Textiles inspire new ways to grow human tissue

Methods borrowed from the textiles industry show promise for scaling up tissue engineering and making it cheaper.

Tissue engineering is a process that uses novel biomaterials seeded with stem cells to grow and replace missing tissues. When certain types of materials are used, the “scaffolds” that are created to hold stem cells eventually degrade, leaving natural tissue in its place. The challenge is creating enough of the material on a scale that clinicians need to treat patients.

Tissues could help patients suffering from wounds caused by diabetes and circulation disorders, patients in need of cartilage or bone repair, and women who have had mastectomies by replacing their breast tissue.

In typical tissue engineering approaches that use fibers as scaffolds, nonwoven materials are often bonded together using an electrostatic field. This process, called electrospinning, creates the scaffolds needed to attach to stem cells; however, large-scale production is not cost-effective.

“Electrospinning produces weak fibers, scaffolds that are not consistent and have pores that are too small,” says Elizabeth Loboa, dean of the University of Missouri College of Engineering.

“We can run our system for hours and create about a ten-inch diameter of scaffold material. Therefore, we sought to test methods that could standardize the process. The goal of ‘scaling up’ is to produce hundreds of meters of material that look the same, have the same properties and can be used in clinical settings.

“So, we investigated the processes that create textiles, such as clothing and window furnishings like drapery, to scale up the manufacturing process.”

Loboa and colleagues have published a pair of papers using three common textile creation methods—meltblowing, spunbonding, and carding—to determine if these methods would create the materials needed to mimic native tissue.
Meltblowing is a technique during which nonwoven materials are created using a molten polymer to create continuous fibers. Spunbond materials are made much the same way but the fibers are drawn into a web while in a solid state instead of a molten one. Carding involves the separation of fibers through the use of rollers, forming the web needed to hold stem cells in place.

The team tested these techniques to create polylactic acid (PLA) scaffolds, a Food and Drug Administration-approved material used as collagen fillers, seeded with human stem cells. They then spent three weeks studying whether the stem cells remained healthy and if they began to differentiate into fat and bone pathways, which is the goal of using stem cells in a clinical setting when new bone and/or new fat tissue is needed at a defect site.

Results show that the three textile manufacturing methods proved as viable if not more so than electrospinning.

“These alternative methods are more cost-effective than electrospinning,” Loboa says. “A small sample of electrospun material could cost between $2 to $5. The cost for the three manufacturing methods is between $.30 to $3.00; these methods proved to be effective and efficient. Next steps include testing how the different scaffolds created in the three methods perform once implanted in animals.”

The studies are published in *Biomedical Materials* and in *Acta Biomaterialia*, respectively. Loboa worked with Stephen A. Tuin, a recent doctoral graduate from her research group at the Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering at the University of North Carolina and NC State University (NCSU), and Behnam Pourdeyhimi of the NCSU College of Textiles.

The National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the Nonwovens Institute all provided funding for the studies. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agencies.

---

**The Healing Power of Forgiveness**

As we age, things that we’ve done—or that were done to us—carry tremendous emotional weight. Let them go.

To forgive, or not to forgive? It is a question that we ask ourselves more, and that becomes more salient, as years pass.
As we grow older, it is “very, very common to review your life,” says Berit Ingersoll-Dayton, professor and director of the joint doctoral program in social work and social science at the University of Michigan School of Social Work. It’s a process that inevitably will bring up “things that we feel good about—and that we don’t.”

In the absence of forgiveness, an offense that was committed against us, or some pain that we caused others, can replay in our minds, causing continuing anger or remorse that is often a recipe for bitterness and bad health. A wealth of research has linked the isolation and loneliness that can result to increased health problems and higher mortality.

It is tantamount to “suffocating” yourself emotionally, says Amit Sood, a professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. The effects on one’s health from bottled-up anger and resentment can range from anxiety and depression to higher blood pressure and increased risk of heart attacks, he says.

Forgiveness, by contrast, allows one to focus on more positive thoughts and relationships. “It allows you to free up the real estate in your brain” taken up by negative thinking, Dr. Sood says.

An alternative stance

One study suggests that forgiving others may benefit women more than men in certain situations. Researchers at the University of Missouri found that forgiving others helped protect older women from depression, even when they felt unforgiven by others. Men, however, felt worse when they forgave others but didn’t feel forgiven.

Ashley Ermer, the study’s lead author and a doctoral student, says more research is needed to tease out the reasons behind the differences.

Some experts say it isn’t always possible to forgive, especially when an offense is more severe, or when the offender shows no remorse.

“If the other person isn’t sorry and hasn’t made meaningful amends, the hurt party often can’t and won’t forgive. They are left not forgiving, and hurting and hating,” says Janis Abrahms
Spring, a clinical psychologist in Westport, Conn., and author of “How Can I Forgive You? The Courage to Forgive, the Freedom Not To.”

Rather than be “entombed” in those raw feelings, Dr. Spring says, people in pain can find relief and resolution through an alternative stance she calls “acceptance.” This strategy entails moving forward from the incident on your own terms, recognizing the magnitude of the violation, but no longer allowing its unfairness to obsess you (possibly with the help of psychotherapy), and choosing a level of relationship with the offender that serves your best interest.

“This can be accomplished by the hurt party alone, even if the offender isn’t remorseful or willing to make meaningful amends,” she says.

**The Upside of Forgiveness**

A recent study suggests that, for women, depression is eased when accompanied by a tendency to forgive, even when the women feel unforgiven by others. Results for men in the study were more complicated, but for those who tended to forgive, feelings of depression were less than for men who tended not to forgive.

“When you forgive,” says the Mayo Clinic’s Dr. Sood, “it isn’t saying that the other person is right. It isn’t justifying or condoning what the other person did.” Forgiveness, Dr. Sood says, is acknowledging that you have decided to forgo anger and resentment, and that any future relationship with the offending party will be on your own terms.

**Unexpected benefits**

Michigan’s Dr. Ingersoll-Dayton says she has helped run forgiveness-therapy groups in which participants often have found it helpful to write letters describing their struggles with rage and
hurt. Rather than send the letters to the offending party, the group’s members read them aloud and discuss them.

For one woman in her 60s, this led to the realization that the person with whom she was most angry was herself. She began the program feeling angry at her emotionally abusive ex-husband, but after listening to the other group members, she realized she was most angry at herself for staying with him as long as she had, says Dr. Ingersoll-Dayton. This insight allowed her to begin forgiving herself for not being able to leave sooner.

To seek forgiveness, or to offer it, requires being prepared to be rejected or rebuffed, warns Dr. Spring. But, she believes, “the healing that takes place…is more deeply cleansing and healing than anyone can accomplish by themselves.” She emphasizes the importance of “creating opportunities to make good” and “having the courage to address and redress old injuries in a constructive and healing way.”

That can be especially pertinent as we age because time is ticking, she says. If you take the hurts and misunderstandings to the grave, Dr. Spring says, “no one profits.”

By contrast, taking a risk on forgiveness can yield unexpected benefits. A psychotherapist from the Northeast recalls how after her divorce, she and her ex-husband’s mother, with whom she had been quite close, didn’t speak for 20 years. Finally, upon learning that the older woman had lost her husband, the therapist decided to call her.

She was “thrilled,” says the therapist, who during the reunion that followed told the woman she was sad they were no longer friends. “I don’t really understand what happened,” she told her, “but I’d like to.”

It took five minutes to clear up the misunderstanding, she says, after which they began to see each other again regularly.

The reconciliation had a ripple effect, as well. The psychotherapist’s elderly father patched up his own relationship with the mother-in-law, so two octogenarians who had each lost a spouse regained an old friend.
And when the older woman died, she left a favorite sculpture to her former daughter-in-law, a gift personally delivered to her by her ex.

Forgiveness was long in coming, but arrived in time for all to benefit.

**Cholesterol drug may fight prostate cancer, scientists say**

COLUMBIA, S.C., April 14 (UPI) -- A drug designed to lower cholesterol stops the progression of prostate cancer, according to researchers at the University of Missouri.

The researchers say using the drug with or without chemotherapy treatments for prostate cancer could prove to be more effective while reducing the level of toxic chemicals needed to fight the disease.

Cholesterol is used to solidify cell membrane structures, and is synthesized by cancer cells for survival as they grow.

Based on the potential for tumors to become resistant to chemotherapy treatments, the researchers looked toward reducing cholesterol in cancer cells as a method of attacking the disease.

"Although tumor cells may initially respond to these therapies, most eventually develop resistance that causes prostate cancer cells to grow and spread," Dr. Salman Hyder, a professor of biomedical sciences at the University of Missouri, said in a press release. "Cholesterol also can contribute to the development of anti-hormone resistance because cholesterol is converted into hormones in tumor cells, therefore, these cholesterol-forming pathways are attractive therapeutic targets for the treatment of prostate cancer."

For the study, published in the journal OncoTargets and Therapy, the researchers tested the compound RO 48-8071 on human prostate cancer cells, finding it reduced cell growth and was shown in later studies to cause cancer cell death.

When injected into mice with human prostate cells, the compound slowed tumor growth in the rodents, researchers report.
Further studies with the compound need to be conducted, but the researchers said its effects in the lab show potential for another, less toxic method of prostate cancer treatment.

"Often, cancer patients are treated with toxic chemotherapies," Hyder said. "In our study, we focused on reducing the production of cholesterol in cancer cells, which could kill cancer cells and reduce the need for toxic chemotherapy."

University of Missouri scales back retirement benefits for future employees

By Koran Addo St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 13 hrs ago

When future employees of the University of Missouri retire they should not expect to receive health benefits.

The University of Missouri Board of Curators voted unanimously on Thursday to end subsidies for both health insurance and life insurance for employees hired after January 1, 2018.

The new rule also applies to current employees who will have less than five years on the job on that date.

The move is several years in the making as university leadership has grappled with how to pay for ever-increasing retiree health benefits.

A task force studying the issue for more than three years offered the plan as an option.

Without the change, the UM System would be looking at a more than $1 billion price tag for retiree benefits by 2020 and roughly $4.5 billion in 30 years.
“This was not an easy decision obviously because we value our employees, but this is unsustainable,” university spokesman John Fougere said. “We have to be always mindful of the financial stability of the university.”

Fougere called the plan a compromise.

Colleges in Georgia, California, Maryland and other states have either cut retiree benefits entirely, or scaled them back drastically.

“This provides continuing access to these benefits for all of our current retirees and as many of our current employees as possible,” Fougere said. “We feel like we reached a compromise that some of our peers didn’t.”

University leaders reached on Thursday declined to comment on how the board’s decision will affect employee recruiting and retention on the system’s four campuses in St. Louis, Columbia, Kansas City and Rolla.

University of Missouri curators cut health insurance subsidies for many future retirees

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 1:42 pm

ROLLA — Recent hires at the University of Missouri will not be eligible for subsidized health insurance after they retire, the Board of Curators decided Thursday as it enacted a plan to close an $808 million gap between liabilities and current funding.

The decision applies to anyone employed by the university for less than five years on Jan. 1, 2018. That group of about 5,380 faculty and staff includes MU interim Chancellor Hank Foley.
The $808 million liability is the expected cost of providing insurance premium subsidies to all current and future retirees if no changes were made in the plan, which currently covers 100 percent of premium costs. If no changes were made, interim Vice President for Human Resources Kelley Stuck said, the unfunded liability would grow to $6.2 billion over 35 years.

Even with the changes, current contributions would leave the plan underfunded by $333 million by 2050.

“This is not an easy decision, and it was not an easy recommendation for them to come to,” Stuck said, referring to the Total Rewards Advisory Committee, which studied retiree insurance and held 30 listening sessions and conducted 11 campus focus groups before recommending the plan.

The proposed changes divided current UM employees into four groups. Insurance support after retirement would not change for 7,800 current university pensioners and two of the current employee groups.

Along with eliminating insurance premiums for recent hires, the new rules would:

- Provide the current subsidy to faculty and staff who are older than 60 and have more than 20 years of service, a group of about 1,705 employees.
- Provide a contingent full subsidy for employees whose age added to their years of service is greater than 80 but who are not yet 60 or who have not completed 20 years of employment. That group of about 1,450 people would receive the full subsidy if they work past their 60th birthday and complete 20 years at the university.
- Give a subsidy of $100 for each year of service, up to $2,500 annually, toward the cost of health insurance for employees who currently cannot meet the age plus service standard of 80 but who will have worked for the university for at least five years by Jan. 1, 2018.

“The goal was to honor long service and not to disrupt people close to retirement,” Stuck said.

Providing benefits to university employees and retirees consumes 18.9 percent of the UM System operating budget of about $1.19 billion for the current fiscal year, or about $1 for every $3 in payroll costs.

Employees who would have less than a full subsidy may elect to retire before Dec. 31, 2017, to keep the benefits as they currently stand. Employees eligible for early retirement with a reduced pension also would receive a reduced subsidy for their insurance. Employees eligible for a full retirement, who are 65 with at least five years of service or 62 with at least 25 years of service, may do so and keep the subsidized insurance.

The benefits committee studied other large colleges and universities and found that UM is more generous than many. The University of Kentucky, Kansas State University and the University of Nebraska, for example, require retirees to pay the full premium for their health coverage, while some don’t offer coverage at all.
There were no votes against the plan Thursday, but the curators were not enthusiastic about the change.

“This is an area none of us as curators wish we had to address,” Curator Maurice Graham said.

UM System curators limit retirement medical benefits

AUSTIN HUGUELET, 14 hrs ago

ROLLA, Missouri — The UM System Board of Curators voted to limit retirement medical benefits for 84 percent of eligible employees Thursday in hopes of reducing a budget deficit projected to reach $4.5 billion by 2045.

Nearly 11,000 employees with at least five years of service will receive annual payments of $100 for each year of employment, up to a maximum of $2,500, instead of a larger subsidy.

New hires and those who won't have five or more years of service by 2018 — numbering about 5,400 — will be out of luck when it comes to annual payments.

For the remaining 16 percent of employees, the UM System will continue paying up to 73 percent of monthly premiums for employees ages 60 and up with at least 20 years of service, as well as those whose combined age and tenure add up to at least 80 years.

Kelley Stuck, the system's interim vice president for human resources, told curators that faculty, staff and retirees who designed the plan did their best to extend benefits to as many as possible, reward long-tenured employees and help older employees who couldn't adjust their retirement plans as easily as younger employees could.

Stuck said the UM System's offerings exceeded those of peer institutions such as Michigan State University and New Mexico University, which ended retirement medical benefits for all employees.
Interim UM System President Mike Middleton said the changes were necessary and didn't think they would deter new hires.

"Most universities have done away completely with retirement benefits, so anyone coming into the university system is about what they'd get anywhere else," Middleton said. "What we've tried to do is preserve some of the benefits for our long-term employees, and I think we've been successful."

Ben Trachtenberg, chair of the MU Faculty Council, said the response from faculty members varied based on their position and age, but he said many voiced concern for staff who make less money and have more physically demanding jobs than instructors.

Trachtenberg also mentioned that many staff positions at MU are similar to jobs in private colleges or companies.

"If you're in a clerical position, there's a lot of similarity between doing that job at the university and doing it at Shelter Insurance," he said. "And we've told people for a while, 'Maybe our salaries aren't quite as good as you might want here, but our benefits are good.' The less that's true, the more you're going to have to start competing on plain old salary."

**MU Curators discuss changes in retired employee health benefits**

ROLLA, Mo - The University of Missouri's Board of Curators met Thursday morning in Rolla to discuss changes for the upcoming school year.

Recent hires at the University of Missouri would not be eligible for subsidized health insurance after they retire and this would include anyone who was employed for less than five years on January 1st, 2018.
"Today’s action by the board changed the eligibility structure for current employees when they become retiree’s in the future." Vice President of Human Resources for the University told ABC 17 news today "We had a task force, and they recommended that we look at the retiree medical program for two reasons, one we were getting the best value for current retirees and the second was to consider the future of retiree medical insurance for employees."

A part of that group of retiree’s include Interim Chancellor Hank Foley.

The curators are scheduled to meet again Friday morning in Rolla.

**THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Missouri’s R. Bowen Loftin Doesn’t Really Have a Job — but He’s Still Getting Paid**

When he stepped down as chancellor of the University of Missouri at Columbia last year, R. Bowen Loftin made it clear that he wasn’t going away. “I am excited for my new challenge to lead the university’s research-facility development,” he said in a statement in November. His transition agreement, published by the Columbia Daily Tribune, enumerates two new positions for Mr. Loftin — director of research-facility development and director of research at the Tiger Institute for Health Innovation.

More than five months later, Mr. Loftin is definitely not satisfying the latter responsibility, and he may not be fulfilling the former, either. But he’s still getting paid the full chancellor’s salary, $459,000, at least until the end of this month.

The Columbia Missourian reported this week that Mr. Loftin’s position at the Tiger Institute fell through when the health-care company that jointly runs the center, the Cerner Corporation, made clear that it was not on board with the appointment. As for the broader role in research-facility development, here’s what a university spokesman, Christian Basi, told the newspaper:

“Since stepping down as MU chancellor, Dr. Loftin has been exploring the feasibility for advancing the development of research at the University of Missouri relative to his unique expertise and relationships.”
Mr. Loftin confirmed to the newspaper that no formalization of his status had been made in writing, but he is “hoping for that very soon.” He still holds a tenured faculty post in the department of physics and astronomy. He added that he is “doing things which are valuable right now to the university and which are valuable to me personally.”

Regardless of his status, Mr. Loftin will continue to be paid by the university after the end of the month, but at a reduced salary of $344,250 per year. He and his wife will move out of the chancellor’s residence.

Mr. Loftin is no stranger to lucrative postscripts. In the days leading up to his surprise resignation as chancellor of Texas A&M University, he negotiated with board members for better pay and perks, and earned $1.6 million in his final year there. He later told The Chronicle that the arrangement was “reasonably fair,” and that he “didn’t think there was anything wrong with it.”

DUTIES OF FORMER CHANCELLOR
Loftin's job at Missouri unclear

COLUMBIA, Mo. • Former University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin is preparing to move to a new role at the school but details of what he will be doing remain unclear.

Loftin stepped down as chancellor Nov. 9 after months of disagreements with former system President Tim Wolfe and discontent from faculty and students. Wolfe resigned the same day in response to student protests about his handling of racial issues.
He and his wife are preparing to move out of the chancellor’s residence April 29, and after May 1 his salary will be reduced from $459,000 to $344,000, plus other compensation, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported.

Loftin, a tenured faculty member in the Department of Physics and Astronomy, said he is eager to have details of his new job worked out “so we can all move on and go ahead.”

A university spokesman was vague about Loftin’s future. “Since stepping down as MU chancellor, Dr. Loftin has been exploring the feasibility for advancing the development of research at the University of Missouri relative to his unique expertise and relationships,” spokesman Christian Basi wrote in an email.

One possible job mentioned in Loftin’s transition agreement was research director at the Tiger Institute for Health Innovation.

But it was contingent upon Cerner Corp.’s approval. After the agreement was publicized, Cerner told the Board of Curators that it was not ready to approve the job for Loftin.

A job for Loftin has not been submitted to the institute’s Board of Governors, Cerner spokesman Dan Smith said this week. Loftin said he has not heard from the institute or Cerner since meetings in February.

He has had meetings for another possible role as director of research development for the university, he said.

“What I am doing right now I think is meaningful to the university and satisfying to me, so I am happy doing that,” Loftin said.
Legislative uncertainty stymies University of Missouri curators' tuition decision

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 11:26 am

ROLLA — The rhythm of the seasons means spring is the time for the University of Missouri Board of Curators to tend to tuition.

But at their regular April meeting Thursday, board members could do nothing but talk about it because they can’t be certain whether the warmth blowing from Jefferson City is a false thaw in an otherwise frosty year.

“Once we know what the state action is on our state budget, we will be talking to you about the tuition and fee piece,” UM System Vice President for Finance Brian Burnett said as he opened a discussion of budgets for the coming fiscal year.

Enrollment declines across the system are expected to reduce tuition revenue by $30.2 million on the four campuses combined. The Columbia campus is planning for a decline of 1,500, although that could grow, interim Chancellor Hank Foley told the curators. Each year, there is “summer melt,” Foley said, “where students we thought were coming melt away.”

MU officials expect a $32 million budget shortfall next year because of the tuition decrease — estimated at $19.8 million — and increased costs.

In September, former President Tim Wolfe promised Gov. Jay Nixon the university would go along with no tuition increase in exchange for a 6 percent bump in state support. Nixon brought leaders of two- and four-year institutions together, and they also took the pledge.

The Missouri House allowed less than 2 percent for increasing state aid to higher education and denied UM a share as lawmakers took out their frustration over campus turmoil. The House cut $8.6 million from the UM budget, taking $7.6 million from system administration and $1 million from the Columbia campus.

The Senate passed its plan for higher education spending last week with Nixon’s proposal intact. Although the Senate version includes a $1 million cut to system administration, it also gives UM about $27 million of new money.

The Senate budget plan would cushion but not replace the shortfalls because of enrollment declines. MU would gain $11.7 million, UMSL would receive a $3.74 million share and administration would recover $938,980 of the $1 million cut, based on this year’s allocations of state aid.
If appropriations do not meet Nixon’s plan, colleges and universities could increase tuition by as much as 0.7 percent under a state law tying increases to the rate of inflation. A tuition increase to the limit would bring in $7.2 million, Burnett said. Planned fee increases would add $7.8 million.

In-state tuition at MU is $10,586 this year and $25,198 for out-of-state students. The board approved housing and meal rates for the 2016-17 school year at its February meeting. At MU, the most common plan will cost $9,750, up 4.1 percent. Increases at the other campuses were 1.7 percent at UMSL, 2.3 percent at Missouri S&T and 2.6 percent at UMKC.

The lost enrollment and cost of new initiatives are causing the most budget pain for campus leaders in Columbia and St. Louis. At Missouri University of Science and Technology, Chancellor Cheryl Schrader told the curators, fall enrollment may set a record.

In Columbia, campus divisions are cutting $22 million and reserve funds will be tapped for $10 million more. Interim Chancellor Hank Foley ordered a 5 percent cut to campus divisions and a hiring and pay freeze. The result has included layoffs in operations and cutbacks in landscaping and janitorial services.

At UMSL, campus leadership is considering a plan to deal with a projected drop in enrollment that would cover a $15 million deficit by eliminating 85 positions, a 6 percent cut in employment.

MISSOURIAN

Legislative concerns stall UM System curators' budget talk

AUSTIN HUGUELET, 13 hrs ago

ROLLA, Missouri — Steve Knorr had plenty of numbers to share Thursday as he discussed efforts to douse frustration in the legislature and restore public trust in the UM System following protests and the resignation of the former president last fall: Twelve op-eds, 40 leadership trips to the General Assembly and 102 newspaper ads in 34 papers extolling the virtues and emphasizing all the good things the four-campus system does for the state.

But the UM System's vice president of university relations — a position charged with managing relationships in Jefferson City and Washington — couldn't say how much money the legislature would send the Board of Curators in May.
So Brian Burnett, the system's vice president for finance, couldn't make firm recommendations on tuition and fee hikes at the spring curators meeting Thursday at the Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla, Missouri.

In March, the Missouri House of Representatives cut $7.6 million from the UM System's budget and denied about $27 million in performance-based money suggested by Gov. Jay Nixon.

The Missouri Senate had better news for the system last week, offering about $34 million more than the lower chamber with just a $1 million cut to the system's line item.

But without a verdict from the conference committee on House Bill 2003 until the expected date of April 22, the curators were left to wait.

Missouri's public universities agreed in September not to raise undergraduate tuition for the 2016-17 school year in return for a 6 percent increase in state money, but that boost is still up in the air.

The curators could bring in $7.2 million via a tuition increase of about 0.7 percent — state law caps hikes at the rate of inflation — plus $7.8 million from fee increases, but most hopes rested with the legislature's goodwill.

Even if the Senate version passed as written, MU still faces a $32 million budget gap driven by a decrease in enrollment and retention for the fall 2016 semester.

MU Interim Chancellor Hank Foley announced a hiring freeze and a 5 percent cut to MU's 2017 general revenue budget in a March 9 memo, the College of Engineering said it faced $900,000 in cuts of its own the next day, and MU Operations on Friday said it would eliminate 50 positions.

Foley estimated that between 800 to 900 of the 1,500-student enrollment drop had to do with slowing high school graduation rates in Missouri and more lenient acceptance criteria in the University of Illinois system.

But he also vowed to make strides in recruitment.
"We saw a lot of this coming," Foley said. "But my sense is that there's been a shift, the shift is real, and it's not coming back quickly. We're going to have to invest in recruitment. We need to be in Texas more; we need to be in California. I need to get to Chicago and talk to parents and get them back in the fold, so to speak."

Curator Phillip Snowden asked Foley if MU's diversity efforts had made any measurable impact on enrollment of students of color; Foley said it was too early to tell.

But UM System Interim President Mike Middleton said in an interview that MU has a good pitch for students of color.

"The media has portrayed MU as perhaps a hostile place for students of color," he said. "I would submit that it's no more hostile than any university in the country.

"We are in the lead in making progress on the issues students of color face, so it's a good time for anyone interested in social justice to join us in the work we're doing."

Committee sets qualifications sought in new University of Missouri president

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 5:08 pm

ROLLA — The next University of Missouri president needs the acumen to handle political and business relationships, the business judgment to run a large organization and "a deft command of communications and public relations," according to the qualifications statement approved Thursday by the Presidential Search Committee.

The 12-point list that will form the basis of recruiting materials was approved unanimously by the committee that includes the Board of Curators as well as staff, faculty, student and alumni
representatives. The vote keeps the search, still in its early stages, on schedule to finish by the end of the year.

“Everyone feels it is important to finish as expeditiously as we can,” curator Maurice Graham said after the committee adourned.

With three vacant positions on the Board of Curators, two more to become vacant Jan. 1 and a new governor to be elected in November, taking the search beyond the end of the year could disrupt it to the point where it must start over. Those are important considerations, but the schedule should not control the search, Graham said.

“What is most important is the result,” he said. “That trumps the timing.”

The curators are seeking a permanent replacement for Tim Wolfe, who resigned Nov. 9 as international attention focused on the Concerned Student 1950 protests on the Columbia campus. Wolfe, who was a business executive without an advanced degree or experience as a college administrator, has been criticized for lacking the skills to work with academics and for a lack of public relations skills.

Interim President Mike Middleton has said on several occasions that he does not want the job permanently.

In public forums and in smaller groups, the qualifications that are required and those that are desired were discussed and compiled into the list presented Thursday.

Among the qualities being sought are:

- “The acumen necessary to cultivate key political, civic and business relationships essential to leading a public university system; demonstrated success in securing resources and support from public sector agencies.
- “Demonstrated business” judgment ”to foster continuous performance improvement and accountability, and to guide the operational effectiveness and organizational efficiencies within an organization.
- “A deft command of communications and public relations that enables the broad dissemination of the System’s vision to the broader communities it serves.”

The qualifications will be used by consultant Isaacson Miller Inc. as the basis for its package of recruiting materials that will go to potential candidates. Each of the summary points will have a detailed explanation of the qualities it describes, a document that will likely be 11 pages or more, consultant John Isaacson told the committee.

“This is our 50,000-foot view, if you will,” former curator Cheryl Walker, co-chair of the search committee, said. “The more detailed document will go out in our search.”

The next step for the committee will be to review and approve the recruiting packages. The search is set up to allay concerns raised during the search that selected Wolfe that few people
outside the curators had input into the selection. Under the structure established by the board, the committee will run the process through the point of selecting finalists, when the curators will make the final choice.

When the draft was being discussed, curator Phil Snowden of Kansas City, a former state senator, noted an omission — it did not state strongly enough that the new president should be able to work smoothly with lawmakers.

“I didn’t see anything in there where it specifically said dealing in the political realm or with the legislature or dealing with political bodies,” Snowden said.

After some minor changes, he was satisfied.

In a news release issued after the committee vote, co-chair Jim Whitaker of Kansas City said the qualifications statement shows the kinds of relationships the next president must be able to cultivate and maintain.

“These recommendations, from the discussions statewide, have really laid the groundwork for expectations in the next chief to lead the university forward,” Whitaker said.

Panel OKs needed skills of University of Missouri chief

ROLLA, Mo. (AP) — A committee leading the search for a new president of the University of Missouri system nagged by racial unrest says candidates must have "a deft command" of communications and public relations.

The Columbia Daily Tribune (http://bit.ly/1Vu2AgH) reports that the committee approved a list of qualifications for the successor to Tim Wolfe during a meeting Thursday in Rolla of the system's governing board of curators.

Wolfe resigned in November along with the Columbia campus' chancellor amid protests spurred by what activists said was administrators' indifference to racial issues on campus.
The 12-point list of qualifications approved Thursday also requires candidates for the system's presidency to have an acumen to handle political and business relationships, as well as the business judgment to run a large organization.

University of Missouri sheds the silence on student suicides

By Sarah Sabatke 8:30 am EDT April 14, 2016

Watch the story: http://college.usatoday.com/2016/04/14/university-of-missouri-sheds-the-silence-on-student-suicides/

As part of a national effort to raise awareness about suicides on campus, students at the University of Missouri laid out 1,100 T-shirts on the ground Tuesday to represent the approximate number of students who die by suicide each year.

The event, Shed the Silence, was part of the school’s Mental Health Awareness Week (April 11 – 15), during which the campus community is encouraged to wear lime-green — the color associated with mental health efforts — and lime-green ribbons.

The T-shirts came from donations and afterwards are donated to homeless shelters, according to its Facebook page.

More than 1,000 college students die by suicide each year, according to Active Minds from statistics compiled by Emory University.

Shed the Silence is an event created by Active Minds, a nationwide non-profit mental health advocacy organization that has 455 chapters at universities nationwide. It was created by former University of Pennsylvanina student Alison Malmon in 2003, in the hopes of fighting the stigma surrounding mental illness.
Tuesday’s event is a variation of Send Silence Packing, a traveling exhibit of 1,100 donated backpacks. The backpacks represent the number of students lost each year, and attached to each backpack is the personal story of an individual lost to suicide.

Need help? In the U.S., call 1-800-273-8255 for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

University of Missouri police warn students against disruptive protests

By Matthew Sanders

Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 2:00 pm

Officials at the University of Missouri are no longer allowing protests that disrupt campus operations.

MU police told a group of 15 student protesters Wednesday that they would face arrest or student discipline proceedings if their protests disrupted university business.

MUPD Major Brian Weimer, who followed the protesters as they went from the Student Center to Jesse Hall, said the university decided to start enforcing an existing policy against disruptions after receiving complaints from people on campus about past protests.

MU spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken cited Chapter 110 of the UM System’s Collected Rules and Regulations, which says the university can “set reasonable time, place and manner restrictions” on all meetings to prevent “interference with the right of students to obtain an education.”

Weimer said the university wants to balance free speech with employees’ rights to do their jobs without disruption.

The student protesters were part of a day of action against racism and student debt coordinated by the Million Student March. The nationwide protest sought tuition-free public college, cancellation of all student debt, a $15 minimum wage for all campus workers and divestment from private prisons by all higher education institutions.

Protest members could not be reached for comment by deadline.
Interim Chancellor Hank Foley, who was in Rolla for a meeting of the Board of Curators, said university leaders might have been unsure how to handle protests in the fall. UM System President Tim Wolfe resigned Nov. 9 after weeks of protests by the group Concerned Student 1950 over race issues.

Foley said he spent the past semester meeting with law school experts about how to handle protests, and they came to a consensus.

“We really need to have guardrails on some of the activities we were having,” Foley said. “I certainly heard from a lot of people who have found these protests to be scary or frightening.”

As an “old academic,” Foley said the protests did not disturb him, but he understands how some workers and students would be bothered by loud protests.

A statement issued last month by MU’s Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Protests, Public Spaces, Free Speech, and the Press said the university may restrict expression under certain circumstances.

Weimer said the demonstrators Thursday were respectful and listened to police commands to not conduct loud protests indoors.

UM System releases financial aid records of athletes to comply with subpoena

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System released the financial aid records of about 500 current and former MU athletes after being subpoenaed in connection with a federal antitrust lawsuit filed against the NCAA and most of its major conferences.

Federal law limits the nonconsensual release of a student's personally identifiable information, which includes the student's name, address and student number. Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, educational institutions can disclose personally identifiable information without student consent if doing so is necessary to comply with a subpoena.
At issue is a former NCAA rule that restricted athletics scholarships from covering the full cost of attending college. That changed on Aug. 1, when the NCAA began allowing — but not requiring — schools to cover the entire cost of college attendance.

The lawsuit was filed by a group of former NCAA football and women's and men's basketball student athletes in 2014 against the NCAA and other athletics conferences including the Atlantic Coast, Southeastern, Big 12, Big 10 and Pacific-12. The lawsuit seeks to tie the value of a so-called "full-ride" athletics scholarship to the actual cost of attending college.

MU was not named in the suit, but lawyers for the plaintiffs requested documents from schools in named conferences, seeking data to determine MU's basis for calculating athletics-related financial aid.

UM General Counsel received the subpoena Nov. 30 and was ordered to provide records including:

- rosters for the Missouri football team and men's and women's basketball squads.
- names of players who were awarded financial aid.
- how much each athlete received.
- for what purpose the money was allocated.

Current and former football and basketball players going back to the 2009-10 school year were sent a letter Jan. 19 outlining the details of their athletic scholarships, Pell grants and assistance from the Student-Athlete Opportunity Fund and Special Assistance Fund that would be released.

UM System spokesman John Fougere said Thursday in an email that the financial aid records were released Feb. 2 after no students requested to have their records withheld.
Fougere said the university had no additional comment to make about the suit beyond noting that "it's our understanding that similar subpoenas went to virtually all universities in the major athletic conferences."

The letter sent to former student athletes, written by UM System attorney Paul Maguffee, said students who didn't want their records released could file an objection in court.

Fougere said he thought the financial aid information would be sealed court documents.

UM attorneys objected to demands to provide names of athletes who received aid for psychological or psychiatric care, according to a list of FAQs accompanying the letter to students. Former athletes who received aid for mental health care were to be notified if their names were released.

Banks' living wills have a credibility problem

By David Nicklaus St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 7 hrs ago

Even as Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and other critics call for big banks to be broken up, the banks themselves are working on ways to do just that.

The banks don’t want to be broken up, of course, but the Dodd-Frank Act requires them to write what amounts to a living will. If a big, complex institution gets in trouble, regulators want to know how to separate the pieces in a way that doesn’t endanger the financial system.

The trouble is, the process of writing these liquidation plans has been slow and contentious. We learned this week that both the Federal Reserve and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. have rejected plans
from five of the eight biggest banks. Two other banks failed to get their plans approved by one of the two regulators, and only Citigroup appears to be close to having a satisfactory plan.

Citigroup was among the shakiest too-big-to-fail banks during the financial crisis, so we’ve made progress if regulators think it could be wound down during a future panic. On the other hand, Bank of America, Bank of New York Mellon, JPMorgan Chase, State Street and Wells Fargo all just flunked their living-will assignments.

Jack Tatom, a St. Louis-area economist who’s a fellow at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Applied Economics, Global Health and the Study of Business Economics, believes the failing grades are regulators’ fault.

“The biggest problem is that the regulators haven’t been very transparent about what they are looking for,” Tatom said. “The regulators are going to have to show more cards, provide more guidance.”

The five banks face sanctions if they don’t have satisfactory living wills by October. Presumably they’ll make every effort to meet that deadline.

Even then, though, the too-big-to-fail problem won’t be behind us. Just because a bank has a wind-down plan doesn’t mean it will work.

“The thing about contracts is that they’re imperfect and they can’t anticipate every eventuality,” says John Howe, a professor of finance at the University of Missouri. “I’m skeptical that this will work, but nobody really knows because we haven’t tried it.”

The other problem is political. Will a future administration take the risk of closing a big bank? Or, remembering how the bailouts of 2008 kept things from getting worse, will it try to engineer something similar?

“I can imagine that it might be politically unpopular to break up a bank if that might lead to at least temporarily higher levels of unemployment,” Howe says.
Essentially, Dodd-Frank dealt with the too-big-to-fail problem by emphasizing the word “fail.” The thinking behind the living wills is that every bank should be capable of being liquidated in a pinch.

Sanders proposes to solve the same problem by ending “too big,” but breaking up the big banks raises difficult questions. How do politicians decide the optimal size of Bank of America? Is it half the current size? A quarter?

A forced breakup might destroy jobs and hurt customers who value big banks for their extensive ATM networks and sophisticated corporate services.

The market isn’t saying that the behemoth banks are too big, but they do get an unfair advantage from the perception that they have Uncle Sam’s implicit backing.

Doing everything possible to dispel that perception seems like the right approach. The biggest challenge isn’t rewriting the banks’ living wills, it’s convincing the public that they can actually work.

KMOX-AM (Radio) CBS – St. Louis, Mo.

**Summer 2016 Could be Similar to Last Summer, MU Researcher Says**

A University of Missouri researcher is predicting a dry summer this year. Atmospheric sciences professor Anthony Lupo tells KMOX news he is basing his claim on a switch over from El Nino to La Nina.

Sexual Harassment Investigation Will Expand to Entire National Park System

National Park Service director Jonathan Jarvis has ordered a survey to determine if misconduct at the Grand Canyon represents a widespread problem

By: Elizabeth Shogren and Lyndsey Gilpin/High Country News

Apr 13, 2016

After falling under scrutiny about the way it has handled long-term sexual harassment at the Grand Canyon, the National Park Service is expanding its probe to see if the case represents a broader cultural crisis within the park system. “I hope that what occurred at the Grand Canyon is an anomaly, but I don’t know that,” Jonathan Jarvis, director of the National Park Service told High Country News in an interview at his office in Washington, D.C. “We have to find out if there are similar situations in other parts of the park system.”

At the urging of members of Congress, Jarvis plans to conduct a survey of the entire agency, though no details about the survey have been provided. Jarvis also sent a memo to his staff of more than 20,000 on March 15, requesting that employees with sexual harassment complaints reach out to supervisors. If they fail to get adequate responses, he urges them to appeal to other supervisors or their local equal opportunity contacts.

In January, the Interior Department’s Office of Inspector General released a report about sexual harassment by boatmen at the Grand Canyon’s river district for almost two decades. In February, the Park Service released a written statement that it had “zero tolerance” for sexual harassment. Since then, Grand Canyon superintendent Dave Uberuaga abolished the Grand Canyon River District, and intermountain regional director Sue Masica has been working on a larger plan to address sexual harassment through training and more active responses to complaints in the future.

The shocking investigation found women were repeatedly propositioned for sex, harassed by male boatmen and supervisors and retaliated against after reporting incidents to
management. The OIG report also stated that Park Service managers and the regional director were aware of these issues and failed to take action for years.

Some members of Congress accuse the Park Service of moving too slowly and failing to adequately punish the accused harassers and their managers. In a letter dated March 23, 2016, members of Congress pressed Jarvis to broaden the investigation and conduct an agency-wide survey. Rep. Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., says he and some colleagues other came up with the survey idea because they were impatient with the Park Service’s response.

“It’s scary that they didn’t take the initiative to do this on their own,” Gallego told HCN in an interview. “When you start hearing about sexual harassment, they tend not to be isolated incidents. A culture of sexual harassment and cover up tends to happen. This is why we want to do a survey, to draw out more information. A whack-a-mole policy to take care of the issue as it pops up is not a good system.”

Gallego adds that it’s “ridiculous” that no one has been fired following the January report. “Process should not be the excuse for inaction. How do female employees feel when someone found to be a sexual harasser is still employed? What message does this send?”

One of the perpetrators mentioned in the OIG investigation who has been accused by multiple women of sexual harassment and retaliation is still employed at the Grand Canyon.

Jarvis defends his agency’s response, stressing that federal employees have more protections than private employees. If the Park Service fails to follow proper procedures, it risks having employees reinstated. “We’re not done,” Jarvis adds. “I want to make sure we get this right.” Jarvis also suggested that Uberuaga may be among those disciplined. The OIG investigation shows that although Uberuaga received a report from an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission investigation in 2013, he sat on it for months. According to the OIG report, “no disciplinary or administrative action was taken against employees who were identified in the report as having violated DOI and NPS regulations.”

“(Uberuaga) made some mistakes on this issue. There’s no question about that. That also will be dealt with appropriately,” says Jarvis, a longtime friend of Uberuaga’s. “I’m not protecting him.” However, Jarvis declined to comment on which mistakes warranted repercussions.

**Debbie Dougherty is a professor of organizational communication at the University of Missouri and has spent years researching sexual harassment in organizational cultures like federal agencies. To get it right, she says, requires deep assessment of the culture and a willingness to hold harassers accountable. “They need to stop being so fearful of firing people, whether they’ve been there for a long time or not,” she says. “Zero tolerance isn’t something we just say, it's something we engage in.”**

When the OIG report was released in January, HCN put up a tip form so that federal public lands employees could share their experiences with sexual harassment. More than a dozen responses tell us that the Grand Canyon case is not an isolated incident. Macho cultures in
land management seem to have contributed to sexual harassment problems in a variety of these agencies. The failure to fire anyone has left many Park Service employees with low morale and little trust in the system. “I have experienced sexual harassment in the NPS first-hand, but the lack of response on the part of Grand Canyon managers and the retaliation I received for reporting it was almost more disturbing to me,” says Rachel Brady, a former river ranger at the Grand Canyon and one of the 13 complainants who prompted the OIG investigation.

For now, Jarvis’ focus is on the survey. He plans to solicit advice from the Pentagon, which regularly surveys the military about sexual harassment and assault. “When we conduct such a survey it has to be something that protects the privacy of an individual so that they feel that they can let us know; but gives me enough so that I can actually do something about it,” Jarvis says.

Elizabeth, a current Park Service employee who has worked at seven parks and experienced sexual harassment herself, is skeptical the agency will do anything beyond a survey. “Other than the Washington folks getting some ideas of how bad the problem is, it doesn’t mean they’re going to do much to implement change,” she says. (Elizabeth asked that her last name not be used because she worries about retaliation for speaking critically.)

According to Dougherty, understanding the complexities of sexual harassment and the institutionalized culture of a bureaucratic agency is not as simple as handing out a survey. Until recently, how the military handled sexual assault was a prime example of that. It took several scandals, in-depth interviews, and many surveys before the Department of Defense implemented strategic programs like hotlines, counseling, and persistent training to address the issue.

An effective survey doesn’t just ask people if they’ve ever been a victim or perpetrator of sexual harassment, Dougherty says. It would include questions about the culture of an organization to try to learn why sexual harassment is tolerated. Research shows focus groups with employees can help craft good surveys, for example, by learning the language men use to refer to women. “You have to identify the issues within the culture before you can make a survey,” Dougherty says.

Experts suggest the Park Service may not get a full picture of its sexual harassment problem until it comes down harder on perpetrators so that employees can trust that harassers, and not victims, will suffer consequences. “We need to learn how to better track who [perpetrators] are and eliminate them from the culture – that sends a message – but to do that, you have to believe women enough where they aren’t afraid to come forward and report,” Dougherty says.