University of Missouri-Columbia graduate assistants have voted in favor of forming a union.

The vote was 668-127.

The move almost certainly sets the stage for a legal fight with Mizzou’s administration over whether graduate assistants qualify as employees.

Graduate assistants are students pursuing advanced degrees. They also teach classes, grade papers and conduct research.

Similar to part-time instructors known as adjuncts, colleges and universities nationwide are increasingly relying on graduate assistants as a cheaper alternative to full-time professors.

As of last fall, Mizzou had 2,569 graduate assistants and 1,973 faculty members.

But within the UM System, graduate assistants aren’t recognized as employees.

“We are seeking clarity on whether graduate students have legal rights to organize,” spokesman John Fougere said. “There is no legal precedent for that in current Missouri law to make that determination.”
The issue of whether graduate assistants have standing to collectively bargain varies state-by-state and, in some cases, institution-to-institution.

Leonard Perez, an administrator with the National Labor Relations Board explains that, for private schools in particular, the issue has been unsettled for the past 25 years.

Right now, the NLRB doesn’t recognize graduate assistants as employees. “But that all depends on the political bent of the board at any given time,” Perez said.

For public schools, the NLRB has no input and the matter is generally decided by the state, he said.

In Missouri, both sides have hired lawyers and are resigned to fight it out in court — the UM System vs. the Coalition of Graduate Workers, a campaign affiliated with the Missouri National Education Association.

Joseph Moore, a graduate instructor in Mizzou’s journalism school, said the university leaders could avoid a legal fight if they want to.

“This vote represents the democratic will of grad students,” he said. “The onus is on the university to recognized this democratic result. The university absolutely has the authority to recognize graduate workers as employees; they are choosing not to.”

Moore said he’s optimistic graduate students will eventually prevail. “I don’t think it’s a question of if we will be recognized, but when,” he said.

The push for unionization grew out of an uproar late last summer when the university abruptly stripped them of their health insurance subsidies just before the school year started.

After a loud outcry and a number of protests, university leaders eventually restored the benefits through 2017. Later, the university agreed to increase pay — in the form of stipends — for some graduate assistants.
But, for some, the trust between the university and graduate assistants has been damaged irreparably.

“Our unofficial motto is: No more surprises,” said Anahita Zare, the outreach chair for the university’s Forum on Graduate Rights.

“Our ultimate goal is a contract that guarantees a salary and health care benefits,” Zare said. “We don't want anymore emails informing us 13 hours before school starts that we no longer have health insurance.”

University of Missouri graduate assistant vote favors union by big margin

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, April 19, 2016 at 8:19 pm

The Coalition of Graduate Workers claimed an overwhelming victory Tuesday evening when 84 percent of graduate assistant ballots showed support for creating a union at the University of Missouri.

About 30 percent of the approximately 2,600 eligible graduate students who hold assistantships voted Monday and Tuesday, co-chair Connor Lewis said. The next step is to organize union officials and formally ask the university to engage in collective bargaining, he said.

“It meets all the requirements by federal and state standards,” he said. “I think it was an impressive turnout give that there was last-minute attempts at voter intimidation.”

Lewis said he was referring to an email statement to the campus from interim Chancellor Hank Foley, sent April 8, that expressed surprise at the decision to hold the vote and questioned its legality and the legality of graduate assistant unions. In that email, Foley wrote that the university would actively discourage unionization.
“Should graduate student leaders decide to proceed with such a vote at this time despite the lack of consultation with MU administration, and should such a vote indicate that graduate students would like to pursue a union, university leadership will begin an educational campaign to ensure that all graduate students impacted by this decision will be knowledgeable about what this means at the University of Missouri,” Foley wrote.

MU spokesman Christian Basi wrote in an email Tuesday that the university would not comment on the election result.

Ballots were counted after polls closed at 6 p.m. Tuesday. The League of Women Voters oversaw the election. The coalition will now organize as a local union affiliated with the Missouri National Education Association.

Both the university and the coalition expect to go to court over the employment status of graduate assistants. Joe Moore, spokesman for the coalition’s unionizing effort, said the creation of a governing structure for the local and the formal request for collective bargaining would come before any legal action.

Foley on Friday referred to the balloting as a “mock election” and a “straw poll.” He also said he “doesn’t want to go to war with these kids” and that spurred turnout, said Zach Rubin, in charge of getting graduate assistants to the polls.

Skelly Skelton, a master’s student in religious studies, said he voted because of Foley’s comments. Previously, he said, he was indifferent to the election.

“It sounded very much like a parent who won’t let their child go to be a productive citizen,” Skelton said.

Graduate assistants began organizing to air their grievances after MU announced in August that IRS regulations meant it could no longer fully subsidize health insurance. That decision was reversed and the IRS has since announced it will allow the arrangement where the university buys individual plans for the assistants for one more year.

Graduate assistants receive a stipend and a tuition waiver in addition to health insurance. Foley also announced in November that minimum graduate stipends for doctoral students with a 20-hour assistantships would increase to $15,000 in August and $18,000 in 2017.

Those increases will cost the university an extra $3 million in the coming year and will likely cost another $3 million in 2017, Basi wrote in an email. Unavoidable increased costs along with an anticipated loss in tuition revenue are the reasons MU divisions have been ordered to cut $32 million, including a pay freeze, for the coming year.

Tenured faculty will not resent graduate assistants costing more while they absorb cuts, Rubin said.

“The faculty I know of are overwhelmingly supportive,” he said.
Co-chair Eric Scott said a union will be able to consolidate the gains made because graduate assistants were organized and help maintain their position in coming years.

“It feels like a real vindication to see that we won with such a powerful majority,” he said.

**Graduate workers vote in favor of unionization**

MU and UM System officials have said they will not recognize the election results.

**Graduate student workers made their support for unionization official Tuesday, with 84 percent voting in favor of authorizing the Coalition of Graduate Workers to represent them in collective bargaining with MU and the UM System.** The Columbia chapter of the League of Women Voters reported 668 graduate workers voted in favor and 127 voted against.

“This result is in spite of eleventh hour voter intimidation by the University of Missouri administration, and it unequivocally demonstrates that graduate student employees will not accept the status quo,” CGW wrote in a news release. “It is also the culmination of an academic year of tireless organizing during which the graduate student employees of the University of Missouri have provided inspiration to universities across the United States. If the University of Missouri is to move forward, it will be due in no small part to the resolute desire of graduate students to make the University of Missouri a better institution of higher education.”

Graduate student Jesse Hoff, a research assistant in the department of genetics, said he voted in favor of unionization to solidify graduate workers’ place at the table. He believes the union will help graduate students consistently have their voices heard and their rights respected.

“Grad students run the university,” Hoff said. “We do the research, we do the teaching and we need to make sure that we have full representation of what our needs are at all levels and across all departments of the university.”

The union authorization election came after a year of tension between graduate students and administration. In August, graduate students were informed 13 hours before their health coverage period ended that it would not be renewed. The insurance was quickly reinstated. The Forum on Graduate Rights and CGW were formed shortly thereafter, and CGW began planning for unionization in early September. They met with administration at the MU and UM System level several times throughout the year, according to previous Maneater reporting.

In an interview with the Columbia Daily Tribune on April 9, interim Chancellor Hank Foley called the election a “mock vote” and a “straw poll,” adding that seeing the results would be
important, but ultimately the university would look to the courts for a determination of whether
graduate workers are employees.

Graduate student Jennifer Lewallen said she voted yes after conferring with colleagues. She took
offense to Foley’s comments.

“That’s another reason I came out: for us to kind of stick it to him,” Lewallen said. “Graduate
students are not kids. We are adults. Many of us have kids of our own, and we do a lot of work
here at the university, and we do it happily, and we want to be recognized for the work that we
do as employees of the university.”

Although the vote proves the graduate workers’ support of unionization, CGW still needs the
administration to recognize the election results and the union itself before it can move forward as
graduate workers’ collective bargaining agent.

In February, interim UM System President Mike Middleton said the administration needed legal
clarity on the employee status of graduate students before the union could be recognized. CGW
is preparing to file a lawsuit in order to get a court ruling on their employee status.

The Missouri Constitution does not specify whether graduate workers are employees.

Graduate student Ben Daniels said he voted in part because of graduate student issues raised
after the health insurance scare in August. He cited lack of graduate student housing and
accessible, affordable child care as other factors in his decision.

“I’m lucky enough that I don’t have a child or a family right now, but I can’t imagine supporting
that on a stipend of $1,200 a month,” Daniels said.

In its news release, CGW said it looked forward beginning contract negotiations with the
university.

“We view the results as a clear mandate for in favor of graduate student employee collective
bargaining, and we call for the administration of the University of Missouri to duly recognize
these democratic results,” the news release read.

MU graduate student workers take another step toward unionization

LIVE PAGGIARINO AND REBECCA SMITH, 10 hrs ago
COLUMBIA — **MU doctoral student Jesse Hoff had been waiting a while to vote. At 8 a.m. Monday, he finally got the chance.**

Hoff, along with about 84 percent of the 795 MU graduate student workers who voted, were in favor of allowing the Coalition of Graduate Workers, an affiliate of the Missouri National Education Association, to exclusively represent MU graduate workers in collective bargaining. The vote was conducted Monday and Tuesday by the League of Women Voters, a neutral third party.

"We're thrilled, we're gratified. It's the democratic will of grad student employees," said Joseph Moore, member of the Coalition of Graduate Workers organizing committee.

A simple majority was enough to take the next step toward unionization, but workers will still have to wait for university administration to recognize them before they can negotiate.

And, it might take a bit of convincing.

In an email to the Graduate Professional Council on April 8, MU Interim Chancellor Hank Foley wrote, "any vote to unionize at this time cannot be considered binding or recognized by the university," according to previous Missourian reporting.

Missouri law states employees have the right to collectively bargain and form a union, but MU has never officially classified graduate students as employees — even though the Graduate Professional Council passed a resolution in February reaffirming graduate students' rights as employees.

At the UM System Board of Curators meeting April 15, UM System Interim President Mike Middleton said, "The problem is that in the state of Missouri it's not clear that students have a right to collectively bargain."

Moore was confident the university would recognize the results of the election. He said lawyers were prepared to file a lawsuit if they didn't, but he hoped it wouldn't get to that point.
"I don't see how they couldn't (recognize the union)," he said.

Graduate workers formed the Forum of Graduate Rights after MU threatened to end graduate workers' subsidized health insurance in August, according to the organization's website. The Coalition of Graduate Workers branched out of that group with the sole intent of unionizing.

While MU reinstated health insurance subsidies for the next school year, it has not fully met the forum's other demands for employed graduate students released after the of the health insurance cuts protest. They include:

- A livable wage.
- Full tuition waivers.
- Waived course fees.
- More affordable university housing.
- Affordable childcare and maternity and paternity leave.
- MU administrative transparency and graduate student input.
- An increase in diverse faculty and students and an administrative investment in diversity recruitment and retention.

Since the vote has been approved, the coalition should be able to represent graduate students in contract and insurance negotiations as well as other employment issues that may arise, according to the coalition's website. Collective bargaining would also mean that the coalition could advocate for the forum's demands.

Hoff said that graduate students should be able to have a say in changes regarding graduate student employees, particularly working conditions.

"It makes all the sense in the world to me," he said.
Graduate students are not required to join the union. Students who do choose to join will have to pay the monthly union fee. The Missouri National Education Association general membership fee is $9, but local dues have yet to be determined, according to the coalition's website.

**MU grad students "will not accept the status quo," vote to unionize**

**COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri graduate students have voted to unionize.**

According to a statement from the Coalition of Graduate Workers, 84 percent of voters in Monday and Tuesday's elections voted in favor of the coalition "acting as the exclusive representative of graduate student employees for the purpose of collective bargaining."

The coalition said the results of the elections demonstrate "graduate student employees will not accept the status quo."

MU Interim Chancellor Hank Foley sent an email to graduate students on April 8 saying the university could not recognize a graduate student union. Foley said the university had been working with them to improve communication, but the decision to vote on unionizing was made without consulting MU administration. Foley's email called the vote "surprising and disappointing."

The graduate students said the vote in favor of unionization is proof that they should be allowed to unionize.

"We view the results as a clear mandate in favor of graduate student employee collective bargaining, and we call for the administration of the University of Missouri to duly recognize these democratic results," the statement from the coalition said.

The statement continued with, "If the University of Missouri is to move forward, it will be due in no small part to the resolute desire of graduate students to make the University of Missouri a better institution of higher education."

The coalition also addressed events from fall 2015.
"It is also the culmination of an academic year of tireless organizing during which the graduate student employees of the University of Missouri have provided inspiration to universities across the United States," the statement read.

The graduate student coalition said, "We look forward to building a broadly representative bargaining team, and to beginning contract negotiations with the University."

Mizzou graduate workers approve unionization

COLUMBIA, Mo. - UPDATE: University of Missouri graduate assistants have overwhelmingly approved unionization.

84% of the votes tabulated from Monday and Tuesday were in favor of unionizing.

"We're hoping that the margin of victory, as well as what I believe to be a pretty impressive turnout, will convince them they need to recognize the union and begin collective bargaining," Connor Lewis, co-chair of the Coalition of Graduate Workers told ABC 17 News Tuesday night.

ORIGINAL STORY, 5:47 p.m.: Two polling locations on the University of Missouri’s campus closed Tuesday evening after a two-day graduate student vote on unionizing.

The League of Women Voters officiated the vote, with tables set up in both Memorial Union and the Student Center on Monday and Tuesday. The Coalition of Graduate Workers wants to formally unionize to bargain with school administration on issues such as pay and healthcare.

"We do research, we receive wages and pay taxes on [them], all as employees," Lirely McCune said. "We are mandatory reporters for Title IX. So we have all the responsibilities of employees, but not the rights."

The key right in this matter, Lirely McCune said, is collective bargaining. By joining with the Missouri National Education Association, the Coalition of Graduate Workers could negotiate contracts with university administration. Currently, graduate students receive a stipend, subsidized health insurance and a tuition waiver. Concern and confusion after the school took away, then returned, health insurance to graduate students served as a catalyst to pursue this route.
"We don't know if we're going to have insurance after next year," Lirley McCune said. "We don't know what's going to happen. We need a contract. Promises are not enough."

Joe Rulli, a second year graduate student pursuing a master's degree in music, told ABC 17 News he voted for the unionization. While he will not reap its benefits once he finishes school in a few weeks, he said his father benefited from the union established at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"My note can say something for future generations, even if it doesn't affect me directly," Rulli said.

Rulli added that a union would help clarify the students' requests of administration.

Interim chancellor Hank Foley said legal issues would stop the school from recognizing its graduate students as employees.

"Moreover, we have been working in good faith with this organization on key issues, including stipends, graduate student housing, and their desire to organize. In recent conversations, we indicated there was some question regarding the legality of unionization among graduate students, and until this question is resolved, it would be inappropriate to move forward. To this end, any vote to unionize at this time cannot be considered binding or recognized by the university," Foley wrote in an April 8 email.

As school year comes to a close, MU ramps up recruitment

MU has hired four more admission representatives for different regions of the country.

This past March, MU estimated that 1,500 fewer students would enroll this coming fall than last year, but the university is doing everything it can to boost enrollment for this fall and the future.

Interim Chancellor Hank Foley announced in a letter to staff that MU’s budget for next year would be $32 million short due to the enrollment decline. To combat the decreased enrollment, Foley announced a hiring freeze and a 5 percent budget cut across all departments.

However, the cuts won’t impact recruiting efforts, interim Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Barbara Rupp said.
“The hiring freeze and budget cuts have not affected recruitment, as it is understood that recruitment efforts must continue,” Rupp said in an email.

Rupp also said many individual schools have been reaching out to students with personal calls and emails and that more faculty and students have participated in their yield events this year. She anticipates that those programs will continue to be in place for the class of 2021.

Foley also announced in the letter that MU would be implementing several recruitment initiatives to attract more prospective students. Rupp said MU has hired four new admissions representatives who will be in Atlanta, Minneapolis, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Admissions representatives meet with prospective students at high schools and college fairs and develop recruitment strategies for their assigned area, according to MU’s Human Resource Services website.

“We already do some recruiting in three of those cities, but have never had the opportunity to have a full-time representative living there,” Rupp said. “We anticipate that this will help our non-resident recruiting efforts.”

In a March Faculty Council meeting, Rupp did not address whether the events of last semester impacted the decreased deposits but did admit that they may have played a role in the decreased enrollment projection.

“While we do not think that the campus unrest was the only factor, we certainly believe that it was a factor in our decreased deposits,” Rupp said. “This seems to be particularly true out-of-state, where many families were not able to come to campus, or return to campus, and relied only on what they were able to see in the media.”

But Rupp is confident that the recruiting efforts will yield positive results. She has been particularly encouraged by the faculty’s response to help recruiting.

“The faculty response has been very positive and they have been more than willing to assist with recruiting students to Mizzou,” Rupp said. “I expect that this will continue with more coordinated efforts next fall and beyond. Students seem to enjoy receiving a phone call or an email from faculty, and faculty have been delighted to have personal conversations with prospective new students.”

Journalism professor Berkley Hudson has been making some personal calls to prospective students. He said he has made calls and sent emails in years before, but this year was the first time that he did it formally for admissions. As a parent who has sent two kids to college, Hudson said he understands that fit is the most important aspect.

“My main job is to listen very carefully to what the prospective student is saying and to see whether there’s a possible fit,” Hudson said. “And if there is, my job is to answer questions to make sure that Mizzou is a great fit.”
While he did receive some information to talk about with students, Hudson said that he already knows what to say and what to listen for.

“(MU has) always been a great place to be a journalism student, but I’m saying right now, there ain’t no better place to be a journalism student,” Hudson said. “The world knows who Mizzou is now. They think whatever they think, but we’ve got their attention. We have the opportunity to be a global leader in race relations, teaching, service and economic development.”

**University of Missouri backs review commission as alternative to cuts**

By SHANNON SHAVER Missouri Digital News

Tuesday, April 19, 2016 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — The University of Missouri, fighting to maintain current funding and a share of any new money for higher education, on Monday threw its support behind the idea of a commission to study how well it is working.

“We’re always open to good ideas,” university lobbyist Marty Oetting told the House Committee on Government Oversight and Accountability. “I think the board is open to that.”

On Monday, state Rep. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, presented the resolution — already approved in the Senate — to the committee.

The resolution would create the University of Missouri System Review Commission to review the university’s rules, structure, degree programs and other activities. The General Assembly would then consider the result of the commission’s recommendations when lawmakers decide how much money to give the university next year.

Oetting said the university would not be opposed to hearing suggestions from the commission.

“Whether it’s this commission or any other group that comes forward with recommendations or observations of what happened last year and how the university could handle it better, I think they’re open to those suggestions,” Oetting said.

The university’s appropriation for the coming fiscal year is uncertain because the Missouri House cut $8.6 million from this year’s allocation. The House also froze the university out of any
new support. The state Senate cut only $1 million and allows the university about $27 million of the $55.8 million set aside for increasing state aid to public colleges and universities.

Senate Appropriations Chairman Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, sponsored the resolution and argued that the university’s budget support next year would depend on accepting the commission’s recommendations.

While university officials spoke in support of the resolution, committee members from both parties expressed concerns. Rep. Tom Hurst, R-Meta, said he is worried the commission would not inspire any change.

“When the Board of Curators basically sat back on their hands and let it happen, now what we want to do is appoint another commission. Do they have any teeth?” Hurst said. “People are tired of it. I went to the University of Missouri. I saw things happen when I was there; they haven’t gotten better.”

If the commission doesn’t spark any action, Hurst said, the blame might fall on the legislature.

“I’m not against your idea. The fact that it costs some money to do it, I have a little qualms with,” Hurst said. “Is it just going to be another committee that, if something does happen, they say, ‘Well, you’re the one that set up the committee to oversee it’? So not only then do they not take the blame, they force it on us.”

Some Democratic committee members were concerned that the resolution did not have specific criteria for the appointment of commission members.

“I don’t see anything in here that requires any sort of diversity, any number of women, any number of persons of color,” said Rep. Gina Mitten, D-Richmond Heights.

The resolution says the commission would include eight members — four appointed by Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard, R-Joplin, and four appointed by House Speaker Todd Richardson, R-Poplar Bluff.

“The idea was to bring broader, additional perspectives to the table to help this be as effective and productive as it can be,” Rowden said.

Rep. Courtney Curtis, D-Ferguson, wanted to know whether recommended changes actually would be made.

“What is the likelihood that these recommendations that are compiled will actually be adhered to and implemented in a swift manner?” Curtis asked.

Oetting said the university would take ideas that have merit and “look at those very quickly.”
Student pleads guilty to making online threats toward Mizzou's black community

A man charged with posting threats online last year that he would shoot black students and faculty at the University of Missouri's Columbia campus has changed his plea to guilty.

Hunter Park, 19, admitted Monday to making a terrorist threat. Authorities say the threats showed up Nov. 10 on the anonymous location-based messaging app Yik Yak.

Brouck Jacobs, an assistant Boone County prosecutor, said there was no plea deal. He said the prosecutor's office has requested a three-year prison sentence.

A university police officer says Park admitted he wrote the postings when confronted in his dorm room at a sister campus in Rolla. The school said no weapons were found.

One post included a threat to "shoot every black person I see," while another threat said: "Some of you are alright. Don't go to campus tomorrow." The message seemed to echo one that appeared on the website 4chan -- a forum where racist and misogynistic comments are common -- ahead of the deadly campus shooting at an Oregon community college in October.

The threats also came amid turmoil and protests at the University of Missouri that activists said were spurred by administrators' indifference to racial issues on campus. Two other people also were charged with school shooting threats during the unrest; one has pleaded guilty and the other is awaiting trial.

Park's attorney, Jeffery Hilbrenner, didn't immediately return phone messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. Sentencing is set for June 16.
Man pleads guilty to threatening to shoot black Mizzou students and faculty

The threats came amid turmoil at Missouri as students protested the handling of racial issues.

The prosecutor is seeking three years in prison for Hunter Park, 19.

COLUMBIA, Mo. – A man charged with posting online threats to shoot black students and faculty at the University of Missouri’s Columbia campus has changed his plea to guilty.

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Authorities say the threats showed up Nov. 10 on the anonymous location-based messaging app Yik Yak. A university police officer says Park admitted he wrote the postings when confronted in his dorm room at a sister campus in Rolla.

The threats came amid turmoil at the University of Missouri as students protested the handling of racial issues.

There was no plea deal.

Assistant Boone County prosecutor Brouck Jacobs says he’s seeking a three-year prison sentence. Park’s attorney didn’t immediately return phone messages from The Associated Press seeking comment.

Sentencing is set for June 16.
MU to host TEDxMU 'Shaping the Future' conference Saturday

COLUMBIA — MU students will host their second TEDxMU Summit on topics including local and world news, social justice, activism and bettering oneself from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

This year’s theme is "Shaping the Future: The Power of a Single Idea." Speakers include:

**9:30 to 11:15 a.m.**

- Adam Casey, founder of the non-profit charity, I Do It For Her: "Why You Should Fall Recklessly in Love"
- Kyle Gunby, MU student: "Improv & Ideation: Why Are We Most Creative When We Lie?"
- Jon Chin, founder of Share Meals: "Share Meals: How Hunger Gave us Purpose"
- Kaylan Daniel Holloway, founder of iGUIDE Leadership Team: "Implementing a Social Justice Pedagogy in the 21st Century School: Developing Consciousness & Achievement while #StayingWoke"
- Hayden Kristal, MU student, "The Importance of Intersectional Accessibility In Activism"

**11:25 a.m. to 1:45 p.m.**

- Stephanie Shonekan, chair of MU's Department of Black Studies: "Place in the Sun: Where There’s Hope for Everyone"
- Lincoln Sheets, an MU physician and medical researcher: "Using Big Data to Predict Health Problems Before They Start"
- Yixin Zhang, MU student: "How to Give Up"
• Anurag Chandran, MU student: "Understanding the Global Jihadist Nexus: ISIS, Al Qaeda and Open Source Intelligence"

• Samantha Tellatin, MU student: "Cover Crops: An Idea Worth Planting?"

This event is modeled after the TED conference, a nonprofit organization that holds recorded conferences where people share their story in videos later posted online. On Saturday, attendees will listen to talks, engage in a networking session and interactive activities designed by the TEDxMU team to spark conversations.

Tickets can be purchased in advance at the MSA/GPC Box Office located in MU Student Center for $40. The price allows access to the conference, a personalized name tag and meals. Tickets are not sold at the door.

Questions can be directed to the TEDxMU Curator, Chuka Emezue, at 573-999-2594 or cnec65@mail.missouri.edu.
Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression said the campus-themed Muzzles respond to an "epidemic of anti-speech activity" at colleges and universities in 2015 and continuing.

"Never in our 25 years of awarding the Jefferson Muzzles have we observed such an alarming concentration of anti-speech activity as we saw last year on college campuses across the country," according to the center's statement Wednesday that announced the "winners."

Typically, presidents, branches of government and public school administrators have won in past years for egregious efforts to censor. But higher education provided such fertile ground that the Jefferson Center said it divided the Muzzles into various categories: censorship of students, censorship by students, threats to academic freedom, and so on.

All told, 50 colleges and universities were cited — a feast to chew on but dispiriting as well, said Josh Wheeler, director of the center. Past Muzzle recipients received a T-shirt with Jefferson's likeness and a black rectangle over his mouth, but Wheeler said that wasn't practical this year because of the large number of recipients.

"When we have a large selection of nominations, I suppose it's a good thing for the program, but it's a sad commentary on the state of free speech in our country today," Wheeler told The Associated Press an interview. "Frankly we are as puzzled as anybody as to the reasons why there is this wave of anti-speech activity on college campuses."

**At the University of Missouri, a now-fired assistant professor made the Muzzles cut for her call for "some muscle" to remove a student photographer from coverage of a public demonstration.**

And at Yale University, the center said, it took to task those who issued an advisory to students about Halloween costumes. That said, professors and others came to the defense of instructors who questioned the student advisory on costumes.

The center said certain colleges and universities have embraced the concept of "trigger warnings" and other measures aimed at shielding students from any slight. "If there is any place where intellectual freedom and debate ought to be wide open and robust, it's the college and university campus," Wheeler noted.

The higher education offenders range from elite schools, such as Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, to community colleges and public and private institutions nationwide.

At Smith, students sought conditions from reporters seeking to cover demonstrations, with the aim of supporting their movement, the center said.

Among other "Muzzle" winners and the "offenses" the center cited:

— The University of Oklahoma, which severed ties with a fraternity and expelled two students shown in a video singing a racist chant. The center said President David Boren's actions — albeit widely popular — were unconstitutional.
— The University of California, which encouraged a system-wide campaign to combat "microaggressions" on its campuses.

— Students at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, for demanding protection from being exposed to sexist and derogatory comments on campus. When the administration declined, the students filed a federal Title IX complaint against the state university.

— Students at Amherst College in Massachusetts who asked the private school to issue a public condemnation of students who placed posters with the words "All Lives Matter" and "Free Speech" on campus. They also wanted the students to undergo extensive "training for racial and cultural competency" and disciplinary action.

The center was, however, able to recognize some schools that took a stand against censorship.

The University of Chicago, for instance, issued a policy statement that guaranteed "the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge and learn," rejecting the role of a university to shield students from ideas and opinions. Princeton, Purdue and American adopted similar guarantees.

MISSOURIAN

Bond reduced for former MU physician in stalking case

RACHEL TREECE, 14 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The bond of a former MU physician who faces charges of aggravated stalking was reduced Monday afternoon to $25,000.

Forty-three-year-old Gregory McClain, a former surgeon with MU Health Care, was charged with two counts of aggravated stalking on April 8. His bond was originally set at $100,000 cash, according to previous Missourian reporting.

Circuit Judge Kevin Crane reset the bond in a hearing Monday afternoon.

McClain was arrested on suspicion of making threatening phone calls to a former coworker and her supervisor.
In addition to reducing the bond, Crane said McClain was not to contact either of the people who reported being stalked. McClain must also keep the court updated on his current address.

McClain was not in court Monday afternoon. As of 2:45 p.m. Tuesday, he was not listed as an inmate in Boone County Jail, according to Boone County Sheriff's Department website.

A press conference is scheduled to be held at 4 p.m. Wednesday at Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital to address the stalking allegations. McClain is expected to speak.

**How (Not) to Hide a Scandal**

There’s a fine line between a marketing campaign and a cover-up. The attempt by UC Davis to get its pepper spray incident off the top of Google searches is a case in point.

Google “University of California, Davis.” What do you see? Who controls what you see?

Until last week, here’s what you wouldn’t see: images of a police officer, back in 2011, pepper spraying a group of student protesters. The students are assembled peacefully, sitting in a line on the ground, heads ducked.

Once the video started circulating, the university tried to control the fallout. Over the last five years, it paid contractors at least $175,000 to scrub references to the controversy from the Internet.

But last week, the PR campaign backfired. On the afternoon of April 14, the top search result for "UC Davis" was the headline from The Sacramento Bee, the paper that broke the story through open-records requests: “UC Davis spent thousands to scrub pepper-spray references from Internet.”

Now, lawmakers and students are calling for Chancellor Linda Katehi’s resignation. They see the spending as an ethical breach: in the midst of budget cuts, how can the university use public funds to smooth over a scandal?

“As an institution, our goal is to educate students about the past,” said Brandon Buchanan, a sociology graduate student and participant in the student movement #firekatehi. “This incident reveals that the university has made it its goal to try to forget the past.”
Most colleges have marketing budgets, and many spend time refining their brands, recruiting new students and trying to boost their rankings. But in the public eye, there’s a fine line between a PR campaign and a cover-up, between emphasizing the positive and hiding the negative. While many recognize the value in spending money to promote a college or university’s message, spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to bury a controversy can seem disingenuous, if not outright exploitative.

“This movement toward Internet management is happening at the same time that they were saying there was no money,” Buchanan said. “They’re willing to spent $175,000 when they’re cutting money everywhere else.”

**The New First Impression**
For PR experts, crisis management is about redemption. Mistakes last forever on the Internet, and the right marketing campaign can offer a way forward.

“People can be unfairly stained by damaging press for years after the event,” Darius Fisher, president of the online reputation management company Status Labs, said in an email. “Without the means to tell their side of the story, they’re stuck in an unfortunate situation where the world continues to shape its opinion based on old news.”

**Fisher would know; his company worked with former University of Missouri professor Melissa Click, who became the subject of her own national controversy earlier this year. But while Click is an everyday person turned public-shaming target, UC Davis is a public institution, which uses public funds, dealing with one of the biggest controversies it’s faced in recent years.**

For UC Davis, reputation management wouldn’t be enough, Fisher said. Even so, he believes there’s nothing inherently wrong with paying for these kinds of services -- at least in less troubling circumstances. After all, bad press harms a university’s ability to attract new applicants.