardens West, Grand Manor Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Cedarcrest Manor, Festus Manor, Scenic Nursing and Rehabilitation Center and NHC Desloge, NHC Healthcare Town and Country.
University of Missouri nursing school gets $20M for study

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — The nursing school at the University of Missouri has received nearly $20 million in federal funds to expand research that has already reduced hospitalizations among nursing home residents in the St. Louis region.

The funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services was announced Wednesday by the university’s Sinclair School of Nursing.

The research began in 2012 as a partnership with 16 St. Louis-area nursing homes and Medicare and Medicaid programs. The new phase will add 16 more nursing homes toward the goal of creating a national model.

The university says the first phase of the research resulted in a 34.5 percent decrease in potentially avoidable hospitalizations.
add increased payments to physicians and other providers who treat patients in place at nursing facilities rather than order expensive hospitalizations.

“The whole point is to see that when you need a nursing home, things go really well,” said Marilyn Rantz, curators’ professor emerita of nursing and the team leader.

The grant is second in size only to a $20 million grant to study the effects of climate variability in Missouri. The project was started with a $14.8 million grant in 2012, which at the time was the largest in university history.

The grant has funded MU’s participation in a seven-state study intended to create a national model for improving care. The 16 participating nursing homes in the St. Louis area have reduced potentially avoidable hospital stays by 34.5 percent and reduced Medicare spending for all hospitalizations by an average of $729 per resident, according to a study issued in January.

The 16 new nursing homes already try to manage the most common diseases associated with hospitalizations, including pneumonia, dehydration, urinary tract infections and skin ulcers.

“This grant is bringing national recognition to the University of Missouri and the state of Missouri,” said Judith Fitzgerald Miller, dean of the nursing school.

Missouri is participating in the project along with Alabama, Indiana, Nebraska, Nevada, New York and Pennsylvania. Each state designed its own plan for reducing hospitalizations, with an academic institution leading the study with quality improvement organizations, a health care network and a hospital association as partners.

The Missouri project assigns an advanced practice nurse to help train staff in each of the nursing homes to recognize changes in health status more quickly and start treatment earlier. It also has identified areas where Medicare payment disparities create an incentive to hospitalize patients rather than treat them at the nursing home, Rantz said.

A doctor treating pneumonia is paid $136 if the patient is in a nursing home and $203 if the patient is in a hospital, Rantz said.

“Decisions about resident care can come down to money, not what is best for the patient,” she said in a news release.
Nursing school receives $19.8 million grant to continue research on elderly care

COLUMBIA — Xbox consoles could aid in elderly care in the future and help decrease hospitalizations.

On Wednesday, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, awarded a $19.8 million grant to the MU Sinclair School of Nursing to expand an existing program aimed at reducing hospitalizations in nursing homes.

The project, Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes, will be used as a national model for senior care, Judith Fitzgerald Miller, dean of the nursing school, said.

Marilyn Rantz, curators' professor emerita of nursing, and a team of MU researchers founded the initiative in 2012 to decrease falls by elderly residents by implementing motion sensors, such as Xbox Kinects, in various areas of the residents' apartments, according to previous Missourian reporting. The motion detectors can recognize changes in walking, bending and other body movements that may signal an increased risk for falls.

Each year, 2.5 million elderly people are treated in emergency rooms for fall injuries, which costs about $34 billion annually, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The broken bones and head injuries that senior citizens get when they fall can lead to further complications such as brain trauma.
The Nursing School will use the grant to research early detection of illnesses and interventions in coordinated care, a model in which several health care professionals work together to ensure a patient's good health. The grant will also fund studies about methods to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, Fitzgerald Miller said.

Past work by the Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes has already effected positive change. Sixteen Missouri nursing homes implemented the coordinated care model, an initiative that resulted in a 34.5 percent decrease in potentially-avoidable hospitalizations, Fitzgerald Miller said.

Karen Muckler is the executive director of DelMar Gardens of Meramec Valley and Chesterfield, one of the nursing homes using the model. After implementation, she noticed that one month the facility had zero hospitalizations, which was very rare, she said.

In addition, Fitzgerald Miller said the team has already successfully reduced hospitalizations after falls, which has saved Centers for Medicaid and Medicare millions of dollars.

MU nursing student Erika Buchheit said the expansion shows how beneficial the program is for TigerPlace residents and the nursing students.

"For us, it's about taking a step in the right direction," Buchheit said. "We do clinicals here and provide as much help as we can to the staff and residents. It's really exciting to see this change because as students we can only imagine how this will shape the future of nursing."

Beneficiaries of the Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes include the residents of TigerPlace, the assisted living facility where about 100 students, faculty and TigerPlace residents gathered Wednesday morning to celebrate the grant.

"We have a wonderful, wonderful team, and I just can't thank everyone enough," Rantz said. "The whole point of a nursing home is that things work really well, and you get good quality care. That's really the objective out of this work. We're poised for the next phase, and we're ready to work."
Interim Chancellor Hank Foley said at the grant announcement that providing quality care in nursing homes can help elderly people avoid unnecessary hospital stays.

"There are almost 16,000 nursing homes in the U.S. with 1.4 million nursing home residents living in them each day," Foley said. "They're in need of nursing and medical care, and they're at risk for potentially-avoidable hospitalizations. Most of us in this room may need nursing home services in our life time, so this is going to benefit us all."

**MU School of Nursing receives $20 million to expand 'Missouri Quality Initiative'**

COLUMBIA, Mo. — The University of Missouri's School of Nursing received nearly $20 million from the U.S. Department of Health of Human Services Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on Wednesday. That money will go toward the School's 'Missouri Quality Initiative' for nursing homes.

The Sinclair School of Nursing is trying to create a national model for senior care and aim to significantly lower national health care system spending.

"We have already seen monumental success from the Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes," said Judith Fitzgerald Miller, dean of the Sinclair School of Nursing. "Just last month our researchers received kudos from CMS from the first phase of the
Having the opportunity to expand this program showcases the university's commitment to improving nursing homes and care of older adults not only in Missouri, but across the nation."

The Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes was launched in 2012. It is a partnership between the University of Missouri, CMS, state Medicaid programs and 16 collaborating nursing homes in St. Louis.

The program is led by Marilyn Rantz who's a Curators' Professor Emerita of Nursing, along with other university researchers.

The second phase of the program will take place at 16 additional homes which have systems in place to manage many common diseases of those who are hospitalized like pneumonia, dehydration, congestive heart failure, urinary tract infections, skin ulcers and asthma.

"One of the challenges nursing homes face in determining care is the amount of payment they receive from CMS," Rantz said. "This disparity in payment, between what hospitals are paid and the significantly less amount nursing homes are paid, leads nursing homes to hospitalize residents who could have been cared for in the home. For example, a physician can bill CMS $203 for a resident hospitalized with pneumonia, but a nursing home can only bill $136. This inequity means that decisions about resident care can come down to money, not what is best for the patient."
According to the University, one result of this initiative has been a 34.5% decrease in potentially avoidable hospitalizations.

$20 Million to MU Sinclair Nursing School

Money to study senior care

COLUMBIA, Mo. - The University of Missouri - Columbia announced the Sinclair School of Nursing received $19.8 million in research grant money from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

The money will help the school continue their research on senior care in nursing homes. They're working on a national model on how to significantly lower national health care spending.

Launched in 2012, the program is a partnership between MU, CMS and state Medicaid programs, and now more than 30 nursing homes in the St. Louis area.

The program is led by Dr. Marilyn Rantz who says nursing homes struggle with funding and oftentimes make decisions for financial reasons rather than what is best for the patient.

“This disparity in payment, between what hospitals are paid and the significantly less amount nursing homes are paid, leads nursing homes to hospitalize residents who could have been cared for in the home,” Rantz says. “For example, a physician can bill CMS $203 for a resident hospitalized with pneumonia, but a nursing home can only bill $136. This inequity means that decisions about resident care can come down to money, not what is best for the patient.”

During this research project, CMS has agreed to pay the participating nursing homes the same they would pay the hospital for the patients treatment. The research team then studies if this increased payment is an incentive to try and treat the patient in the home, rather than sending them to the hospital.

In the first four years of the project, the rate of hospitalization was decreased by 34%.
MU Sinclair School of Nursing receives nearly $20 million

COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri Sinclair School of Nursing announced Wednesday they have received nearly $20 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

According to a press release, the money is going to be used to expand the Sinclair School of Nursing’s Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes. This program works to create a national model for senior care and significantly reduce national health care spending.

The Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes was launched in 2012 and is a partnership among MU, CMS and state Medicaid programs, and 16 nursing homes in St. Louis committed to improving care.

"We have already seen monumental success from the Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes," said Judith Fitzgerald Miller, dean of the Sinclair School of Nursing. "Just last month our researchers received kudos from CMS from the first phase of the project. Having the opportunity to expand this program showcases the university's commitment to improving nursing homes and care of older adults not only in Missouri, but across the nation."

The second phase of the program will take place at an additional 16 homes that have systems in place to manage the most common diseases associated with hospitalizations: pneumonia, dehydration, congestive heart failure, urinary tract infections, skin ulcers and asthma.
This money is intended to avoid unnecessarily hospitalizing residents of nursing homes.

"One of the challenges nursing homes face in determining care is the amount of payment they receive from CMS," said Curators' Professor Emerita of Nursing Marilyn Rantz. "This disparity in payment, between what hospitals are paid and the significantly less amount nursing homes are paid leads nursing homes to hospitalize residents who could have been cared for in the home. For example, a physician can bill CMS $203 for a resident hospitalized with pneumonia, but a nursing home can only bill $136. This inequity means that decisions about resident care can come down to money, not what is best for the patient."

Since launching, the Missouri Quality Initiative for Nursing Homes has recruited and placed an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) at 16 participating nursing homes. The APRNs worked with nursing home staff and health providers to coordinate patient care. One of the results of the project was a 34.5 percent decrease in potentially avoidable hospitalizations.

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**A Fracking Well In West Virginia Is Leaking Chemicals That Can Affect Fertility**

A first study in a federal survey of deep wells that store fracking wastewater finds fertility-lowering chemicals downstream of a West Virginia facility.

Originally posted on Apr. 6, 2016, at 6:56 a.m. Updated on Apr. 6, 2016, at 10:46 a.m.

**Dan Vergano**

Dangerous levels of chemicals that can harm fertility flow downstream from a West Virginia fracking wastewater disposal facility, federal and academic researchers reported on Wednesday.
The finding raises questions about safety of similar deep disposal sites nationwide, several independent scientists said.

The contamination near Fayetteville, West Virginia, flows from a brook called Wolf Creek a few miles upstream of a New River drinking water treatment facility for 11,300 people. The disposal site, which includes a deep waste well, several holding ponds, and storage tanks, sits on a hillside above the creek, and has been the site of a fight over its permit, revoked in 2014 and then renewed by the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection in August.

“I wouldn’t drink out of Wolf Creek,” University of Missouri toxicologist Susan Nagel, a study author, told BuzzFeed News. It’s unclear whether the contamination has reached residents’ drinking water, but that should be tested, Nagel said.

U.S. Geological Survey scientists invited Nagel, an expert on “endocrine disrupting” chemicals linked to switched genders in fish, lowered fertility in mice, and hyperactivity in children, to test water upstream and downstream of the fracking waste site. “We found levels of these endocrine disrupting chemicals high enough to threaten health,” Nagel said.

Nationwide, there are about 36,000 deep disposal wells that handle wastewater produced by hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, of oil and gas. These deep “injection” wells have emerged as an achilles heel in the fracking boom of the last decade, linked to 17,000 safety violations from 2007 to 2010 in a ProPublica survey, as well as earthquakes in Ohio, Texas, and Oklahoma. The new study found high levels of 16 endocrine disruptors in stream samples taken adjacent to the deep disposal well, about 200 feet downstream of the facility.

“Basically you have high levels downstream and low levels upstream and in comparison streams,” Nagel said. The study can’t say whether the pollution comes from a cracked disposal well pipe, the retaining ponds on the site, or from the deep rock layers where the well has injected wastewater since 2007. “All we can say is that there is a problem downstream.”

Unpublished companion research led by USGS scientist Denise Akob shows that the sodium, chloride, barium, and strontium chemistry downstream in the creek match the profiles of fracking wastewater.

“What’s really striking and intriguing is that to my knowledge, no one has done this kind of upstream and downstream measurement at one of these disposal sites before,” environmental health scientist Nicole Deziel of the Yale School of Public Health told BuzzFeed News. “While
this is just one well, this raises some really important questions about safety. It’s critical we learn how this contamination occurred.”

Seth Whitehead, a fracking industry advocate with Fracking in Depth, told BuzzFeed News by email that the concentrations of endocrine disrupting chemicals from the samples collected would have to be 40 times what was found for there to be a risk to humans. “None of the samples collected by the researchers contained EDC concentrations high enough to be deemed dangerous,” he said.

While the study shows contamination downstream of the disposal well site, it is just one site, environmental scientist Corrie Clark of the Energy Department’s Argonne National Laboratory in Argonne, Illinois, told BuzzFeed News by email. The question is whether the problem is just the disposal facility outside Fayetteville, Clark said, “or whether there are broader concerns with produced water management at other disposal facilities.”

The facility outside Fayetteville came to the attention of USGS in 2013, Akob told BuzzFeed News by email, because of pollution reports. “Ultimately we hope to provide a national perspective for these findings,” she said. “The [West Virginia] site will be only one of many sites we plan to include in our research.”

“The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection just received a copy of this report and is still reviewing the findings,” Jacob Glance, a spokesman at the agency, told BuzzFeed News by email. As for the facility, he said, “the permits renewed in August are still in effect.”

In W. Virginia, frack wastewater may be messing with hormones

Waste leaching from frack disposal wells are the likely source of a spike in endocrine-disrupting compounds in downstream waterway—a troubling sign given the roughly 36,000 disposal sites across the U.S.

April 6, 2016
By Brian Bienkowski
Environmental Health News

Water around and downstream from a fracking wastewater disposal facility in West Virginia contains compounds that may harm fish health by messing with endocrine systems, according to a new study.

Researchers found high levels of endocrine disruption activity in the water near or downstream from the wastewater site in Fayetteville, West Virginia. The study, published today in the journal Science of the Total Environment, adds to evidence that some chemicals in hydraulic fracturing waste are hormone-mimickers or blockers and are leaching out of wastewater disposal wells and into nearby water, potentially impacting fish and human health.

Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, is a process that uses horizontal drilling and high volume fluid injections to release oil and gas. Along with water, the injections contain sand and a mix of chemicals—some of which have been linked to cancer, hormone impacts, and reproductive problems. It’s estimated that every well produces more than one million gallons of wastewater, which is eventually pumped into disposal wells.

There are an estimated 36,000 fracking disposal sites in the U.S. and little testing has been done on nearby surface water, said lead author Christopher Kassotis, a postdoctoral fellow at Duke University.

Kassotis and other university and federal researchers collected water upstream, downstream and around a wastewater facility that has a disposal well, holding ponds and storage tanks—all used to house excess wastewater from drilling. There is a small stream flowing through the site, which flows into Wolf Creek. Wolf Creek flows into the New River, which is used for some people’s drinking water.

Samples near the site and downstream had “considerably higher” activity for a number of hormones, including estrogen, androgen and thyroid receptors, than reference samples in the watershed far from any disposal sites.

“What’s really interesting is that they sampled from different sites that are in different places in watershed,” said Andrea Gore, a professor of pharmacology at The University of Texas at Austin who was not involved in the study. “It clearly shows substantial difference in endocrine activity looking upstream and downstream.”

The activity is worrisome for local fish—such contamination seems to affect the reproductive development of some fish species, which can lead to threatened populations. In recent years researchers are finding more “intersex fish”—male fish with some female reproductive parts—and believe the culprit is endocrine-disrupting chemicals in water.

“Sometimes we forget fish are a really important part of the ecosystem,” Gore said.

Properly functioning hormones are crucial throughout people’s entire lives, Gore said. “During development all parts of the body are going through rapid change. Most of these changes are
orchestrated or at least influenced by these hormones," Gore said. "These changes, even at really low levels, have impacts on biological development.”

And adults need normal endocrine function too, she added. “Too much or too little of any hormone, you get sick.”

Industry representatives pushed back, saying that the concentrations of compounds found do not warrant health concerns.

Endocrine-disrupting chemicals “are found in just about everything we use on a day to day basis, including dyes, perfumes, plastics, personal care products, detergents and cleaning agents,” said Seth Whitehead, a researcher at an outreach program launched by the Independent Petroleum Association of America called Energy In Depth, in an emailed response.

“Concentration level is far more relevant than merely detecting EDCs,” he added.

Susan Nagel, senior author of the study and an associate professor at the University of Missouri, said the levels found were within the range or higher than the level known to impact the health of aquatic organisms.

“In many cases, even with considerable dilution, levels of endocrine-disrupting contaminants would still be capable of disrupting the development of fish, amphibians, and other aquatic organisms,” the authors wrote.

While single fracking wells use about 50 chemicals, about 1,000 different chemicals are used by the industry, according to previous research. An estimated 100 of these chemicals are known endocrine disruptors.

While some known endocrine-disrupting compounds were identified in the current study, it’s unclear which of these chemicals were responsible for the endocrine activity in West Virginia.

Also the authors point out that the injection well studied may accept wastewater from other industries, which could also contain endocrine-disrupting compounds.

The findings aren't the first time frack waste has been linked to endocrine-disrupting chemicals.

Nagel and colleagues previously reported that water near Colorado fracking drill sites had much higher endocrine-disrupting activity than other nearby water.
“2 Fists Up: We Gon Be Alright” featured interviews with the Concerned Student 1950 protest group.

A section of the film was devoted to the hunger strike by Jonathan Butler.

The film was screened publicly for the first time at the Missouri Theatre in Columbia.

COLUMBIA - Acclaimed filmmaker Spike Lee’s new documentary, which chronicles the racial protests that engulfed the University of Missouri campus last fall and drew national attention after a resultant boycott by the Tigers’ football team, premiered Wednesday a half mile from campus.

“2 Fists Up: We Gon Be Alright,” which was presented by ESPN as part of the “Spike Lee’s Lil’ Joints” series, featured interviews with members of the Concerned Student 1950 protest group.

The hourlong documentary — which opens with iconic images, such as the George Zimmerman trial in Florida and Eric Garner’s death at the hands of New York City police officers as well as Michael Brown’s death and the riots in Ferguson, Mo. — dissects the story of entrenched racism on college campuses through the eyes of the students who led the protests in November that led to the ouster of University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe and Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

ESPN Films producer Marquis Daisy, who also produced and directed the “Tigers United” documentary about Michael Sam, said the documentary’s aim is to further the national conversation about race.

“From an ESPN Films perspective, we just hope that really it opens dialogue and people will engage in conversation following this film,” Daisy said. “We feel like this film is very honest and Spike Lee, with his unapologetic approach, we felt was perfect.”

University of Missouri System interim president Michael Middleton, who replaced Wolfe, and several MU faculty members, including former communications professor Melissa Click, also appeared in Lee’s film.

It was screened publicly for the first time at the Missouri Theatre in Columbia before an estimated crowd of 800, which broke into spontaneous claps and cheers throughout the screening.
The film explores the origins of the Black Lives Matter movement and how it helped prompt Concerned Student 1950 to grow from a group outraged by Michael Brown’s death into a movement that shook the foundations of higher education.

There was, of course, a section devoted to the hunger strike by Jonathan Butler, one of the founding members of Concerned Student 1950.

It also examined why he chose such an extreme tactic after previous attempts to start a conversation on campus about race, such as the protest at the homecoming parade, failed to produce results.

There was a lengthy treatment of the Missouri football team’s involvement, which resulted in national attention that brought a swift end to Wolfe’s tenure as president, but no football players appeared on camera in the film.

The loudest cheers of the evening were reserved for Click, the professor who was fired after she was caught on video in a confrontation with Columbia police at the homecoming parade and later called for “some muscle” to remove a student journalist covering the November protests.

Lee introduced Middleton before the screening started and thanked him for his support of the project.

“I called him up and from the jump, from the get-go, he said, ‘Spike, whatever you need, I will help you with your piece,’ ” Lee said.

“Spike Lee, everybody knows, is the man,” Middleton said. “When he called, how do you not support what he wants to do?”

Middleton, who was seated next to Lee, and founding members of the Concerned Student 1950 movement — including Butler, who publicly distanced himself from the group last month — were VIP audience members.

Two Tiger football players — junior safety Anthony Sherrils, a Hogan Prep graduate, and junior wide receiver J’Mon Moore, whose meeting with Butler on campus sparked the players’ boycott — also had reserved seats, as did 21 Missouri legislators.

Sherrils was not spotted in the crowd, but Moore and roughly 10 of his Tigers teammates attended the screening.

A half-hour version of the documentary will debut at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York. It will be screened April 15 and again April 21-23.

ESPN Films will release a 22-minute digital version May 31 that is set to air June 3 on ESPN.
Lee, who also taught a master class Wednesday at MU’s prestigious journalism school, visited Columbia last month for a local film festival and conducted numerous interviews amid ongoing protests.

Great having Spike Lee teaching a master class at the Missouri School of Journalism today. #Mizzou @mujschool pic.twitter.com/GViMSrvpk1

&mdash; Kurp (@Kurp) April 6, 2016

ESPN described “2 Fists Up” as “an examination of how the Black Lives Matter movement sparked activism at the University of Missouri, its football team and across the rest of the United States,” in an email last month.

Missouri football players announced a boycott Nov. 7 on Twitter in solidarity with Butler.

Within two days of the football team’s involvement, which jeopardized a win against BYU at Arrowhead Stadium, University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe and Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin stepped down.

**Spike Lee premieres University of Missouri film near campus**

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A Spike Lee documentary about protests at the University of Missouri this fall, which were spurred by what activists said was administrators’ indifference to racial issues on campus, made its premiere Wednesday night at a theater near the campus.

Lee worked with ESPN to make the documentary, "2 Fists Up," which examines how the Black Lives Matter movement sparked activism at the University of Missouri and the rest of the county.

Lee contacted the university to set up a screening of a one-hour version of the film, the Columbia Daily Tribune reported.
It was shown at the Missouri Theatre in downtown Columbia. About 800 people were in attendance, the Columbia Missourian and Kansas City Star reported.

University of Missouri System interim President Michael Middleton introduced Lee to the crowd ahead of the screening.

The documentary was initially slated to premiere May 31 as part of a package of short films by Lee collectively called "Spike Lee's Lil' Joints." Jennifer Cingari, a publicist for ESPN Films, said the network still plans to premiere a 22-minute version of the documentary on the network's platforms around that time. A third 30-minute version of the documentary will also be shown at the Tribeca Film Festival this month in New York City.

"Spike is excited about it. He really wants people to see it," Cingari told the Daily Tribune. "It got such a good response. He feels a connection to this."

Lee was on campus last month to interview subjects for the film and record footage of the Concerned Student 1950 group as it protested at multiple spots on campus.

The protests resulted in campus chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe resigning amid discord that included a graduate student's hunger strike and members of the school's football team pledging to boycott the rest of their season until Wolfe was gone.

Missouri football coach Barry Odom said he was not contacted to be in Lee's film or about his players meeting with Lee, but said he trusts they were "responsible" and handled it "the right way." Odom was promoted after former coach Gary Pinkel announced he was retiring days after the season ended because he was suffering from cancer.
**Spike Lee's '2 Fists Up' captures a semester of unrest at MU**

By David Morrison

Thursday, April 7, 2016 at 1:24 am

Interim University of Missouri System President Mike Middleton stood on the stage at the Missouri Theatre on Wednesday night, to the right of film director Spike Lee, and asked the approximately 800 people in attendance what he thought was a hypothetical question.

“Spike Lee, everybody knows, is the man,” Middleton said. “When he called, how can you not support what he wants to do?”


Middleton and Lee introduced the premiere screening of the documentary “2 Fists Up: We Gon Be Alright,” the Academy Award-winning director’s film on the Concerned Student 1950 campus movement and the football team’s role in helping the group achieve its main aim of removing Middleton’s predecessor, Tim Wolfe, from office after it felt Wolfe and the Missouri administration were slow to react to racial issues on campus.

Lee made the documentary as part of a partnership with ESPN Films to create a series of short-subject pieces called “Spike Lee’s Lil’ Joints.” A 22-minute version of the movie will premiere on ESPN’s digital platforms May 31, followed by a television premiere June 3. A 30-minute version plays at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York later this month.

The Missouri Theatre housed the first, and only, public showing of Lee’s hourlong director’s cut.

“Let’s hope that this piece, with all the other things happening on campus, that it sparks really serious conversation so things can work out,” said Lee, who sat next to Middleton during the screening.

While ostensibly a sports film in conjunction with ESPN, the Missouri football team’s role in the events from the fall took up a fairly small portion of the program’s runtime.
The Tigers staged a boycott in support of Concerned Student 1950 hunger striker Jonathan Butler in November, threatening not to play the team’s next game against BYU in Kansas City until Butler’s main demand — Wolfe’s removal — was met and his hunger strike was over.

A group of around three dozen African-American football players announced their support for Butler on Nov. 7, then-Coach Gary Pinkel tweeted a picture of he and nearly the entire team locking arms and a message backing the players’ stand the next day, and Wolfe resigned Nov. 9.

“I guarantee I wouldn’t be alive if the football players didn’t step in,” Butler says during the movie.

Lee spoke with some of the team’s players during his time on campus in early March, when he also interviewed Middleton, Missouri faculty and Concerned Student 1950 members, as well as documenting a march through campus by the group.

None of the player interviews were included in the film. The only athletic representation came from archived footage of former safety and team captain Ian Simon reading a statement at Concerned Student 1950’s Carnahan Quad campsite the evening of Wolfe’s resignation and from Pinkel’s press conference earlier in the day.

“I support my players, and a young man’s life was on the line. I’m talking guys had tears in their eyes, crying, and asked if I could support them and I said I would,” Pinkel said in the footage. “I didn’t look at consequences. That wasn’t about it at the time. It was about helping my players and supporting my players when they needed me.

“I did the right thing, and I would do it again,” he concluded, to a round of applause from the Missouri Theatre audience.

Wide receiver J’Mon Moore and safety Anthony Sherrils, two of the team’s main conduits to the protesters in November, had reserved places among the 200-seat VIP section Wednesday night. Sherrils did not appear to be in the audience but Moore was one of about a dozen players in attendance.

“I’m glad it didn’t overdo it and put any false information in it. We were glad we were able to help,” Moore said after the show about the football team’s role in the protest and the film. “We did it for them, for Jonathan. So I’m glad he’s alive. All the extra attention and extra publicity isn’t really what we did it for.”

The film spent most of its time charting the rise of Concerned Student 1950 on Missouri’s campus, from the seeds of the group in the “Black Lives Matter” movement and activism in Ferguson following the killing of Michael Brown, through former student body president Payton Head having a racial slur shouted at him on campus, through the group picketing Wolfe’s car at the homecoming parade, presenting a list of demands to Wolfe and confronting him in Columbia and Kansas City and on into Butler’s hunger strike.
“This was something that was completely new. There was no blueprint that we were following at all,” Head said after the screening. “I think the football team definitely played an important role because they represented what drives the issues in this nation. That’s money. It’s capitalism. I’m calling and reaching out to senators and legislators in Jefferson City saying we have a student with his life on the line. Nothing happened until the football team stepped in, and we saw the national and international media circling around the university.

“I think that’s a very important conversation we need to have in this nation, is what exactly do we value? Is it black lives, or is it black lives when they’re on the field?”

Former Missouri communications professor Melissa Click was in attendance and received multiple cheers during the film as footage played of her helping protesters ward off media on Carnahan Quad the day of Wolfe’s resignation.

The system board of curators voted to fire Click on Feb. 25 after a review of her conduct Nov. 9 and verbally sparring with police officers during the homecoming parade about a month earlier. In the film, she admitted that she should have been more “polite” to student journalists Tim Tai and Mark Schierbecker, who were trying to document Concerned Student 1950’s celebration after Wolfe’s dismissal.

Lee asked Click, who appealed her dismissal, how her actions got her fired. “Excellent question,” she answered, to the sound of cheers from the crowd.

Before the screening, Middleton said he hoped Lee’s film will help foster a conversation about the issues that caused Missouri students to take such drastic steps in the fall.

“I’m confident that this production will provide our community and the larger community who sees it an opportunity to have some very serious, frank, well-informed discussions about the issues we’ve been facing in this community and around the country for much longer than I can remember,” Middleton said. “These are serious issues. They are systemic issues. They flare up periodically and legitimately in our communities across the country. We need to come together and figure out a way to get through this and improve our communities.”

The fallout from the tumult continues, as the state House voted last month to approve increased aid to all state colleges and universities except the UM system while also cutting $1 million of support to the Columbia campus. The state Senate voted to restore those budget cuts Monday.

The VIP section included 21 reserved seats for members of the state’s general assembly, all of them African-American, all but one a Democrat and all from the St. Louis and Kansas City areas.

“What happened at Mizzou could’ve happened at any American institution, but I’m glad that it happened here and the students here were brave enough to speak up,” Head said. “In reality, we love this place. One of the biggest things I kept hearing over and over again was, ‘If Mizzou is so bad, why don’t you go someplace else?’ The reality of the situation is we love this institution and we want it to be better.
“I think one of the things we have to do in our nation and our world is stop teaching history and leaving out the bad parts of it. Because the bad parts teach us the most.”

MISSOURIAN

Spike Lee documentary focuses on campus activism

JACK WADDELL, 21 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Spike Lee's documentary on campus activism at MU premiered Wednesday evening to a supportive audience that applauded when student activist group Concerned Student 1950 appeared on the screen and booed to images of former UM System President Tim Wolfe.

"2 Fists Up" examines the events that prompted protests against racism on campus last semester and how they connect with the Black Lives Matter movement and the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, after the death of Michael Brown. It is part of "Spike Lee's Lil' Joints," a short film series for ESPN's "30 for 30" documentary series.

Interim UM System President Mike Middleton, members of Concerned Student 1950 and Melissa Click, a former MU faculty member who was fired in response to her controversial involvement in campus protests last semester, attended the screening at Missouri Theatre. About 800 people were in attendance.

Middleton spoke to the crowd before the film about the issues facing the university.

"We need to come together and figure out a way to get through this and improve our communities," he said.

Lee's documentary features well-known figures such as Payton Head, former president of the Missouri Students Association, and Click, who garnered attention after calling for "muscle" against journalists during a campus protest in November.
The 60-minute film also incorporated fresh perspectives. Kandice Head, Payton Head's twin sister, was captured on film saying she had been told she couldn't get good enough grades to stay in the Missouri School of Journalism because she was black.

"You never heard the stories of the people working behind the scenes to make sure that we could fight for liberation on this campus," Payton Head said after the screening. "I think that was the great perspective this film brought to the limelight that other news media outlets didn't."

Moving forward, Payton Head said the administration should keep working to earn the trust of students and faculty.

"I think racism is a very difficult issue to solve, but universities were created to be the enlightenment for our nation and world," Payton Head said. "So it starts here. And it's started already."

The film elicited a wide spectrum of reactions from the audience. After footage of Wolfe saying he stepped down from his position as president out of love for the university was shown, several attendees said "Yeah, right" and laughed. Applause filled the auditorium when video of President Barack Obama praising the protests was shown.

Lee declined to answer questions from reporters on Wednesday. He also discouraged members of Concerned Student 1950 from commenting. Middleton also declined to answer questions, only saying "the film was great."

A few hours before the screening, Lee taught an invite-only master class at MU in which he showed one of his documentaries about Michael Jackson. He then held a Q and A session about that film, but declined to answer questions about "2 Fists Up."

A student in attendance asked Lee how he thought MU could increase the number of black faculty members. He suggested that the film would answer that question.

"We've got today, and then we've got tonight," he said.
Lee did, however, answer questions about his filmmaking practices. He said he doesn’t like the term "controversial" — a word often used to describe his films — because it is a label. He added that his films aim to cast the spotlight on issues including racism and gang violence.

"It shows that ... film is getting people to talk about the subject matter," Lee said during the class.

He said he picks the topic of his movies based on the story he wants to tell, not on the controversy linked to the subject.

"My stuff is based on what's important to me and what is being overlooked," Lee said.

Lee has said he wants people to "make up their own minds" after watching his films.

"I never go into a film and tell people 'this is what you should think about it,'" he said. "People are very intelligent, and they will make their own assessment."

A 22-minute version of the documentary will premiere on an ESPN platform on May 31, Lee told the crowd before the screening.

A 30-minute version of the documentary will be shown from April 21-23 at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York, according to previous Missourian reporting.

University of Missouri head must support students: student leader

By Kevin Murphy

COLUMBIA, Mo. (Reuters) - The University of Missouri student whose allegations of racial abuse on campus partly led to the school president's resignation last year told a
public forum on Wednesday that the university's next leader must support its students better.

Payton Head, president of the Missouri Students Association, outlined his suggestions at a public forum on the school's main campus in Columbia. Former President Tim Wolfe resigned last November over what protesters called the school's soft handling of reports of racial abuse.

The forum was the third of four to be held by a panel appointed to name Wolfe's successor. In May, the 10-member panel will recommend candidates to the university's board of curators, which has the final decision.

In contrast to the demonstrations that drew national attention and led to Wolfe's exit, the hearing on Wednesday was calm as Head said the school's leaders must better stand behind the student body and the university.

"The students here have the courage to speak up for these issues because they love this school so much and want it to be better for the generations to come," Head said.

Interim Chancellor Hank Foley of the university's main campus in Columbia said the school was at a turning point and must find the right president.

"It's critical we get things right," Foley told about 85 people at the forum.

Unrest at the university, widely known as "Mizzou," started last September when Head said on his Facebook page that he was repeatedly racially abused on campus by someone riding in a pickup truck.

Head's post went viral, and students demonstrated over what they said was the lack of a strong reaction by Wolfe.

In November the university's football players refused to practice or play until Wolfe stepped down, and some teachers and students threatened to boycott classes.

MU community weighs in on UM System presidential search

RACHEL PHILLIPS, 13 hrs ago
COLUMBIA — **The next University of Missouri System president should have an understanding of people and groups who have a stake in the university as well as the way academic systems function, participants in a forum said Wednesday.**

"This person needs, more than anything, to have the educational, academic mission in his or her DNA," Rebecca Johnson, an MU professor of nursing and veterinary medicine, said.

Johnson was among more than 50 people gathered at MU to discuss the qualities and qualifications they would like to see in the next UM System leader. The audience included UM System curators John Phillips and Phillip Snowden, nominated student curator Gene "Patrick" Graham and search committee members Stephanie Shonekan and Rakeem Golden. The conversation was led by search committee co-chairs Cheryl Walker and James Whitaker.

Topics included what educational background, prior experience and characteristics are considered necessary to lead the four-campus system.

MU Interim Chancellor Hank Foley began the forum at Reynolds Alumni Center by offering three characteristics he would like to see in the future president: impeccable integrity, high intellect and the intensity to do the job well.

No clear consensus emerged on what educational background the next president needs to have. Some attendees said the president should have a terminal degree such as a doctorate or a law degree, while others said academic degrees are less important overall.

The same was true about whether the president needs to come from within academia; former presidents Tim Wolfe and Gary Forsee were businessmen. Many speakers favored some sort of experience in academia, while others said an understanding of it would be helpful but not necessary.

"You can foster a leader in any particular environment," said Kristofferson Culmer, an MU graduate student who has been active on behalf of graduate student employee rights. "I think
what we need to look at is the concepts of leadership and the qualities that are required to lead this type of organization."

Some people said that the next president should be able to easily communicate with different constituencies invested in the system. Desired abilities include a willingness to talk to students, an ability to communicate with legislators and the capability to convey a positive message about the university throughout the state.

"I think that one of the qualities that I would like to see in our president is somebody who isn't afraid to create our own narrative of our own universities," said MU senior Payton Head, former president of the Missouri Students Association.

Other qualities mentioned included an optimistic outlook, a global mindset, fiscal responsibility and the abilities to listen and adapt.

Wednesday's forum was the third in a series of four public forums the UM System has held on the topic. The first two were held Monday at the Missouri University of Science and Technology and the University of Missouri-St.Louis. The final forum will take place Friday at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

MU's forum, along with the other three, will be available for viewing on the UM System's website. According to the site, additional input on desired traits and qualifications is being collected by email at umpresidentialsearch@umsystem.edu through Friday.

Kelley Stuck, the UM System interim vice president for human resources, said one-on-one interviews and more than 25 small group sessions on the subject have also taken place. Stuck said a list of qualifications for the position will be recommended at the UM System Board of Curators meeting this month, and recruitment will begin in early May.

Since 2003, when Elson Floyd became president, the UM System has had six presidents and interim presidents.
Search for UM system president comes to Columbia

COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri-Columbia hosted an open forum Wednesday. The public meeting gave people the opportunity to say what traits or qualifications they desire in the next president of the University of Missouri system.

"We are at a turning point at Mizzou, and at a turning point it's important to get it right," said University of Missouri Interim Chancellor Dr. Hank Foley. "We have a long history that we have to celebrate and also confront."

Foley said he is looking for three characteristics in a system president.

"Someone who is impeccable in terms of integrity, someone who has a high intellect, and someone with high intensity and is willing to throw themselves into the job fully to do it well," Foley said.

The meeting was the third stop in the tour of universities within the system. On Monday, forums were held at Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla and the University of Missouri-St. Louis. A similar gathering was scheduled for Friday at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Cheryl Walker is a co-chair of the UM Presidential Search Committee. The Missouri S&T graduate and former UM System curator said a common desire expressed in previous forums was an emphasis on research.

“Oftentimes, people think of science and math when they think of research,” Walker said. “Many people spoke about making sure there is an appreciation for the entire fabric across all subject matters.”

According to statistics from the UM System available at the meeting, there are more than 70,000 students being educated within the four colleges. Walker said it’s important that the next president understands the differences between the four campuses.
“They want someone to appreciate the uniqueness of each campus as it relates to the whole,” she said. “There is a difference in learning and the needs of each campus.”

Dr. Jim Whitaker is the other co-chair of the UM Presidential Search Committee. He said someone with business experience is needed.

“The UM System is a big machine,” he said. “It is a big institution and someone needs to be skilled in budgetary matters and show competency and experience dealing with it.”

According to data from the UM System, it is a $3.1 billion enterprise and employs more than 17,700 people.

Walker and Whitaker are leading a 12-person committee tasked with finding the next president.

MU holds open forum to help search for new president

COLUMBIA, Mo- Today the University of Missouri held an open forum to hear from the public about what they wanted out of a new president.

The search committee believed that hearing other inputs would prove to be helpful to find a the right person to fill the position.

This comes after Timothy Wolfe stepped down from the position in early November after the protests on campus.

Since then, the University has been looking for the right man or woman to take his place.

"We have a great University here and we have an opportunity to have a leader to take it to even a greater status, so we are very optimistic," says Jim Whitaker, one of the Co-chairs for the search committee.

Former president of the Missouri Students Association, Payton Head said this will hopefully give the University a fresh start. "For me the biggest thing I'm looking for is someone who values students. Definitely someone who sees the importance of their role on campus that they play."
The committee hopes this process will be finished by the new school year. Shortly they will develop a qualification statement, a job description, and go to the market sometime in the Spring.

The next stop for the committee will be Kansas City to hold a similar forum.

UM System presidential search forum comes to MU

Former curator Fred Hall: “The president has got to be a leader, he’s got to be a person of strong concepts of the role of academia, and he’s got to have an empathy for faculty, students and that sort of thing.”

The UM System presidential search committee heard a variety of opinions about the desired experience and qualifications of the next system president during a public forum on campus Wednesday.

Faculty, staff and students attended the forum, the third of four at the various UM System campuses, to give input. Many agreed that having a terminal degree and experience in higher education are both keys qualifications they would like to see in candidates. Others spoke about their desire to have a president who can relate to faculty and students.

Cheryl Walker and Jim Whitaker, the co-chairs of the presidential search committee, led the forum. Interim Chancellor Hank Foley, interim Vice President for Human Resources Kelly Stuck and some members of the Board of Curators and presidential search committee were also in attendance.

“We are at a turning point at Mizzou — I think most of you who are here realize that, and realize that at turning points, it’s critical to get things right,” Foley said in his opening remarks.

Foley shared his vision, which is comprised of three facets, for the next president.

“I’d like someone who is impeccable in terms of integrity and ethics,” Foley said. “Secondly, I’d like someone of high intellect, and thirdly, I’d like someone who is intense. Someone who really enjoys this and will throw themselves into it fully as if there’s nothing else important in life.”

Many who spoke at the forum said they wished for the president to hold a terminal degree. Rebecca Johnson, a professor of veterinary medicine and nursing, said in addition to a terminal degree, she also believes that it is vital to have an understanding of the academic mission.
“This person needs more than anything to have the educational academic mission in his or her DNA so that they understand what it is we are here for,” Johnson said. “I say DNA because if the person doesn’t have that awareness in their DNA, all the advising and all the instructing and all the teaching we tried to do about that will fall on deaf ears because there won’t be an understanding of how you implement context of the academic mission within the business of this huge institution.”

Former curator Fred Hall said he believes it’s important for the next president to have an understanding of the academic world.

“The president has got to be a leader, he’s got to be a person of strong concepts of the role of academia, and he’s got to have an empathy for faculty and students,” Hall said.

Bill Griffin, a MU graduate and business professor, said he would like to see an increase in the number of international and exchange students and believes a professor with an understanding of globalism could be a step in that direction.

“I would like to see someone in this position who has a global mindset because what we do reaches much further than these 100 square miles that we’re sitting in the middle of and particularly our students need an exposure of that,” Griffin said.

But Darryl Cook, an employee from the Moniteau County division of UM Extension, said he believes it is important for the president to be well-versed on small places, too, not just cities and the international sphere.

“I think that the president really needs to come from an environment that is extremely diverse,” Cook said. “We are an outlier. We are the farthest distance in this constellation of education and we need someone who can acknowledge the presence of small places like Moniteau County and the young people that come from there because they will end up being candidates, hopefully, for admission to MU.”

Religious studies professor Rabia Gregory said she thinks the president should have teaching experience to better relate to faculty.

“I think, if we can possibly make it happen, that the candidate should have some experience teaching, whether in the classroom, through extension or publish outreach, but some understanding, not just what it means to be a student, but what it means to work with students,” Gregory said.

Along the same line, doctoral student Kristofferson Culmer said being able to relate to students is also important.

“I think what we need to realize is the system is made up of 77,000 students, and the system president needs to have a focus towards the student experience, the student outcome, someone who is committed to really improving the environment for the benefits of the students here,” Culmer said.
Those who spoke also recognized the importance in working with politicians to have a good relationship with the state legislature.

“I think it’s important that this person have a certain amount of political charisma — whatever that is — given the situation with this university and our state legislature,” Cook said. “This is an opportunity, when you talk about leadership, for the school to put their best foot forward as the leader in the process so that when you’re confronting individuals in the legislature, you have the experience and the knowledge and the ability to deal with diverse political positions which come together in Jefferson City and see themselves as having a very substantial role in how this school is governed.”

Former Missouri Students Association President Payton Head spoke about the events of the fall and said that he believes the next president should be someone who is not afraid to create the UM System’s own narrative.

“I think it’s most important that for a strong University of Missouri System, we have to take ownership of our students, we have to take ownership of the past, present and future,” Head said.

Head said the UM System needs to embrace its positive and negative qualities.

“We have to have a president, we have to have a system, we have to have a university who isn’t afraid of owning the good and the bad of our institution,” Head said. “Mizzou has done a lot of bad in the past, but Mizzou has also done a lot of good.”

MISSOURIAN

Three MU professors awarded $10,000 for teaching excellence

PAYTON LIMING, 19 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Sarah Bush, Alexandra Socarides and Mary Beck were each awarded a 2016 William T. Kemper Fellowship for Teaching Excellence on Wednesday morning.

The Kemper awards started in 1991 with a $500,000 donation from William T. Kemper, who graduated from MU in 1926, according to previous Missourian reporting. During his 52-year career in banking, Kemper held positions in Missouri, Kansas and Oklahoma.
Teachers are nominated for the award, and a committee selects the top five. On Tuesday morning, journalism professor Earnest Perry received the first 2016 award.

Sarah Bush received the second of five Kemper Awards. An associate professor of biological sciences in the MU College of Arts and Science, Bush "is inspiring and shows a genuine interest in her students," according to a release from the MU News Bureau.

She's been an MU faculty member since 2001. Bush said she hadn't yet thought about how she'd use the money, but she said: "I am sure I will put it to good use."

Bush's students in one of her courses, "Evolution for everyone," were taking an exam when Interim Chancellor Hank Foley and Commerce Bank Chairman Jim Schatz presented the award, Bush said.

"It was a big surprise," Bush said. "I didn't know I was going to get it this year. It was a great honor."

Alexandra Socarides, an associate professor of English in the MU College of Arts and Science, was the third Kemper recipient. When Socarides received the award, she was teaching a graduate student seminar on the third floor of Tate Hall.

Socarides was speechless while Foley announced the gift. She's been an MU Faculty member since 2007.

"Thank you so much. I'm speechless," Socarides said as the 20 students, faculty and staff packed in the small classroom erupted into applause.

In an interview Wednesday afternoon, Socarides said she focuses on interactions that help undergraduate students decide what they would like to do with their lives. She added that she also tries to help graduate students planning to become teachers to figure out what type of educators they want to be.
"Teaching is about the individual students: who they are, where they come from, the experiences that they come with and how I can help them to move forward," Socarides said.

At about 5 p.m. Wednesday, Mary Beck, clinical professor of law and director of the Family Violence Clinic at the MU School of Law, accepted the fourth Kemper award. Beck has been an MU Faculty Member since 1993.

As Interim Chancellor Hank Foley announced Beck as one of the recipients, her students whooped and clapped. Beck repeatedly said "Thank you" in response.

"I am just so glad everyone is here," Beck said. "This is the ultimate honor."

The final Kemper award will be announced in the upcoming days.

Opinion: Nixon on MU

Knowing the governor’s role

By Henry J. Waters III

Wednesday, April 6, 2016 at 2:00 pm

Republicans running for governor say incumbent Democrat Jay Nixon should have intervened with University of Missouri managers during recent student protests on the MU campus and that he also failed in Ferguson.

During the party’s recent Lincoln Day activities, Republican candidate Catherine Hanaway said Nixon should have been “more forceful” to stop “lawlessness that happened in Ferguson and at the University of Missouri.”

Candidate Eric Greitens said the Concerned Student 1950 protest created a “crisis” at MU and had become a “national embarrassment.”
In a comment that might ring true with her GOP constituency, Hanaway intoned, “Where was Jay Nixon when the University of Missouri was taken under siege? Why didn’t he say to his curators that teachers should teach, scholarship athletes should play and Melissa Click should not be able to call in ‘muscle’ against students?”

This is first-class demagoguery. The actions of protesters on the MU campus bear no similarity to events in Ferguson, where the killing of a black teenager led to violent protests and a legitimate question whether Nixon should have called out the National Guard. At MU, no violence occurred and no one was injured. For a governor to have taken over as Hanaway suggests would have deserved roundhouse criticism.

The state constitution establishes the political independence of the University of Missouri. The governor has no business assuming the role of curator, president or chancellor. It is possible to imagine actions by university leaders of such a lawless nature the army must be brought in, but such a scenario invokes images of the Civil War, not the protests by Concerned Student 1950.

Nixon did the right thing to stay out of it. The Republicans demonstrate their unfitness for the office by their suggestions otherwise.

The Kansas City Star.

APRIL 6, 2016 5:56 PM

Mizzou records give a rare peek at a campus constant: grade inflation

Like most U.S. colleges and universities, the University of Missouri has seen grades steadily rise

Analysts and faculty say pressure from students, elsewhere gives them incentives to grade more easily

MU, unlike most schools, publicly posts the grades it has awarded over time

By Scott Canon
scanon@kcstar.com

COLUMBIA - Want an easy A? Steer clear of R. Lee Lyman’s Fundamentals of Archaeology. He’s flunked students at the University of Missouri for decades.
In a sophomore class of 25 students in 2014, fewer than half earned an A. Two got D’s and two flunked. Last fall, only two people in the course scored an A. Four failed. In 2012, half of the dozen students in his archaeology class tanked.

What gives?

“I’ve used the same grading scale for the 30-odd years,” said Lyman, an anthropologist and now professor emeritus.

That makes him an academic oddity. Across the country at places like MU, at less selective schools and on the elite campuses of the Ivy League, grades keep going up. Professors such as Lyman take an ever lonelier stand to hold steady on the value of an A or a B.

Some analysts say grade inflation may be topping out simply because there’s nowhere higher to go. Some schools have begun experimenting with the A-plus, hoping to create room atop the crowded scale. Experts say we’ll sort the great from the good by running GPAs out farther beyond the decimal point.

In national surveys, faculty say they feel pressured more to boost grades than to keep them constant. Some of their colleagues urge them to resist inflation, but students, parents and campus higher-ups can subtly or bluntly lean on them for grading generosity.

A respondent in one national survey — voicing what faculty say privately — suspected his academic department lost out on university teaching awards that rely heavily on student evaluations. Strict grading doesn’t win much love from the student body.

Studies have shown that the higher the grades students expect they’ll get in a course, the stronger the evaluation they’ll give an instructor. College teaching careers hardly turn on those marks from students alone — evaluations from other faculty, published research, the ability to win grants can trump them — but they matter.

Students also tend to shop for courses that produce the most A’s and the fewest F’s.

“Everybody looks to find where they can get easy grades,” said Kurt Diable, an MU student from Liberty.

Professors who find too few students taking their classes risk their status at a school and their ability to stay on the faculty.

A 2000 study found that adjuncts gave higher grades than their peers. Those short-term or part-time instructors shoulder a growing portion of the teaching load. In 1971, they represented about one in five instructors. Forty years later, they made up more than half.
“In most cases, (adjunct instructors are) evaluated solely on student evaluations,” New York University education professor Jonathan Zimmerman wrote in an essay last month. “Who can blame them for trying to gin up their scores? After all, their livelihoods are at stake.”

Grade inflation — yesterday’s B student becomes today’s A-minus scholar — reflects a change in campus culture, said Stuart Rojstaczer. He taught environmental science, geophysics and civil engineering at Duke University before leaving to write a novel and study how grades have risen. His recently updated research shows them rising 0.1 points per decade without pause for 30 years. His findings conclude A’s are now three times as common as in 1960.

MU, in a way that few universities reveal, lists all the grades given in its courses from 1997 on. An analysis of those numbers reveals the average grade rose from about a B (slightly below 3.1) to B-plus (just shy of 3.3) over the last 18 years. (MU notes that the figures could exaggerate grade inflation because they include graduate classes — a growing part of the university and a level where A’s have long been the default score.)

Rojstaczer said MU’s grade inflation puts the school at about half the national average.

The first national spike came in the 1960s and ’70s, he said, as professors worried that grading someone too low might jeopardize the student’s ability to stay in school. Kicked out of school, they could get drafted into the military. That leveled off for a time when the draft disappeared. But grading rose again in the late 1980s and early ’90s. The latest ballooning of B’s into A’s, Rojstaczer said, reflected a cultural change.

“Students became customers rather than acolytes,” he said. “When you treat a student as a customer, the customer is always right. And the student customer wants a higher grade.”

Holding the line

Lyman, the one with the demanding archaeology class, concedes that even he hasn’t stuck to the standards he once set.

“I never thought grading on a curve was a very good idea. At some point, 20 percent on a test becomes an A,” he said. “(But) I feel like I’ve dumbed the exams down.”

Essay questions count for less. He includes multiple choice and true/false. Still, some kids don’t make the cut. Writing skills and the ability to think critically and express coherent thoughts have fallen as a greater percentage of high school students move on to college than did a generation ago, he said. Lyman said more students come to Columbia less prepared. (University administrators say students arrive better prepared.)
He pays a price for the grades he gives out. “I’ve had parents call me at home in the evening and curse at me for flunking their student,” he said.

Lyman said he feels little direct pressure from the university brass to go easy. Several years ago, he fielded a registrar’s question about how he grades. He said students get the grade they deserve. “That’s the last I heard of it.”

A few times over his career, faculty asked why he sets the bar so high.

“I take that as a compliment,” Lyman said. “I think what they’re saying is, ‘Hey, you might want to rethink how you award grades.’”

Like his archaeology class, MU’s Principles of Microeconomics has tripped up scores of students over the years. Dave Mandy, who headed the economics department for 10 years, said he’d never been asked by administrators about difficult grading.

“Conversely,” he said in an email, “we never receive praise from above for upholding high standards. So why do we do it? Because we think it is the right thing to do. Grades in our classes should mean something.

“But it comes at a cost. Instructors who uphold high standards endure more complaints and inquiries from students and parents and usually get lower scores on the evaluations students complete at the end of each class.”

A for a reason

Analysts caution against singling out high grades in a class as proof of falling standards. Honors classes, for instance, tend to produce abnormally high grades. But those courses draw the most ambitious, high-achieving students.

Introductory classes — think again of Lyman’s archaeology class — can produce lower grade averages. They’re populated by sophomores, freshmen and students taking classes unrelated to their majors. The subject matter is often new. Senior level classes, on the other hand, produce higher grades because they’re filled by students who have largely gotten the knack of a particular field.

Nursing, education, fine arts, the humanities and other fields have historically given higher grades than the hard sciences. Professors who grade too hard risk the employment and graduate school prospects of their students competing with graduates from other schools.

Structurally, some areas find themselves in a system that’s likely to produce higher grades. The MU numbers show, for instance, large numbers of A’s for some music courses.
There’s a reason, said Julia Gaines, who heads the music department. An ensemble class typically meets for 4 1/2 hours a week but carries just a single credit hour. Sure, Gaines said, most ensemble classes yield A’s, but they demand much more time practicing and attending class than a geology or engineering class that carries more credit hours.

And music students arrive on campus only after significant mastery of their discipline. A cello player likely comes with significant awards from high school, able to read symphonies easily and perform at an impressive level. A student in Lyman’s archaeology course, by contrast, is just being introduced to the concept of carbon dating.

“Our students come with a plan. We’re looking at them four years before they come here,” Gaines said. “Our students can’t come to music as a fallback. They’ve taken years of private lessons.”

**Better teaching, better students**

Administrators are skeptical that rising GPAs come from lax standards. They speak of rising admissions standards and the higher SAT and ACT scores of entering freshmen. At Mizzou, for instance, the average ACT score of new students was 25.6 in 2010 and 26.0 in 2015. That’s just one piece of evidence, the school says, that students land on campus increasingly prepared for college.

Once they arrive, they find tutoring, online help with writing projects and a range of other academic support services that dwarf what their parents had. Jim Spain, MU’s vice provost for undergraduate studies, said those factors — not easier classes — drive the climbing grade numbers.

“All those things add up to greater student success and one of those things is their grades,” Spain said. “We would be putting our students at peril and put our academic programs at peril if we didn’t maintain our academic rigor.”

Artificially inflated grades, he said, would quickly come back to haunt the school. Instead, Spain said, accounting graduates continue to do well on their CPA exams, nursing students earn their licenses, education graduates pass their teaching exams.

Administrators say the teaching profession has gotten savvier over the years.

“An increase in grades ... doesn’t actually mean a relaxing of academic vigor,” said Steven Dandaneau, the vice provost for undergraduate studies at Kansas State University. “We’ve learned more about how to teach better. We have more tools, more technology at our disposal.”
He also said some of the pressures blamed for grade inflation aren’t universal. At K-State, for instance, only professors see students’ evaluations, so they don’t figure in faculty promotion or retention.

He sees worries about grade inflation as “old-fogeyism — ‘Things aren’t as tough as they were in my day.’”

“There’s no problem here,” he said. “Faculty are doing a great job. Students are doing a great job.”

Some analysts say grade inflation may be more complex, and less pronounced, than the popular perception. Cliff Adelman, a former federal education official and a senior associate at the Institute for Higher Education Policy, said grading has become easier. But only slightly so.

Students more often drop out of a class they’re struggling in, or retake a course — either avoiding or replacing a bad grade.

“That automatically raises the collective GPAs,” Adelman said. “What does grade inflation mean? It means that criteria of judgment vary, over time and from one school to another.”

He sees some wisdom in suggestions that we just dump grades or go for other measurements. Worry less about an A or a B and more about whether students achieve certain skills.

“You need to be more specific about what a student has to learn, let them know how they’re progressing and acknowledge that they’ve attained the skill,” said Trudy Milburn, director of campus solutions for Taskstream, a company working with multischool groups to find grading alternatives. Perhaps, for instance, students can prove they’ve learned not through grades but by the projects, papers and research they produce.

“So maybe you take the final paper (from a course) and put it in with papers from other institutions across the country,” she said. “Then you can evaluate a department or a state or a university” in a way that at least puts grades from one university in context with others.

**Can grades be saved?**

When Valen Johnson taught at Duke several years ago, he proposed a complex formula to even out grading practices and perhaps provide an incentive for a professor to avoid inflation. An A from an instructor who gave them out easily, for instance, wouldn’t be as valuable for a student’s GPA as the same mark from a tougher professor. The effort became a campus controversy and never took hold.
Johnson, now a statistics professor at Texas A&M and the author of “Grade Inflation: A Crisis in College Education,” has conducted studies showing that students who have a choice will sign up for classes with the easiest graders. Then they’ll give those instructors stronger evaluations than more stringent professors.

“There’s really no incentive for individual faculty to grade stringently,” he said. “Almost nobody has an incentive to push in that direction. Students don’t want it. The administration wants the students to be happy. ... It’s just a difficult situation to fix.”

One faction that might change the dynamics could be the brightest students, said Linda Carroll, a member of the national council of the American Association of University Professors. She believes grade inflation is an “absolute reality.”

“Students regularly tell you, ‘Oh well, if I don’t think I’m going to get the kind of grade I need in this course, I’ll take another class,’ ” said Carroll, who teaches Italian at Tulane University.

Professors who grade strictly not only take heat in student evaluations, she said, but also online at websites such as RateMyProfessors.com. (The anonymous reviews there for Carroll give her high marks for helpfulness and clarity, lower for “easiness.”)

But at that website and elsewhere, Carroll said, she is beginning to see pushback from students irritated that recognition of their work gets watered down by high marks for classmates who don’t work as hard.

“That,” she said, “gives me some hope.”

**A-rated**

Students don’t often complain about good grades that come too easily. Neither do they deny that some classes are a cinch.

“You get an idea of who grades harder,” said Bailey Conrad, an MU sophomore from Geneseo, Ill., in a journalism honors program. “It seems like sometimes grad students grade a little harder than they need to prove themselves.”

Like other students, she finds both the courses and the grading in advanced classes challenging — and entry courses routinely “simple.” “It’s easy,” she said, “to get an A.”

Students say shopping for the right course and an easy grader is routine. RateMyProfessor.com stands as the go-to spot for scouting instructors.
“I do it more to find someone who teaches in a style that’s easier for me to learn,” said Alex Leicht, an MU junior from Fenton who is majoring in biology. “For the most part, you get the grade you work for. It’s all about the work you’re willing to put in.”

Diable, the student from Liberty, is carrying 19 credit hours this semester. He hunts for easy A’s in his general education courses so he has more time to tackle demanding classes such as organic chemistry.

“All my (general education courses) had barely any homework,” said the biology junior. “They grade a lot of those classes on a curve, and people ride that curve just to get by.”

Debate surrounding Thomas Jefferson statue continues

Students and professors discussed the merits of keeping his statue on Francis Quadrangle during a public forum Monday.

Months after students began talking about Thomas Jefferson’s legacy and the significance of his statue sitting on Francis Quadrangle, the debate about the statue’s racial implications isn’t going away.

Last semester’s debate surrounding the Jefferson statue continued with a public forum on Monday hosted by the Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy. Students and historians disagreed about Jefferson’s place in history and at MU, but a consensus was clear: The discussion about the statue should be continued.

The debate began last August, when Concerned Student 1950 member Maxwell Little started a petition to remove the statue from campus. Two months later in October, the Student Coalition for Critical Action started the hashtag #PostYourStateOfMind and posted sticky notes calling Jefferson a “rapist,” “slave owner” and “misogynist.”

Two weeks after the SCCA’s event, the MU College Republicans countered with #StandWithJefferson and started a petition of their own to keep the statue on campus. They also posted sticky notes on Jefferson’s statue, but they said “Thank You,” “Freedom Fighter” and “President.”

Annette Gordon-Reed and Peter Onuf, co-authors of the book “Most Blessed of the Patriarchs”: Thomas Jefferson and the Empire of Imagination” and professors at Harvard University and the University of Virginia, respectively, were two of the panelists in Monday’s forum. Little also
joined the two professors to discuss Jefferson’s legacy in contemporary America. Roughly 40 people attended the forum.

Little opened the forum with a statement reiterating his sentiments from the fall, denouncing what the Jefferson statue symbolized.

“To the marginalized student, this statue does not represent excellence, respect or responsibility,” Little said. “The statue of Jefferson is saturated with white supremacy, racism, sexism and exclusion, all of which live here on campus, in Jefferson City and in this nation.”

Gordon-Reed and Onuf understood Little’s point of view but were not supportive of it. Onuf argued that the U.S. would not be where it is today without the contributions of Jefferson and his “fellow patriots.” He agreed that Jefferson should not be worshipped, but he felt that Jefferson needed to be researched and discussed.

“Jefferson believed in a better future; he had hope for justice, he had hope for us,” Onuf said. “We still receive guidance from Jefferson because we believe in the future, and we have hopes for a better Mizzou, a better country and a better world.”

Gordon-Reed echoed Onuf’s statement. She said that Jefferson cannot be held responsible for all the racism in the U.S. and said that energy would be better spent on focusing on uprooting the causes of the problems.

“Rather than see historical figures as objects of worship or objects of derision, we have to think about what they’re useful for,” Gordon-Reed said. “What is their contribution? Jefferson offers the opportunity to talk about the founding, to talk about slavery, to talk about race, to talk about second-class citizenship of African Americans. But all of these critiques can be said about others as well.”

Gordon-Reed said that Jefferson is singled out among the founding fathers because he was one of the only ones who wrote about the racial problems facing the country at the time.

After each panelist made their statements, those who attended were allowed to comment.

Several people brought up the duality of what the statue symbolizes. While he owned slaves and had an affair with one, Sally Hemings, Jefferson also wrote the Declaration of Independence and laid the foundation for important aspects of American life such as free speech and higher education.

Gordon-Reed said that the best way to balance the legacy is through adding a plaque to the statue that explains everything Jefferson did.

“In America, in order to admire somebody, you have to be this good person to admire the things they’ve done,” Gordon-Reed said. “It’s all very personal. I study Jefferson and I can see all of the good things and all of the bad things, and people need to be educated about that.”
The biggest argument between Little, Gordon-Reed and Onuf happened when another audience member asked Little about whether he believed Jefferson did anything honorable for the country.

“No,” Little answered flatly.

“Well it’s hopeless then,” Onuf replied.

Onuf and Gordon-Reed brought up the story of slaves in Massachusetts who wrote a document based on the Declaration of Independence and won their freedom in court. Without Jefferson, they argued, those slaves would not have been freed.


All three panelists concurred that continued discussion about the statue is most important.

“The conversation has been started because of Ferguson, Trayvon Martin, and it’s absolutely overdue,” Gordon-Reed said. “We’re not going to agree on everything, so we’ve got to have a conversation about it.”

Free speech rights cut along racial lines, college students say

While most college students don't feel their First Amendment rights are under fire, black students don't are less likely to feel that their free speech rights are secure, according to a Gallup survey.

Overall, 73 percent of students surveyed said they thought their freedom of speech was secure, the New York Times reports. However, 70 percent of white students surveyed said their right to assemble was secure, but only 39 percent of black students said so, the newspaper reports.

The survey, sponsored by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Newseum Institute, was based on phone surveys of 3,072 U.S. college students and 2,031 adults.

Of the students surveyed 54 percent said their campuses had less-than-open environments that prevent colleagues from voicing their beliefs out of fear of offending others, the Times reports.

Seventy percent of those surveyed said students shouldn't be able to restrict the news media from covering campus protests, according to the newspaper. But 49 percent said reporters' access should be blocked if protesters believe the reporting would be biased, 48 percent if the protesters don't want to be disturbed and 44 percent if protesters want to present their own story online.
"They're clearly divided by the notion that they can ask to be left alone," Sam Gill, Knight Foundation vice president of learning and impact, told the Times.

Melissa Click, an assistant professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, drew national attention last fall when she asked for "some muscle" to remove student journalists covering public protests on the campus last year. Click was fired in February.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2 New Diversity Deans Take On Ivy League Challenges

No MU Mention

This week two Ivy League institutions announced high-profile appointments designed to tackle diversity challenges on their campuses. At Yale University, Kathryn Lofton will become the inaugural deputy dean for diversity and faculty development in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. At Princeton University, LaTanya N. Buck will become dean for diversity and inclusion, with a focus on students.

As chair of the religious-studies department at Yale, Ms. Lofton brings with her intimate knowledge of how the faculty operates. Ms. Buck is coming from Washington University in St. Louis, where she worked closely with students in creating the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, of which she is the founding director.

Both enter their new jobs well aware, they say, that there’s no such thing as quick wins when it comes to the complex topics of diversity and inclusion. What they’re after, they say, are deeper structural changes and improvements in the campus climate. But before they can propose solutions, they say, they plan to spend their first few months listening.
A ‘Serious Situation’ at Yale

At Yale, Ms. Lofton has her work cut out for her. Within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, just 7.3 percent of tenured professors and full-time junior faculty members on the tenure track are members of underrepresented groups. She calls it a "serious situation," without an easy resolution.

"I have not met a single scholar at Yale who has not thought about this question," she says. "The problem is you hit a structural wall and it falls apart."

Ms. Lofton, whose charge includes an examination of recruitment, retention, and mentorship support, has two goals. The first is to come up with best practices that Yale can adopt. The second is to get people to think about their work in a different way.

In hiring, she says, scholars often default to replicating what they’ve already done. But what if when reviewing applications, they come across someone who is approaching their field in a radically different way? Will members of the search committee discard the application because it doesn’t fit the job description, or are they willing to broaden their search?

How can Yale, she asks, design searches that draw in the most diverse and innovative candidates, while maintaining excellence in established fields of research? "This is a collective effort," she says. "But I do think the purpose of this job is an enormous level of precinct work. To meet with every chair of every program to ask them how I can help."

Her work will also include talking to people who have left Yale. Of 86 professors hired from underrepresented groups between 2006 and 2011, half are no longer there. While Yale, like all elite institutions, demands a great deal from its faculty, she says,
it can do a better job of making people feel supported, not isolated. "That’s a culture change that’s not just about diversity," she says.

Discontent at Princeton

At Princeton, Ms. Buck will be entering a campus in which black students have made clear their unhappiness with the rate of progress. Last fall, members of the Black Justice League staged a sit-in in the president’s office, issuing a list of demands that included removing Woodrow Wilson’s name from the university’s public-policy school and requiring cultural-competency training for faculty and staff members. The university ultimately declined the name change, but has put in place other plans to diversify the campus and make it a more welcoming place. Part of that plan was to create Ms. Buck’s position.

Ms. Buck says her first job is to begin talking with students to find out what their experiences and interests are. "For me, this is my professional style," she says. "It’s very important for me to do a listening tour and meet with various individuals across the institution."

She wants to find ways to better connect the three centers that will come under her supervision: the Carl A. Fields Center for Equality and Cultural Understanding; the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Center; and the Women’s Center. She also wants to get students to think about diversity and inclusion beyond the first-year experience, and develop more support mechanisms for students, particular low-income students.

Sustaining Momentum

Certainly Ms. Buck and Ms. Lofton are not the first to attempt structural and cultural changes on their campuses in order to achieve greater diversity. Studying those and
other initiatives has made a skeptic of William B. Harvey, a distinguished scholar at the American Association for Access, Equity, and Diversity. Too often, he says, colleges fail to make noticeable changes because diversity officers are given neither resources nor top-down support. And he says that unless positions like these — focused specifically on students and faculty members — are linked into a broader campus diversity efforts, they won’t be able to sustain momentum.

"It’s a great opportunity under the right circumstances to help an institution introduce change," Mr. Harvey says. But "you push hard and all of a sudden the degree of support you thought you had begins to evaporate."

Both new deans say they expect to come up with concrete proposals by the end of their first year in the position (Ms. Buck doesn’t start until August).

Ms. Lofton, who is a special adviser to Yale’s president and reports directly to the dean of the Faculty and Arts and Sciences, will begin with a comparative analysis of 12 peer institutions, she says, to study both successful and unsuccessful models of faculty diversity and inclusion. That research, combined with "lots and lots of conversations" on the campus, she says, will result in a series of recommendations. Her term in the position ends after a year and a half, so she is aware she has a tight deadline.

Ms. Buck will report to Princeton’s vice president for campus life and become part of a group of senior diversity practitioners, both of which will give her the ear of senior administrators. She says she was convinced Princeton is serious about those issues in part because the university has put more money into diversity efforts in recent years, including more programs to enroll underrepresented students.
"There’s a strong core group of individuals who are willing to work collaboratively to push this agenda forward," she says. "To me it’s clear and apparent things are happening."