MU's diversity division begins to take shape

ELISABETH JOYCE, 11 hrs ago

Generated from News Bureau Press Release: McDonald Announces Goals, Structure for Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity

COLUMBIA — A new Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity at MU will have the same target areas as the University of Missouri System, but the goals will be tailored to MU.

The areas and general goals are:

- Access and success: promote higher graduation rates for a more diverse student body; increase diversity among faculty and staff.

- Campus climate and intergroup relations: create a welcoming environment to acknowledge and celebrate diversity; provide opportunities for groups to interact and communicate.

- Education and scholarship: prepare students for the global marketplace; support the curricular/co-curricular efforts of faculty and staff; provide support for research on diversity.

- Institutional infrastructure: create an infrastructure that supports diversity goals within the university’s strategic plan and ensure that policies and processes reflect diversity and inclusion goals.

Kevin McDonald, interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity at MU, announced the framework in a news release Monday. The release also said the following departments will report to the division effective immediately:

- Accessibility and ADA Education office

- Gaines-Oldham Black Culture Center

- LGBTQ Resource Center

- Multicultural Center
Among the goals, the call to increase diversity among faculty and staff has been made for years. It developed a greater sense of urgency last fall when the student activist group Concerned Student 1950 charged MU with increasing the number of black faculty members to 10 percent by the 2017-2018 school year. At the time, 55 of the 1,973 faculty members, or 2.79 percent, were black.

McDonald said he wants to look at what faculty diversity initiatives have been tried so far at MU and what has worked and what hasn't.

"Part of the discussion for me is first for those who have stayed and been successful, what do they attribute to that?" he said. "Why have some left? What are some opportunities to bridge that gap?"

He pointed to national initiatives, such as the Future Faculty Program, that bring in doctoral students to meet with a department, present research, teach class, engage with students and build a sense of community at the institution. The names of these students go into a database, strengthening the pool of candidates when there's an opening.

The Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity had a soft launch in November when Chuck Henson of the MU Law School became the first interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity. Creation of the position was part of the university administration's response to student protests about racial inequality and race relations on campus.

The division budget will include $1.5 million for the 2016-2017 fiscal year to "support and build infrastructure and create new initiatives," according to the news release. McDonald said so far, none of the money has been earmarked because a portion must be used to build up division infrastructure.
As asked what the first actions will be to mobilize his goals and initiatives, McDonald said, “The initial part is laying out the framework, developing this framework, making sure we have community and constituency, identifying the right metrics. From that, by looking at the data and university audits, it can tell us what some of those developmental opportunities are.”

"All of the information will tell you a story," McDonald said.

Henson announced in late April that he would return to the Law School. McDonald — who was hired in March to be the UM System’s first chief diversity, inclusion and equity officer — took over the interim position June 13.

Four days later, he addressed the UM System Board of Curators and set out the same four diversity goals for the system: access and success; campus climate and intergroup relations; education and scholarships; and institutional infrastructure.

The MU division includes Pat Ivey, who became assistant vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity in February. Staff from the Chancellor’s Diversity Initiative will be folded into the division. McDonald said he plans to identify where extra support is needed in the division and fill jobs accordingly.
University of Missouri System’s Credit Outlook is Stable
Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) – A leading credit-rating agency says the University of Missouri system’s credit outlook is stable, despite turmoil last year. The system announced Monday that Moody’s Investors Service is maintaining the system’s Aa1 credit rating.

The announcement came months after credit-rating company Standard & Poor’s downgraded the system’s outlook from stable to negative but didn’t actually lower the rating.

The outlook was downgraded primarily because of concerns with the system’s ratio of available resources to debt. A report also touched on the departures of two top administrators amid student protests over the handling of racial issues on the Columbia campus.
Moody’s Investors Service cited the system’s four campuses, health services and financial management in maintaining the credit outlook. It says the system faces challenges including lower enrollment and leadership turnover.

Moody’s affirms University of Missouri System’s debt rating

Moody’s Investors Service has affirmed the Aa1, Aa1/VMIG 1 and P-1 ratings assigned to the University of Missouri System’s $1.6 billion of rated debt. The outlook remains stable, according to the ratings service.

Aa1 is the second highest long-term credit rating an institution is able to receive, according to a statement from the University of Missouri System.

A history of prudent financial management, as well as improved profitability of its health care enterprise both support the Aa1 rating, according to lead analyst, Karen Kedem.

“The University of Missouri System’s large scale as a multi-campus system and importance in delivering educational and medical services in the State of Missouri (Aaa) stable underpin its Aa1 rating,” Kedem said in a statement.

Kedem did indicate the system’s expected enrollment decline projected for the fall and its turnover in senior leadership will pose future challenges.

Mizzou faced protests and a hunger strike on its campus over alleged racial incidents and other issues between staff and the administration last fall, which
led to the resignation of the University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe and Mizzou Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

Freshman deposits for fall 2016 fell by 1,470 from last year and 1,749 from two years ago. This year’s freshman class will number fewer than 5,000.

According to Kadem, expense reductions and the profitability of the health care system will produce operating margins close to the historical average of 5 percent in fiscal year 2017.

“This affirmation and outlook is welcome news and accurately reflects the hard work of so many on our campuses and our health system to serve the citizens of Missouri in all they do,” University of Missouri System Interim President Michael Middleton said in a statement.

University of Missouri maintains high Moody's rating

An increasingly profitable health care system, “nimble expense reductions” and the ability to curtail long-term liabilities helped the University of Missouri System maintain a high credit rating with Moody's Investors Service, the university said in a news release.

Moody's issued its latest outlook on UM on Friday and kept the university system at an Aa1 rating, the second highest grade issued to describe long-term financial strength.

Debt issued by Aa1 rated entities is considered to be a high-quality investment with low risk, according to Moody’s definitions.

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There are issues that could cause the rating to be lowered in the future, Moody’s said in its summary of the analysis.

“Inability to stabilize first-time freshmen enrollment by fall 2017 or to smoothly and sustainably fill senior leadership positions could pressure the rating,” the release said.

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Despite Turmoil, Moody’s Maintains University of Missouri Rating

Despite the turmoil at the University of Missouri, the leading credit rating agency says their credit outlook is stable. Moody’s is maintaining the system's a-1 rating. Last fall, two top administrators resigned, amid student protests. But Moody’s' cited the systems' four campuses, health services, and financial management, in the credit outlook. the two big challenges, lower enrollment, and leadership turnover.


Rhoades says MU athletic department 'is in a much better place' than he found it

By BLAKE TOPPMEYER

Mack Rhoades gave himself a good performance review for his 14½-month tenure as Missouri’s athletic director.
Rhoades resigned his post last week upon his hiring as Baylor’s AD. Rhoades’ tenure at Baylor will start on Aug. 15.

“I’m proud of what we accomplished over the 15 months,” Rhoades told reporters Monday during an introductory news conference at Big 12 media days in Dallas. “I think that the University of Missouri, the athletics program, is in a much better place than it was 15 months ago.”

Others might dispute Rhoades’ self-assessment.

Rhoades’ Missouri tenure included a boycott by members of the football team amid student protests of the racial climate on campus that resulted in resignations of the university system president and MU chancellor and a fractured football fan base.

Six months to the date of the football boycott, members of the Missouri softball team announced a protest of Rhoades and the athletic administration for what those players deemed was an unfair athletic department investigation of Coach Ehren Earleywine, who is currently under investigation by the Title IX office and remains the team's coach. The investigation started, in part, due to some player complaints Rhoades received about Earleywine.

The athletic department was blindsided by the football team’s boycott and the softball team’s protest.

In between, Rhoades revealed that MU’s floundering men's basketball program was under NCAA investigation and had self-imposed penalties for NCAA violations that allegedly occurred during Coach Frank Haith’s tenure, before Rhoades’ arrival in Columbia. Missouri has yet to receive word from the NCAA on its final punishment.

Plans for a south end zone facility at Memorial Stadium, which appeared to be moving forward under former Athletic Director Mike Alden, stalled.

“Though my time in Columbia was short, the memories will last a lifetime,” Rhoades said.

Rhoades’ introductory news conference at Missouri featured the presence of Marching Mizzou and the Golden Girls.

On Monday, he was peppered with questions about how he can help improve how Baylor handles sexual violence, given the scandal that cost his predecessor, Ian McCaw, his job. Football Coach Art Briles and President Ken Starr also lost their jobs in the wake of law firm Pepper Hamilton’s
independent investigation that determined they failed to respond appropriately to numerous physical and sexual assaults by football players.

“I know the past several months have been difficult for the Baylor family,” Rhoades said, “and the healing, especially for those who were harmed and left vulnerable due to the actions of a few, will take time and care. … This is an opportunity for Baylor University, and certainly the athletics department, to be a leader in how we deal and handle with and handle sexual violence. I’ve got three unbelievably beautiful daughters that I love, and if you ask, ‘What’s your motivation?’ there’s my motivation.”

The Big 12’s Board of Curators will meet with Baylor officials on Tuesday, and it’s possible Baylor could face penalties from the conference.

“If it’s determined they weren’t in compliance” with Title IX, “there’s a provision in our bylaws that says they have to be in compliance, but it doesn't apply a specific remedy for that,” Big 12 Commissioner Bob Bowlsby told ESPN.com. "So the board would have to get back together once that finding is finalized and determined what, if any, penalty or sanction there might be at the conference level."

Rhoades said he and his family “love the fixer-upper,” and he referenced HGTV's “Fixer Upper,” a home renovation show starring Chip and Joanna Gaines that is based on Waco, Texas. It was a twist on a line he uttered last spring, during his introductory news conference at Missouri, when he said Missouri “is not a fixer-upper.”

“Over the past few days, much has been written about my motivations for coming to Waco,” Rhoades said. “Let me be clear. This is an opportunity, an opportunity where I can see what can be, an opportunity to help lead one of the world’s leading Christian universities in our familiar Texas, a state where we came to love many, many years ago, a state where my grandfather – my hero – was born and raised, an opportunity to win national championships, to watch our student-athletes graduate and to bear witness as they go on to do great things serving the world. Simply, I see opportunities and not challenges.”

Rhoades, a 50-year-old Tuscon, Ariz., native, has spent much of his career as an athletic administrator in Texas. Before coming to Missouri, he was the athletic director at Houston for nearly six years. Rhoades also was an administrator at Texas-El Paso from 1998-2006 before leaving to become the athletic director at Akron.
Rhoades’ base salary was $600,000 at Missouri. His contract indicated he owes Missouri an $800,000 buyout for leaving at this juncture of his five-year deal. Rhoades told CBSSports.com that he wouldn’t personally have to pay the buyout. His salary figures at Baylor, a private school, have not been disclosed.

Rhoades claimed headlines at a conference’s football media days for the second straight week. Last Wednesday, the news broke that Rhoades was leaving MU for Baylor about 75 minutes before Missouri Coach Barry Odom began his news conference at the Southeastern Conference media days in Hoover, Ala. Odom said he and Rhoades had discussed Rhoades’ plans the night before.

“I love Barry Odom,” Rhoades said. “He is a wonderful, first and foremost, a wonderful human being, and I think he’s going to be a heck of a head football coach. That” conversation "was hard. It was emotional for both of us. We care about one another. He understands. He got it. At the end of the day, he wanted what was best for my family and I. We’ll remain friends, and there will be no bigger fan of Barry Odom than I.”

One of Rhoades’ tasks at Baylor will be deciding what to do with the football staff. Jim Grobe, the former head coach at Wake Forest and Ohio, is serving as Baylor’s interim head coach. Briles’ assistant coaches remain on staff.

At Missouri, Wren Baker has taken over as interim athletic director after serving as Rhoades’ deputy AD. KOMU reported Monday that MU curators Jon Sundvold, Phillip Snowden and former curator Don Walsworth will form the search committee for the new athletic director.

Missouri needs to face its growth challenge
By David Nicklaus St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Missouri has a lot of things going for it, but a strong economy isn't one of them.

According to an analysis by Joseph Haslaq, an economics professor at the University of Missouri–Columbia, the state’s gross domestic product grew by
1.02 percent a year between 1997 and 2015, just half the nation’s average growth rate of 2.05 percent.

GDP is the value of all goods and services produced within state boundaries, so it’s a good summation of how we’re doing relative to other places. Missouri’s performance isn't mediocre, it’s awful: Over 18 years, only Michigan and Louisiana grew more slowly.

There’s a tiny bit of good news in that sentence. When Haslag did the same comparison a year ago, Missouri ranked 49th. Our state GDP grew 1.3 percent last year, which was far below the national growth rate but enough to surpass Louisiana.

To his credit, Haslag doesn’t offer an easy explanation for Missouri’s laggard pattern. He is chief economist for the Show-Me Institute, which favors tax cuts, but taxes alone don’t explain how we got to 48th place.

California and Oregon, Haslag notes, are among the highest-tax states, but both make the top 10 for long-term economic growth. Alaska, with no income tax and plenty of oil revenue, ranks 40th, not far ahead of Missouri.

“I wish I had a clear and definitive answer for you,” Haslag told me. “I am 99 percent sure that it’s an amalgam of a lot of stuff.”

Was Missouri doomed by its lack of oil and gas? North Dakota, Texas and South Dakota had the fastest growth since 1997, so natural resources definitely help, but Oregon placed fourth without much of an energy industry.

Did Haslag simply choose a period when the state lost much of its traditional manufacturing base, including the Ford plant in Hazelwood and Chrysler plants in Fenton? That’s certainly true, but aside from Michigan, other Rust Belt states have done better than Missouri.
What’s lacking here? I’m a little skeptical of subjective rankings, but a recent one by CNBC may offer some clues. The network ranks Missouri’s business climate 31st, giving the state high marks for its low costs, infrastructure and “business friendliness.”

Dragging Missouri down were two abysmal scores: It ranked 49th for both workforce productivity and “quality of life.” The latter category includes crime rates, health-care coverage and anti-discrimination laws as well as recreation facilities.

If we’re not competitive at training workers and we can’t attract them from elsewhere, the state is in trouble. Any serious attempt at turning Missouri’s economy around needs to start with our education system, from kindergarten through college.

Haslag figures the state needs to look at other policies too, including business regulation and taxes. “In every one of these areas, there probably are some pretty low-hanging pieces of fruit in this state,” he says.

Missouri’s economy can’t be fixed, by the way, without doing some repair work on its biggest urban area. Metro St. Louis produces 45 percent of state GDP and has been growing slower than the state as a whole.

This is a state where rivalries — urban vs. rural, cities vs. suburbs, St. Louis vs. Kansas City — tend to obscure what we have in common. Getting Missouri growing again may be our biggest shared challenge.

Blunt keeping his distance from GOP convention in Cleveland

Deirdre Shesgreen, DSHESGREEN@USATODAY.COM 4:06 p.m. CDT July 18, 2016
CLEVELAND — As Republicans from across the country gathered in Cleveland on Monday for their presidential nominating festivities, Sen. Roy Blunt was nearly 900 miles away in Joplin, touting his push to expand funding for Pell Grants.

Like other Senate Republicans, Blunt, R-Mo., decided to skip the Republican National Convention, where his party is still struggling to unify around the controversial candidacy of Donald Trump.

“Senator Blunt will be at home this week, participating in events across the state on opioid abuse, year-round Pell Grants, and jobs and the economy,” said Burson Snyder, a Blunt campaign spokeswoman.

Blunt is hardly the only Republican reluctant to link himself to Trump, who has alienated women and minority voters with his incendiary rhetoric and contentious policy stances. A bevy of other GOP senators facing tough re-election bids will also be watching from home, including Sens. Mark Kirk of Illinois, John McCain of Arizona, and Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire. Like Blunt, those lawmakers said it was more important for them to be talking to home-state voters than hobnobbing with delegates in Ohio.

**Peverill Squire, a political science professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, said there’s little for Blunt to gain from attending such an unpredictable and possibly contentious convention.**

“It’s probably safer for him to focus on issues that he thinks play to his advantage in Missouri,” Squire said. “I think Sen. Blunt would like to run his campaign separately from the top of the ticket.”

In 2012, Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., did the same thing — telling reporters she was too busy campaigning in Missouri to participate in the Democratic National Convention, which allowed her to limit press coverage of her close ties to President Obama.

Missouri delegates said they did not begrudge Blunt for not joining them in Cleveland.

“There’s a lot of people not here,” quipped Carl Beardon, a 60-year-old delegate from St. Charles who is not a Trump fan. “I don’t think it hurts him.”