MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

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COLUMBIA — After months of silence and frustration following the Concerned Student 1950 protests in November, some student leaders at MU want to set the record straight.

One group, known as the Social Justice Collaborative, says it has been working in the background since September to increase equity at MU. The group's members believe their careful, deliberate efforts were hijacked when Concerned Student 1950 staged vocal public protests.

Another group, MU Policy Now, organized the night before Tim Wolfe resigned as University of Missouri System president. The group campaigned for Mike Middleton as interim president and pushed for formal policy changes to boost inclusiveness on campus.

Since then, students in both the Collaborative and MU Policy Now say they have continued to push for change. They emphasize that they are not anti-Concerned Student 1950. Rather, they object to what they say is the prevailing narrative in the news media: that Concerned Student 1950 — still active, but much quieter now — was solely responsible for the shifts on campus after MU received nationwide attention.

These are their principal complaints:

- The Concerned Student 1950 group acted rashly and deterred progress by protesting without coming up with strategies or solutions.

- Systemic racism does exist, but the necessary change could and should have happened without crippling MU.
• The MU chancellor, who oversees the MU campus, should have been the focus of the protests — not the UM System president, who doesn't manage daily campus operations.

• The road to a more inclusive campus should be paved with policy change — not just protest.

Some student leaders said Concerned Student 1950 has never understood how higher education institutions work.

"Higher education is like an oil tanker. It can't turn on a dime, and it's intentionally made that way," said Kristofferson Culmer, who chairs the Forum on Graduate Rights' steering committee. "It changes gradually. To expect change tomorrow or next year is a bit ridiculous."

Challenging the narrative

These student leaders have been charting a course toward a more equal campus without fanfare. They scuppered their original plans, but they've continued their work behind the scenes.

"The issue is not whether racism exists," said Evonna Woods, a member of both the Collaborative and MU Policy Now. The question is about Concerned Student 1950's "strategies and the level of support they have. ... It diminishes our ability to get anything done on this campus and be effective with our policy. We can't implement it because they have people hyping them up."

MU Policy Now member Brittani Fults said the large profile of Concerned Student 1950 eclipsed existing communication efforts with MU and the UM System.

"It was treated like we had to get permission from Concerned to do our own thing," she said. "... Like you needed them to get something done. To get legitimacy, or to get people to come."

Maxwell Little, one of the original 11 Concerned Student 1950 members, said such criticism was to be expected.

"With any revolution, there is going to be backlash from individuals who wish they were in the limelight," he said.
Little acknowledged that the fight against inequality had been waged prior to November — citing his own June 7, 2015, Facebook post about not buying MU apparel or tickets to athletic events until more black administrators were hired. He disagreed that Concerned Student 1950 hijacked anything.

"To hijack is to own," he said. "You cannot own a movement."

Even so, these student leaders believe that their momentum was co-opted.

Outgoing Graduate Student Association President Kenneth Bryant Jr. said he and others were frustrated because undue credit was given to the Concerned Student 1950 protests.

"The most important thing to take away: Work was being done prior to those fireworks, among student leaders and administrators," Bryant said.

"This whole meme about, 'Nothing was happening until they pop up and make their fireworks and change everything' is a false meme. It’s not accurate. That is the enduring frustration among people in the know."

**Working together**

The Collaborative began to organize eight months ago with a strategy to glue disparate voices into a unified activist front. The idea was to consider race, and then some.

The group's founders reached out to student groups on campus, asking for no more than two representatives from any group interested in reducing inequalities on campus. The group included representatives from the graduate student rights movement, Mizzou for Planned Parenthood and about 30 other student organizations.

The Collaborative shares attributes with Concerned Student 1950 — no officers, a mix of graduate and undergraduate students, a sense of urgency, a list of grievances and the belief that racism is real and something needs to be done.
Differences between the two groups developed over the tone and planning of their efforts. There was also overlapping membership. MU graduate students Jonathan Butler and Reuben Faloughi originally belonged to both the Collaborative and then to Concerned Student 1950.

Tensions within the Collaborative led Butler and Faloughi to splinter from the group in October, right about the time of the Homecoming Parade.

Both declined to be interviewed for this story, and both have disaffiliated from Concerned Student 1950.

Collaborative members were taken aback when members of the Concerned Student 1950 blocked a red convertible bearing Wolfe in the parade.

The group's members voted overwhelmingly not to go after Wolfe. They instead focused on getting the attention of Loftin, the more local of the two administrators.

"Strategically, it didn’t make sense," Culmer said.

"The question arose: Do we need to focus on Wolfe because he's the guy on top? He's two large steps removed from what happens on campus. Ultimately, it's the chancellor who you need to address this to."

Culmer said Wolfe didn't handle the situation well, but Wolfe didn't deserve to be removed or "painted as a racist white guy who didn’t care about black people."

"He’s a middle-aged white man who doesn't know what white privilege is," Culmer said, "like 95 percent of white people in this country."

**Picking up the pieces**

Students in the Collaborative continued to work on a list of grievances and policy suggestions and meeting with administrators after the parade. Their plans ran aground when Butler announced that he would stop eating.
Angela Haeny, former president of the MU Association of Black Graduate and Professional Students and also a member of the Collaborative and MU Policy Now, said the group "wanted to postpone until spring, wait until the hunger strike blows over and start strong again."

Butler’s weeklong strike ended up being less of a breeze and more of a tornado. Wolfe resigned Nov. 9, and Loftin said hours later that he would step down as chancellor. Later that week, Middleton was named interim system president, and Hank Foley became MU’s interim chancellor.

"So, suddenly, activism becomes cleaning up the mess of the activists," said Alex Howe, a member of MU Policy Now and the Collaborative and treasurer of MU’s Graduate Professional Council.

The Collaborative does not plan to finish its list of grievances or to present its work to administrators. Bryant cited an atmosphere of "general demonstration fatigue."

"I think releasing that document would be superfluous," Bryant said. "... The purpose was to start the conversation."

The student leaders have turned some of their attention to The Working Group — a task force established by Chuck Henson, interim chancellor for diversity, inclusion and equity. The Working Group was a weekly conversation among student leaders and Henson, who called the group's seven meetings "a great success."

"At the meetings the students learned what the Division (of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity) was doing and had an opportunity to talk about how and why things were being done," Henson said in a statement from the MU News Bureau. "... Importantly, the Working Group created a space for a very civil exchange of viewpoints and a safe environment for dissenting voices to be heard."

**Reasons for silence**
At first, the student leaders had a simple and dramatic reason not to speak out: Butler's life was at stake.

Jordan Hoyt, a Collaborative member and Mizzou for Planned Parenthood co-organizer, said the group would not have helped by voicing dissent during Butler's hunger strike.

Afterwards, there were other repercussions to consider, such as increased attention from lawmakers in Jefferson City. The legislature eventually punished the university system with a $3.8 million funding cut.

"You cannot antagonize a conservative legislature in an election year in a conservative state. That's problematic," Bryant said.

Another reason these student leaders remained quiet was to avoid fueling an us-versus-them narrative.

"We felt like the media would eat up controversy between groups," Haeny said. Despite disagreements concerning tactics, "the issues were real."

To avoid having a public disagreement between the groups be taken out of context was also cause to stay quiet. Otherwise, Culmer said "It becomes: 'Black students say racism doesn't exist.'"

Several of the student leaders who are black said they felt pressured to not violate racial norms and to not "break the black code."

"Like, we couldn’t show white people that we don't all think the same way," Haeny said.

Woods said there was a sense that working strategically within a system wasn't considered radical enough. If you weren't a visible, vocal demonstrator, you weren't down with the movement.

"It was about being a certain kind of black," Woods said.
What kind of black?

Culmer raised his right fist in the air, and said:

"That kind of black."

Mizzou students are planning on suing the university over a union vote

COLUMBIA, Mo - University of Missouri graduate assistant students plan to sue the University over a union vote.

They decided to unionize three weeks ago, but MU administrators are refusing to recognize the vote.

In the letter that lawyers for the university sent denying the union, pointed out they consider the grad assistants students and not employees.

With the school year coming to a close, graduate students have agreed this one has been quite eventful. It began with the university first cancelling, then restoring their health benefits after push back from the students.

They held strikes in November, and then last month the grad student assistants voted overwhelmingly to unionize.

The letter that was sent had three legal issues that the lawyers said caused them to make their decision.

1.) "That the graduate student assistants are in fact students and not employees."

2.) "Assuming for the sake of discussion that the graduate teaching assistants are employees, the University would require that any Union representation election be conducted under a procedure established by the University."
3.) "The university prefers to maintain a direct relationship with the graduate students."

The co-chair of the Coalition of Graduate Workers, Eric Scott says the third point is absolutely absurd, "The union is made up of graduate student employees, I'm a graduate system employee."

Scott is positive that the lawsuit will be successful and will help future grad assistants.

The exact date for the lawsuit to be filed is unknown but it will be within the next two weeks.

The university sent a statement saying that they have heard their student's concerns and will increase their minimum payrolls, keep the health insurance plan, and are in the works of creating a better housing plan for the graduate assistant students.

Most students are saying that this is not enough.

**Graduate assistants to file lawsuit against MU**

COLUMBIA - **The Coalition of Graduate Workers said it plans to file a lawsuit within the next day or two after receiving a letter from the university saying it will not recognize the results of a graduate students' vote to form a union.**

The letter was from the university's lawyer Friday saying the university will not recognize the results of the April 18 and 19 election.

The election showed 84 percent in favor of the Coalition of Graduate Workers acting as the exclusive representative of graduate student employees for the "purpose of collective bargaining."
Connor Lewis, the coalition's co-chair, said the university's position is that graduate students are not employees capable of unionizing.

The Coalition of Graduate Workers said it will file the lawsuit in the Boone County Circuit Court.

Lewis said the coalition had been hoping it would not come to that.

"We were disappointed the University chose to go down this road," Lewis said.

MU leaders to conduct campus budget forums

University of Missouri interim Chancellor Hank Foley, Provost Garnett Stokes and Vice Chancellor of Finance Rhonda Gibler will lead two campus forums on budget cuts designed to balance spending with revenue as tuition revenue declines with lower enrollment.

The first forum is set for 1-2:30 p.m. Wednesday in the Jesse Wrench Auditorium in Memorial Union. The second will be held from 8-9:30 a.m. Friday in the Mark Twain Ballroom in Memorial Union. The university also will broadcast the Friday forum online.

In February, Foley ordered a 5 percent cut to all recurring general fund spending when early projections showed there would be as many as 900 fewer incoming freshmen and 1,500 fewer students overall in the fall. More recent projections put the decline in incoming freshman as high as 1,400, with the total decline unknown. MU enrolled 6,191 new freshmen last fall and 35,448 students overall.

The cuts ordered by Foley, which included a hiring and pay freeze, were planned to offset $20 million of a $32 million shortfall.

Gibler will provide an overview of the university's budget process and discuss the fiscal year 2017 budget during the forums before she, Foley and Stokes respond to questions.
The University of Missouri Board of Curators will cap a tumultuous school year by holding a one-day development meeting Wednesday with an agenda that allows members to discuss any issue on their minds.

The meeting is set to begin at 10 a.m. at the Cedar Creek Conference Center in New Haven, a town of about 2,000 residents on the Missouri River between Hermann and Washington.

The public notice of the meeting was issued at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, 1½ hours before the deadline set by the Sunshine Law.

The room for the meeting was booked April 27, UM System spokesman John Fougere wrote in an email.

“We have these approximately once a year, where the board will schedule a development session, taking more time to focus on pressing issues than can be afforded in a regular board meeting,” Fougere said.

The board’s last development session was held in September in Branson. There was no development meeting in 2013 or 2014.

The agenda for Wednesday’s meeting gives notice that the discussion will focus on “board best practices,” which Fougere said will be about how the board can fulfill the university’s mission.

“It is for the board’s benefit to think creatively,” Fougere said. “They don’t have the opportunity to do this in a regular meeting.”

Since the September development session in Branson, the board has held four regular and 10 special meetings.
Missouri lawmakers, businesses disagree on approach to pay equity

JEFFERSON CITY — Researchers generally agree that women, on average, earn less money than men. However, fierce disagreement surrounds proposed plans to bridge the gap.

Some promote executive mandates. Others push for further legislation. Many call for no legal action whatsoever, arguing that pay inequity is best addressed by employers themselves.

But even against these sharp, procedural differences, many Missourians still hold a common view that the gender wage gap not only persists, but must somehow be addressed.

"We need to ensure that all Missourians are getting a fair shake and an equal opportunity to achieve the American Dream," Gov. Nixon said in a press release after signing an equal pay-focused executive measure late last year. "Shortchanging 50 percent of the workforce is bad for women, it’s bad for families, and it’s bad for our entire economy. Equal work deserves equal pay – period."

It's an order

In December, Gov. Jay Nixon signed Missouri Executive Order 15-09, which directed executive branch agencies, and encouraged private employers, to determine whether a gender wage gap existed in their organizations.

The order came after the Women's Foundation partnered with the MU Institute of Public Policy, part of the Truman School of Public Affairs, to study the status of women in Missouri. Preliminary findings of the study showed that a pay gap existed between men and women in the state regardless of age, race, ethnicity and level of education.
On April 11, the day before Equal Pay Day, researchers behind the study published a full and complete list of "Pay Equity Best Practices Guidelines." The document aimed to advise employers on how to identify existing disparities and promote future pay equity. The study defines pay equity as "pay rates that reflect the internal and external value each position and worker brings to an organization."

The following day, Nixon, making use of the new guidelines, directed the Office of Administration to lead an effort to promote pay equity practices for state employees.

Nancy Johnson, director of personnel at the Office of Administration, will head the effort alongside human resource managers and agency directors from the state government, according to a news release from the Governor's Office. The report's guidelines will be used as a starting point, with the assembled group determining how to best incorporate the practices into the operation of different entities within the state's executive branch.

In the press release, Nixon said the published guidelines could influence future government action, describing them as "a valuable resource for current and future policymakers."

**Just how wide is the gap?**

The MU Institute of Public Policy's recent report claims that, in 2013, Missouri women working full-time made only 77 cents for every dollar a man made. This is just shy of the national average — 78 cents to the dollar.

However, the report also recognizes that many complex factors influence this disparity, including disproportionate child care responsibilities for women, generally higher pay in some traditionally male-dominated fields and the predominance of women in minimum wage positions.

The report claims that, even accounting for these factors, women still make less for "equal work" than men, suggesting a gender bias exists.

But how much less, precisely? The report doesn't specify.
In an email conversation, Sonja Erickson, who prepared the institute's report, explained the distinction between explainable and unexplained variables.

Explainable reasons for differences in pay include choice of profession and time spent out of the paid workforce, she said. These are included in the report's calculation of Missouri's 23-cent wage gap.

However, these factors do not explain the disparity between men's and women's wages at the start of their careers — a 10 percent difference, Erickson said.

And even when researchers control for every conceivable explained variable, they still find a persistent pay gap of 10 to 15 percent, which many take as an indication of a gender bias, she added.

In 1963, both Missouri and the federal government passed their own versions of the Equal Pay Act, requiring pay equity for "the same quantity and quality of the same classification of work."

In 1998, Lilly Ledbetter, a retired worker at a Goodyear plant in Alabama, filed a lawsuit against her former employer under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Ledbetter claimed she had consistently received poor evaluations from supervisors due to her gender. This, in turn, caused her paychecks to be much lower than they rightly would have been were she evaluated fairly, she argued.

She wanted each insufficient paycheck to count as a separate discriminatory act.

After many years, Ledbetter's case eventually made its way before the U.S. Supreme Court. In Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber (2007), the court sided against her in a 5-4 split. The majority opinion asserted that she had waited too long to sue for past discriminatory decisions, and that separate paychecks would not "accrue" as separate instances of discrimination.

However, any precedent was short lived.
In 2009, Congress passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, allowing each instance of discriminatory pay to count as a separate violation, effectively nullifying the high court's prior ruling.

**A legislative fix?**

Several lawmakers in the Missouri General Assembly have tried their hand at equal pay legislation. Few of their bills have become law.


House Bill 2404 would establish a commission to study discriminatory pay in both the public and private sectors.

"People need to know that equal pay is the law of the land," Newman said. "The trouble is we don't have enforcement, and that is why we still have this issue."

Chris Koster, Missouri's attorney general and a Democrat running for governor, suggested the idea of an equal pay commission a few years ago, Newman said. Establishing such a group would provide clear data that could be used in determining how to proceed.

Despite being filed so early in the year, Newman's bill was never assigned to a committee hearing, one of the first steps in a bill's path to becoming law. With the current legislative session ending Friday, it's likely her legislation won't make it to the books, Newman said.

Rep. Penny Hubbard from St. Louis, Rep. Stephen Webber from Columbia, Rep. Lauren Arthur from Kansas City and former Sen. Paul LeVota, all Democrats, are among several who have sponsored similar pay equity protection bills in recent years.

LeVota resigned last summer after multiple Capitol interns accused him of sexual harassment, claims he denied, according to previous reporting by the Associated Press.
None of the bills have passed.

**No intervention required**

Current law provides sufficient protection, so instead of supporting further legislation, the focus should be on confronting the root of the issue, said Karen Buschmann, vice president of communications for the Missouri Chamber of Commerce.

Buschmann believes in the importance of narrowing the pay gap, but not through any further legislation or litigation. Instead, she wants to focus on the power of social movements and encourage better practices in education.

"The Missouri Chamber believes in equal pay for equal work," she said. "I don’t think you'll find much disagreement in that, but I think you will find disagreement in how we approach that."

Some lawmakers want to add onerous mandates on businesses, thereby opening them up to increased risk of lawsuits. This is not the way to approach pay equity, Buschmann said.

Economists believe the causes of pay disparity are very complex, she said.

Women generally concentrate on lower paying fields than men, and the average mother will take more time off work to be with children than an average father. You can't legislate these culturally-ingrained factors, Buschmann said.

Instead, the chamber focuses on social change. It serves as Missouri's host for "Dream It. Do It.," a program that aims to get more students, especially girls, excited about careers in science and technology.

By organically getting more women into these higher-paying fields, the pay gap will naturally decrease, Buschmann said.

Buschmann also applauded the internal initiatives of companies like ExxonMobil, who she said has taken steps to increase the number of women engineers within its ranks.
ExxonMobil partners with the Society of Women Engineers to host its "Invent it. Build it." campaign, which hosts hands-on activities to encourage more girls and women to take up careers in engineering.

"When you see that big of a difference in high-paying fields being dominated by men, you can go a long way in providing programs and incentives for women to get into those industries," she said. "That, we believe, is the way to narrow the gender pay gap."

\textbf{Faculty, staff and graduate students protest retiree health insurance changes}

Walking from Jesse Hall to Speakers Circle on Monday, 18 faculty, staff and graduate students voiced their discontent over recent changes made to UM System employee retiree health insurance benefits.

“Not OK in August. Not OK now,” one graduate student's sign read, alluding to when the UM System cut graduate students’ health insurance in August and notified them 13 hours before it expired. MU has since restored graduate students’ insurance, but the event spurred graduate student activism throughout the fall and spring semesters. On Monday, the Forum on Graduate Rights and Coalition of Graduate Workers protested alongside faculty and staff to show their support.

The Board of Curators voted during its April meeting to approve the retiree health insurance changes. Under \textit{the new plan}, employees must fulfill three criteria to qualify for a subsidy: “be eligible for benefits with at least five years of service before Jan. 1, 2018, be at least 60 on his or her retirement date and have at least 20 years of service to the UM System on his or her retirement date.”

If employees meet the criteria, their level of coverage would depend on service and age; those with a combined 80 years or more in service and age would receive the same level of coverage as current retirees. If their service and age totaled less than 80 years, then employees’ subsidies will become a fixed annual payment of $100 per year of service, up to a maximum of $2,500.
Before these changes, the UM System paid up to 73 percent of the monthly premium and provided subsidies at a percentage rate calculated for each employee based on age and years of service.

Rabia Gregory, an associate professor of religious studies, spoke during the protest and said that while the university has a “financial crisis,” faculty, staff and students should not “bear the brunt” of the cuts.

“Morale is at an all-time low,” Gregory said.

She said that the changes to retiree health insurance was just one of many missteps the university had made over the course of multiple years. She also listed Melissa Click’s firing and the decision to close University Press before deciding to keep it open as additional “violations” the administration had made.

Beginning in front of Jesse Hall, the protesters walked through Jesse Hall, holding up their signs in front of the chancellor and provost’s offices, before walking to Speakers Circle. There, graduate student Will Allbritain sang and played his guitar, and Gregory spoke again.

“We are here today for the people who cannot be here,” Gregory said. “This does not end here, this does not end this week.”

Some graduate students also spoke and voiced their support of the faculty.

“For an institution of hiring learning, Mizzou hasn’t learned its lesson very well,” one graduate student shouted out.

Gregory thanked the graduate students for this support.

“It’s important to stand with everyone on campus who keeps getting wronged by the Board of Curators and administration,” Gregory said.

Graduate student and CGW Co-Chairman Eric Scott echoed the sentiment.

“All of us need to stand together,” Scott said. “Injustice to one of us is injustice to all of us.”
Throughout the protest, two MU police officers stood at a distance, following as the protesters made their way through Jesse Hall to Speakers Circle. In April, MU officials announced that the existing policy banning disruptive protests would be enforced.

The presence of the police during protests has changed the way they protest, Gregory said. They have to be quiet in some locations and can only gather in certain places.

Gregory watched the two officers as they stood across the street from the protestors.

“And they lost their retiree health insurance, too,” she said.

**Apartment complexes don't require severe weather plan**

COLUMBIA - As severe weather season approaches, people living in some of the new apartment complexes may not be ready when severe weather season arrives.

"They didn't really tell us the protocol for severe weather," apartment renter Catelyne Snitker said.

Apartment tenant Mitchell Urban said, "I'm not sure where we're supposed to go, honestly."

Despite the safety concern during severe weather season, Columbia apartment complexes are not required to have a severe weather plan in place.

“The fire code does not require apartment complexes to have a severe weather plan, so it’s not something the fire department enforces,” Battalion Chief Brad Frazier said.
It’s not just Columbia that doesn’t have a required severe weather plan to be put in place by developers.

KOMU 8 News reached out to a development company in a similar college town; Fayetteville, Arkansas. Kendra Butterfield with Specialized Real Estate Group said there are no severe weather plan requirements in place there, but she does think there should be.

“There should be some sort of plan of action in place so residents know where they should go,” Butterfield said.

Deputy Director of Boone County Emergency Management Tom Hurley also said he does not know any city that enforces a severe weather plan.

“I’m not aware of any place in the country that requires tenants to have a plan of any kind whether it be for severe weather or fire for their tenants,” Hurley said.

Despite not having a required severe weather plan, Frazier still thinks a plan would be beneficial.

“It’s a smart thing for a property owner to do to have placarding explaining where to go in case of an emergency,” Frazier said.

He also said some businesses choose to provide a plan.

“Business owners have plans, hotels for example opt to have a severe weather plan and we collaborate with them on those plans,” Frazier said. He also said the fire department would assist with helping apartments come up with plans as well.

“We’re certainly willing to do that with apartment complexes and we encourage them to have those types of plans,” Frazier said.

Hurley also said that they are open to helping come up with a plan.

“We try and stay out of the direct planning for housing structures, but if need be we can certainly come by and do a site visit and speak to land owners, property owners about what would be the safest position for their tenants to be in in a disaster or emergency,” Hurley said.
Hurley also said that the infrastructure of a building is not the most dangerous part of a tornado or severe weather.

“The debris is certainly the most dangerous item around. It’s not building collapse, it’s not structural failure, it’s the debris that’s brought with the tornado.” Hurley said.

**The residential halls on the University of Missouri campus do have a severe weather plan.**

“We’re not required to, it’s simply a best practice when you house such large numbers of people,” Associate Director of Residential Academic Programs Kristen Temple said.

She said all residence halls and student apartments have severe weather plan in place. Students and staff practice these plans every semester.

Each plan varies by building but all follow a similar practice.

“Moving students into the areas that have been designated as safer areas of the building in the event of a tornado or other severe weather,” Temple said.

Hurley said if you want to have a plan for when severe weather strikes, it’s important to talk with those you rent from.

“You need to open up a dialogue with your landlord or property owner and the tenants to ensure everybody is aware of the safest location in the building is,” Hurley said.

If severe weather were to happen and you are in an apartment complex or building without a basement, there are still places for you to go.

“An interior windowless room is your safest bet, even on the fourth floor. If you have access to a basement facility, perhaps storage or where there’s laundry or a sturdy stairwell or concrete stairwell,” Hurley said.
OUR TOWN: Honeybee hives create buzz on MU campus

On an overcast Saturday afternoon, a swarm of honeybees descended on the University of Missouri campus to much enthusiasm from a group of students. After months of planning and coordinating, Sustain Mizzou and its volunteers finally were able to install two honeybee hives at the Eckles Butterfly Garden.

Megan Tyminski, vice president of projects for the MU student organization, spearheaded the project.

“Our organization is aimed toward sustainability, and this is just an easy way to understand the way humans interact with ecosystems and the way bees affect ecosystems,” Tyminski said.

The importance of bees, which pollinate the plants that produce much of our food supply, and their decline in population is all the more the reason to further explore ways to understand and raise them, she said.

The group of volunteers partnered with the Mizzou Botanic Garden, which helped pay for the hives, and Jefferson Farm and Gardens for mentoring.

The next Monday, Tyminski and a group of volunteers wearing beekeeper suits and veils opened the hives for their first checkup. MU graduate student and experienced beekeeper Sarah Cramer took charge of handling the honeycomb frames inside the hive as she explained the habitat and activity inside to other students.

“We saw pollen coming in, and we saw larvae, so that means that they’re in the process of raising the next generation, which is an excellent sign,” Cramer said.

Tyminski hopes that through increased exposure and with a better understanding of bee behavior, humans can learn the importance and significance of bees in food production.