New drug could help treat spinal muscular atrophy

According to studies, approximately one out of every 40 individuals in the United States is a carrier of the gene responsible for spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a neurodegenerative disease that causes muscles to weaken over time. Researchers at the University of Missouri developed a new molecule in April 2014 that was found to be highly effective in animal models exhibiting SMA. Now, testing of that compound is leading to a better prognosis for mice with the disease and the possibility of potential drugs that will improve outcomes for patients with SMA.

“Our team has been fine-tuning a potential therapeutic for SMA and what it does,” said Chris Lorson, an investigator in the Bond Life Sciences Center and a professor of veterinary pathobiology in the MU College of Veterinary Medicine. “It’s a type of molecule called an antisense oligonucleotide, or ASO, that essentially is synthetic string of nucleic acid that binds a specific sequence in the gene.”

In individuals affected by SMA, the survival motor neuron-1 (SMN1) gene is mutated and lacks the ability to process a key protein that helps neurons function. Muscles that control walking or even lifting an arm often are profoundly affected as well as muscles important for breathing. Fortunately, humans have a nearly identical copy gene called SMN2, however, SMN2 normally
only makes a small amount of the correct SMN protein. Lorson’s compound targets SMN2 and effectively “turns the volume” up for SMN2, allowing it to make more of the correct SMN protein.

“Our current treatment helps the body create a backup mechanism to combat the disease and extends survival in mice with SMA from just 13 days to a little over five months after only one injection at birth,” Lorson said. “This treatment helps produce the right form of SMN, the one that was only produced at very low levels before.”

Lorson stressed that his lab’s achievement does not promise a cure for SMA and that it is unlikely a single compound will address the full gamut of symptoms. However, by combining therapies currently being researched, a better prognosis could be on the horizon, Lorson said.

The early-stage results of this research are promising. If additional studies are successful within the next few years, these compounds may be tested in human clinical trials with the hope of developing new treatments for SMA.

The study, “Optimization of Morpholino Antisense Oligonucleotides Targeting the Intronic Repressor Element1 in Spinal Muscular Atrophy,” recently was accepted for publication in Molecular Therapy, a journal of Nature. Previous funding was received from CureSMA. Erkan Osman, a postdoctoral fellow and lead author on this publication working in Lorson’s lab is funded by FightSMA and the Gwendolyn Strong Foundation. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agencies.
University of Missouri presidential search effort comes to St. Louis

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch

ST. LOUIS • Just outside the Renaissance Hotel, near Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, the 16-person search committee for the University of Missouri’s next president sits in a closed session.

Because the meeting is closed, officials are mum about the purpose.

But leaders have previously said the plan is to name a new president before the end of this year. And it’s September. And they’re meeting by the airport.

Perhaps they’re interviewing candidates?

The committee is tasked with naming a replacement for Timothy M. Wolfe, who resigned in November amid protests on the Columbia, flagship campus. Former Mizzou Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton is serving as interim president of the UM System.

The committee held a public meeting for all of five minutes before going into closed session. It is expected to continue meeting most of Wednesday.

“We would like to personally commend the efforts made by all thus far in this critical process,” a joint statement between Board of Curators chairwoman Pam Henrickson and Cheryl Walker and Jim Whitaker, co-chairs of the search committee, said. “Through the collective efforts of our committee, our search firm partners at Isaacson Miller, and the many stakeholders engaged in this process to date, we are encouraged to have build a pool of talented, experienced and diverse candidates from a national audience.”
The job description for the University of Missouri System president was approved by the committee in May. Since then, committee members and meetings have been kept quiet.

Search committee in St. Louis to interview University of Missouri presidential candidates

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, September 6, 2016 at 2:00 pm

ST. LOUIS — The search for a University of Missouri president entered a new phase Tuesday with candidate interviews at a hotel near Lambert-St. Louis International Airport.

UM System spokesman John Fougere would not confirm the purpose of the Presidential Search Committee meeting taking place behind closed doors, but in June then-interim Vice President for Human Resources Kelley Stuck said a series of 75- to 90-minute “airport interviews” of semifinalists for the job would begin once the pool of candidates was set.

Tuesday’s meeting is the first time the 16-member committee has met at an airport hotel.

The university issued a joint statement from search committee co-chairs Cheryl Walker and Jim Whitaker and Pam Henrickson, chair of the UM Board of Curators thanking the search firm, Isaacson, Miller Inc., and others for “a pool of talented, experienced and diverse candidates.”
“We are excited a new academic year has begun, and are also happy to see the presidential search progressing nicely,” the statement read. “Once again, thanks to all for your engagement in this important endeavor for the University of Missouri system.”

The committee is meeting at the Renaissance St. Louis Airport Hotel. Members are scheduled to be in closed session all day Tuesday and Wednesday.

Walker, a St. Louis attorney and former curator, and Whitaker, a Kansas City orthopedic surgeon, represent alumni on the search committee, which also includes all nine curators, the student representative on the Board of Curators, a second student appointee, two faculty representatives and a staff representative. All 16 members will have a vote when finalists are selected, with the decision on whom to hire in the hands of the curators.

The university is looking for a permanent replacement for Tim Wolfe, who resigned Nov. 9 as president of the four-campus system amid racial protests on the Columbia campus. A group called Concerned Student 1950 targeted Wolfe after stopping his car during the Homecoming Parade in October, demanding his resignation and setting up a campsite on Carnahan Quadrangle in support of a hunger strike by graduate student Jonathan Butler.

The protests began to draw national media attention after Butler’s hunger strike began. Coverage multiplied and went international after the Tigers football team announced a boycott of athletic activities in support of Butler.

At the same time, Wolfe was weakened by internal fighting with then-Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and campus leadership was in turmoil over graduate assistant labor issues, a rebellion among deans against Loftin’s leadership and other issues.

Wolfe twice tried to have the curators fire Loftin, who was pushed out of his job the same day Wolfe resigned.

The system leadership is now in the hands of interim President Mike Middleton, who has said he does not want the job on a permanent basis. The campus leader is interim Chancellor Hank Foley, who has indicated he will seek the job on a permanent basis once a president is chosen.

The committee early in the year set a goal of having the search completed by the end of November. If that timetable is not met and the search continues into January, a new governor will take office with the power to appoint five new members of the Board of Curators, a majority that would have to decide whether to continue the process underway or initiate a new search.
The University of Missouri Board of Curators and presidential search committee kicked off two days of meetings in St. Louis Tuesday morning.

The Board of Curators chair and the search committee co-chairs released a statement focusing on their progress with the search for a new system president: “We are excited that a new academic year has begun, and are also happy to see the presidential search progressing nicely. Once again, thanks to all of you for your engagement in this important endeavor for the University of Missouri System."

The statement went on to read, "We are encouraged to have built a pool of talented, experienced, and diverse candidates from a national audience."

"The contributions from every member on the search committee, and many other key players, have been significant, which has had a direct effect on our progress. We remain committed to ensuring the best possible outcome for our entire System: campuses, our great faculty, staff, alumni and students, as well as the citizens of Missouri."

In June, an MU spokeswoman told ABC 17 News while the board hopes to appoint the new president by the end of the calendar year, there is not a firm deadline on the presidential search to ensure the best candidates are considered for the position.
You’ve got to hand it to the St. Louis and Missouri leaders: Not only did they steal away with the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency’s new western headquarters, now they’ve pulled in a $12 million, five-year contract to train NGA staffers.

To the victors go the spoils.

Of course, if you remember the NGA’s hastily rewritten rationalization for the decision to use a defense agency as an urban renewal tool — thank you again, Mr. Lame Duck Commander-In-Chief — you will remember that part about having trouble finding qualified workers in Illinois. The he-bobs in the cornfields couldn’t possibly handle the jobs making spy maps.
This $12-million decision was likely driven by the facts about as much as the decision to put a headquarters in the middle of an urban wasteland instead of at Scott Air Force Base, a secured site mere yards from the biggest users of the data products NGA produces.

Here are some facts:

**The University of Missouri’s Columbia campus is ranked 87th in the nation for engineering. The University of Illinois is ranked fifth.**

Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville is this region’s only university offering geographic information systems degrees. U of I is in the top 10 percent nationally. Mizzou is well below colleges helping the Ozark hillbillies and Appalachian mountain folk get thar larnin’ about mappin’.

Scott Air Force Base has a steady stream of cyber warriors and computer specialists from which an employer could recruit, all with veteran hiring preferences and all with advanced training that would dovetail with education opportunities in Illinois.

Hats off to Missouri’s politicians, who have again captured your tax dollars by tying up and gagging reason.

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**Campuses Cautiously Train Freshmen Against Subtle Insults**

WORCESTER, Mass. — A freshman tentatively raises her hand and takes the microphone. “I’m really scared to ask this,” she begins. “When I, as a white female, listen to music that uses the N word, and I’m in the car, or, especially when I’m with all white friends, is it O.K. to sing along?”

The answer, from Sheree Marlowe, the new chief diversity officer at Clark University, is an unequivocal “no.”
The exchange was included in Ms. Marlowe’s presentation to recently arriving first-year students focusing on subtle “microaggressions,” part of a new campus vocabulary that also includes “safe spaces” and “trigger warnings.”

Microaggressions, Ms. Marlowe said, are comments, snubs or insults that communicate derogatory or negative messages that might not be intended to cause harm but are targeted at people based on their membership in a marginalized group.

Among her other tips: Don’t ask an Asian student you don’t know for help on your math homework or randomly ask a black student if he plays basketball. Both questions make assumptions based on stereotypes. And don’t say “you guys.” It could be interpreted as leaving out women, said Ms. Marlowe, who realized it was offensive only when someone confronted her for saying it during a presentation.

Clark, a private liberal arts college that has long prided itself on diversity and inclusion, is far from the only university stepping up discussions of racism and diversity in orientation programs this year.

Once devoted to ice cream socials, tutorials on campus technology systems and advice on choosing classes, orientation for new students is changing significantly, with the issue taking on renewed urgency this year as universities increasingly try to address recent racial and ethnic tensions on campuses as well as an onslaught of sexual assault complaints.

In addition to diversity sessions, many campuses train students on exactly what constitutes sexual consent as well as how to intervene when they see fellow students drinking excessively or poised to engage in nonconsensual sexual behavior.

A bystander intervention presentation for arriving freshmen at Wesleyan University last Thursday — “We Speak We Stand” — featured students acting out fictional episodes of campus sexual violence, harassment and problematic drinking, with examples of how to intervene. “Each of you has the power to bring to light sexual violence in our community,” one student told the group.

**Fresh on the minds of university officials are last year’s highly publicized episodes involving racist taunts at the University of Missouri — which appear to have contributed to a precipitous decline in enrollment there this fall.**

“That closes your doors,” said Archie Ervin, the vice president for institute diversity at Georgia Institute of Technology and president of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education. “If you have sustained enrollment drops and disproportionately full-paying students such as out-of-state, the state legislature can’t make up the gap.”

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, officials have put together a diversity presentation as a pilot program this year for 1,000 freshmen — whom some colleges refer to with the gender-neutral term first-year students. That program, expected to cost
$150,000 to $200,000, follows incidents on campus last year. In one, a racist note was slipped under a black student’s door, prompting Patrick Sims, the university’s vice provost for diversity and climate, to post an emotional video on YouTube titled “Enough Is Enough.”

Lori Berquam, the university’s dean of students, said in an interview that the sessions would try to address the fact that some students in Wisconsin, a predominantly white state, had little exposure to people of other races until they got to Madison.

“It would not be unheard-of for a student to join us from the state of Wisconsin having had zero people of color in their high school,” Dr. Berquam said.

In August, the University of Wisconsin system, which includes the Madison flagship and 25 other campuses, said it would ask the State Legislature for $6 million in funding to improve what it called the “university experience” for students. The request includes money for Fluent, a program described as a systemwide cultural training for faculty and staff members and students.

But that budget request has provoked controversy. “If only the taxpayers and tuition-paying families had a safe space that might protect them from wasteful U.W. System spending on political correctness,” State Senator Stephen L. Nass, a Republican, said in a statement issued by his office, urging his fellow lawmakers to vote against the appropriation.

Mr. Nass’s objection to spending money on diversity training reflects a rising resistance to what is considered campus political correctness. At some universities, alumni and students have objected to a variety of campus measures, including diversity training; “safe spaces,” places where students from marginalized groups can gather to discuss their experiences; and “trigger warnings,” disclaimers about possibly upsetting material in lesson plans.

Some graduates have curtailed donations, and students have suggested that diversity training smacks of some sort of Communist re-education program.

The backlash was exemplified recently in a widely publicized letter sent to new freshmen at the University of Chicago by the dean of students, John Ellison.

He warned that the university did not “support so-called trigger warnings, we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual safe spaces where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own.”

Still, the push to respond to complaints about subtle cultural insensitivity, as well as more overt racist behavior, continues on campuses across the country. About 75 chief diversity officers have been hired by colleges and universities in the past 18 months, according to Dr. Ervin’s organization.
Ms. Marlowe, a lawyer who most recently was diversity officer at the University of California, Santa Cruz, was also recruited by two other colleges this year before settling at Clark, a manicured campus of about 3,000 students an hour west of Boston in this heavily working-class city.

Her two-hour presentation on Aug. 27 aimed to help students identify microaggressions and to teach them how to intervene when they observe one. Microaggressions can be verbal, nonverbal or environmental, she said.

“What’s an environmental microaggression?” Ms. Marlowe asked the auditorium of about 525 new students. She gave an example. “On your first day of class, you enter the chemistry building and all of the pictures on the wall are scientists who are white and male,” she said. “If you’re a female, or you just don’t identify as a white male, that space automatically shows that you’re not represented.”

A nonverbal microaggression could be when a white woman clutches her purse as a black or Latino person approaches.

Another subset of microaggression is known as the microinvalidation, which includes comments suggesting that race plays a minor role in life’s outcomes, like “Everyone can succeed in this society if they work hard enough.”

For Clark students like Noelia Martinez, a Massachusetts resident who was born in Puerto Rico to Dominican parents, the session was an epiphany.

“It helped me understand what I’ve been going through all of my life, basically,” she said, describing how she had endured stinging comments such as “You’re a really good student for a Hispanic.”

But Ms. Martinez, a sophomore transfer student, also realized that she, too, was guilty of microaggressions, because she frequently uses the phrase “you guys,” she said. “This helped me see that I’m a microaggressor, too.”

The presentation elicited a lively question-and-answer session, during which students asked about the N word, discrimination against white people and men, and the definition of “Asian.”

Ms. Marlowe said she questioned the validity of the concept of reverse racism, arguing that racism is a system in which a dominant race benefits from the oppression of others.

But some students appeared slightly confused.

“When you use the term ‘self-identify’ as a white woman, are you saying that you can choose your race?” one white male student asked.
“I’ll give you an example,” Ms. Marlowe said. “I went to a conference. I was talking to this man. I thought he was black. I was talking about diversity and social justice.”

“He said, ‘I’m Cuban,’” Ms. Marlowe told the crowd. “I assumed he was black because he was the same skin complexion as me, and the same type of hair.”

But, Ms. Marlowe said, while it is sometimes difficult to identify a person’s racial or ethnic background based on appearance, she does not believe that gives license to people like Rachel A. Dolezal, the white woman who claimed to be African-American while working for the N.A.A.C.P. in Spokane, Wash. “You can’t say you’re black if you’re not, historically.”

The student still seemed confused.

“Maybe we can unpack it afterward,” Ms. Marlowe told the student. “You want to come see me afterward?”

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**MU researchers bring awareness to emotional support animals**

ESAs raise ethical and legal questions for clinical psychologists and their clients.

Generated from a News Bureau press release: [Research Highlights the Legal Issues of Certifying Emotional Support Animals](https://example.com)

Freshman Laura Sigmund lives with her emotional support cat in Hatch Hall.

An emotional support animal provides “physical assistance, emotional support, calming and other kinds of assistance,” according to the service animals section of MU’s online manual of Business Policy and Procedure.
Any ESA kept in university housing must be approved by the Disability Center. Unlike service animals, which must be either a dog or in some cases a miniature horse, an ESA can be any species and does not require specific training.

This process begins when an individual applies for a disability accommodation on the Disability Center website. Then, the student meets with an access adviser to determine whether keeping an ESA is a reasonable accommodation, Barbara Hammer, director of the Disability Center, said.

Sigmund’s cat is eligible to live in her room because it helps Sigmund deal with anxiety and depression.

“It wasn’t difficult for me to show that I had need,” Sigmund said. “It’s been pretty smooth sailing.”

In some cases, the Disability Center will ask for a recommendation from a mental health professional before approving an ESA, but documentation is not required.

“In our case, or in the case of a landlord, we can’t make a person jump through a lot of hoops to provide us with documentation,” Hammer said. “We can’t ask a lot of intrusive questions about the nature of their disability.”

MU researchers are currently exploring the ethical and legal ramifications of psychologists certifying that a person needs an ESA. They have already published one article in the journal Professional Psychology: Research and Practice.

“... There [are] no guidelines on this and there’s kind of a lack of awareness generally about not only what ESAs are, but also how psychologists are involved in that process,” said Cassie Boness, a graduate student in clinical psychology and co-author of the article.

Boness said while there is research regarding service animals and pets in general, ESAs are a new topic.

“The research that we found trying to answer the question, ‘Is there any evidence of the effectiveness of ESAs?’ is lacking,” Boness said.

Psychologists don’t have clear guidelines, either.

“[ESAs] also aren’t supported by the Americans with Disabilities Act, so there’s no regulatory board that looks over the certifications for ESAs,” Boness said.

This is significant because individuals can easily get an ESA certified online without even meeting in-person with a psychologist, Boness said. Clinical psychologists can also certify ESAs.

The researchers recommend that these letters be written only by forensic psychologists, who work at the intersection of psychology and law.
“These letters are in fact formal disability determinations under the law, which makes them a forensic evaluation, from our point of view,” Jeffrey Younggren, clinical professor and lead author of the article, said. “We believe that clinicians shouldn’t even be doing them, first because it’s not a part of their job as a treating therapist, and second because they aren’t really objective about their client’s needs and the impact of that determination.”

Sigmund, who discussed her ESA with her roommate beforehand, said she believes that other individuals who may not have a true need could cheat the system.

“They don’t really understand [the ESA] is for a mental illness, and they just think that I brought my cat because I went through the right system,” Sigmund said. “She actually has a purpose. So I definitely think that if people knew how to get through it, they would definitely abuse the system.”

Currently, six MU students, including Sigmund, have an ESA in university-run housing. Hammer said this is an increase from four or five years ago, when requests were as rare as one a year.

At MU, ESAs are only allowed in the owner’s room. They are not allowed anywhere else on campus, according to university policy. Legally, ESAs are protected by the Air Carrier Access Act and the Fair Housing Act. The balance of the rights of the individual and the rights of the public is fundamental to the debate over ESAs, the researchers said.

“We’re mainly focusing on what types of techniques and assessment instruments should be used to make this evaluation,” Boness said. “We’re trying to think about what are standardized instruments that are familiar to forensic psychologists that would be useful.”

New Family Access Center for Excellence aims to be “one-stop shop” for mental health services

Generated from a News bureau press release: MU, Boone County Program Aims to Improve Youth and Family Access to Mental Health Care Services

A new center in downtown Columbia will help connect children and families to mental health services.

The Family Access Center for Excellence, which opened its doors Aug. 15, is the first facility of its kind in the area and will serve children up to the age of 19. MU researchers from the
**Missouri Prevention Center partnered with several public health and service to establish the program.**

FACE aims to provide an unbiased evidence-based assessment for each case. From there, they can refer the family to whichever provider is best for them and help them overcome any barriers they might have to accessing services.

“To boil it down, it is a one-stop shop where a family or child can be referred from any source,” said Kelly Wallis, director of Boone County Community Services Department.

MU students will work with licensed clinicians to develop their own assessment and case management skills, as well as action plans for the families, said Aaron Thompson, assistant professor in the School of Social Work and associate director of the Missouri Prevention Center.

“Students, alongside clinicians, will then continually address barriers to service access (e.g., transportation, cost, etc.) through an intensive case management procedure to ensure that families connect with the services, that they continue with the stated action plan and that progress is monitored,” Thompson said in an email.

Multiple departments are involved with the program.

“Social work, clinical psychology, school counseling and school psychology are currently departments that are obviously involved; however, we would invite other partnering departments and faculty and students as long as their direct involvement benefits families and youth,” Thompson said in an email.

Eventually, Thompson hopes FACE will become an American Psychological Association accredited practicum site, which would allow the program to host doctoral-level psychologists who need supervised practice toward licensure.

FACE exists as a result of the Children’s Mental Health tax, a quarter-cent sales tax that contributes to children’s mental health services. The proceeds from this tax go to the Boone County Children’s Services Fund, which funds FACE among other programs.

“What’s cool about this whole process is children’s mental health tax was put on the ballot as a result of a citizen’s petition here in Boone County,” Boone County Commissioner Janet Thompson said. “It wasn’t government-driven at all. This came about because people in the community recognized the need.”

More than 50 percent of families that go to an appointment with a service provider never return for a follow-up appointment, according to an MU News Bureau news release. Some families instead turn to the juvenile correctional system to get the services they need.

“Parents or teachers will call law enforcement to take these kids to juvie, because that’s been the only mechanism by which they could get their services,” Janet Thompson said. “That’s
problematic on many levels, but one of the data driven responses to that is a kid that is in juvenile is seven times more likely to end up in the adult criminal court system.”

FACE is currently making connections with community leaders and school systems throughout the county. Once it is fully established in Columbia, the organization plans to open satellite offices to eliminate the need for travel and better serve rural communities within Boone County. Although they currently only have three case managers, the organization hopes to expand soon.

In five years, Aaron Thompson expects that FACE will house approximately 15 to 20 clinical case managers, each with a caseload of 20 to 25 families, giving FACE the capacity to see nearly 500 families.

“In five years, FACE will have the capacity to offer direct services to families in the form of telehealth … This is an important service for families in rural areas who need services and cannot come to Columbia,” Aaron Thompson said in an email.

Another deterrent to accessing mental health services is cost, but FACE hopes to help with that, too.

“All FACE services and associated referrals will be free of charge for the families and FACE will host a range of remedies to assure that these services are covered,” Aaron Thompson said in an email.

FACE will monitor its success by collecting data on the families it assists and monitoring the number of juveniles entering into the juvenile correctional system, according to a press release from the College of Education.

“This is a pilot program; it’s something very innovative and new,” Wallis said. “There are other counties looking towards us to see if this is something that helps the community. We could definitely be a model for other counties and possibly even other states.”

Jay Sexton named inaugural Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy’s chairman

Sexton has previously served as a lecturer and tutorial fellow at the University of Oxford.

Generated from a News Bureau press release: MU Kinder Institute Names Oxford Scholar as New Chair in Constitutional Democracy
Jay Sexton, a lecturer and tutorial fellow at the University of Oxford in England, has been named the inaugural chairman for MU’s Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy.

Sexton will also teach a standard class load, mentor graduate students and continue to pursue research, said Justin Dyer, Kinder Institute director and associate professor of political science.

A Kansas native, Sexton returns to the Midwest after nearly two decades abroad. After serving in various roles, including director at the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford, Sexton will offer an international perspective to MU students, Dyer said.

“He’s a great addition for many reasons,” Dyer said. “He is an internationally acclaimed historian who brings a lot of prestige to our history department and to the Kinder Institute.”

Sexton’s position at MU officially began Sept. 1, but he began teaching classes at the start of this semester and working with the Kinder Institute in early August, according to a news release. Sexton also presented a lecture in August on “Brexit,” Great Britain’s decision to leave the European Union, during the Kinder Institute’s Society of Fellows Summer Residential Conference in Columbia.

“It was really great because it was relative to now instead of just history talk,” Kinder Institute Fellow and junior Emma Earley said about Sexton’s Brexit lecture.

Sexton is currently teaching Slavery and the Crisis of Union: The Civil War Era, 1848-1877 in MU’s history department. He will also have opportunities to teach American history survey courses along with other courses through the department, Dyer said.

According to the Kinder Institute’s summer 2016 newsletter, Sexton spent 16 of the past 17 years at Oxford. Associate Director and History professor Jeff Pasley said Sexton’s time spent abroad will bring a unique, transnational understanding of American politics and history and a much-needed positive spotlight to MU.

“[Hiring Sexton will] rejuvenate the study of American political history on a very broad level, making it a center of interest in the university and making it something that attracts students to the university,” Pasley said.

Every academic year, the Kinder Institute welcomes approximately 20 undergraduate students to its Society of Fellows and approximately 20 undergraduate students to their Kinder Scholars Washington D.C. program. The institute also offers a minor and certificate in constitutional democracy, honors tutorials in conjunction with MU’s Honors College and a study abroad program.

These programs present a number of opportunities through programs hosted in Washington D.C. and abroad, Dyer said. The program also allows for students to engage in conversations and debates about democracy and learn from academics within and outside MU.
“I know the graduate students are very excited,” Dyer said. “He is a great resource here on campus for students studying history.”

Adding staff such as Sexton allows for the program to expand, 2015 Kinder Scholar and senior Maddie McMillian said.

“He will give more name recognition for the program and help the program to expand,” McMillian said. “It is a great opportunity for students if they are able to learn from [Sexton].”

MU specialist says information about Zika virus changing rapidly

CORIN CESARIC, 14 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — There have not been any locally transmitted cases of the Zika virus in Missouri, but there could be any day.

Christelle Ilboudo, assistant professor of child health at the MU School of Medicine and pediatric infectious diseases physician at MU Health Care, says the mosquito that carries the Zika virus is in Missouri, but so far no one has contracted the virus from the mosquito in the state.

The Zika virus was first discovered in 1947, but it wasn't until February 2016 that the first human case was transmitted in the United States.

A Zika virus update released on Friday by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, stated that there were more than 16,800 confirmed cases of infection with the Zika virus in the United States and territories as of Aug. 31. There were 1,595 pregnant women in the U.S. and territories with evidence of the Zika virus as of Aug. 25.

When any foreign virus makes its way into the United States, news, along with fear, travels quickly. Ilboudo spoke with the Missourian about the knowns and unknowns of the virus and the new information emerging. *(The conversation was edited for brevity.)*
What are the odds of getting the Zika virus in Missouri?

Our concern for the spread of Zika has changed over time as we learn more about the disease and the mosquitoes that carry it. We were not too concerned about the potential for Zika virus to spread to Missouri because we thought it was going to be limited to where it could spread. But looking at what is happening currently in Florida, where cases have been farther apart geographically, it is hard to say how much risk there is. We do have the mosquito that carries Zika virus in Missouri, so there is a possibility, but I can’t speak to the risk of local transmission. As of today, we do not have any cases of locally transmitted Zika virus in Missouri.

How long does the Zika virus last in a person?

We used to say that people will have the virus in their body for approximately a week. However, there are now cases that seem to indicate that it can actually be up to a couple of weeks. As we track cases and look at those individuals, we get a better sense of how long it really lasts on average and how somebody can infect other people when they are sick.

How does Zika affect a fetus?

The higher risk happens earlier in the pregnancy. The virus affects the developing brain, and growth happens the most in the first and second trimester. So when an infection occurs in those trimesters, there is a higher chance of that baby having complications or manifestations when they are born.

If a woman contracts the Zika virus and then gets pregnant later in life will the child still be affected?

No.

What are the long-term affects?

In an adult who is not pregnant, there usually are no long-term effects. There can be some complications, meaning within a couple of weeks of Zika virus infection, some people may develop paralysis — where they can’t move their legs — but that typically resolves over time. It is a bigger problem for babies before they are born because once the brain is affected, it stops growing.
If someone gets Zika once, are they immune to the virus?

We think so far that if you get infected with Zika virus once, you have the antibodies that make you immune to it. But the virus can mutate. So there is a possibility that yes, you may be immune, but maybe that immunity is not going to be as strong.

The reason why Zika currently is such a big deal is that there is an Asian strain of the virus and an African strain. Originally, we had the African strain and it wasn’t that aggressive, even though it was infecting people. However, we found out that the Asian strain is the one that causes more neurological symptoms. So far there are enough commonalities between the two different strains that even if you are infected by one strain you will still be immune to the other, but this is something that is not fully understood yet.

What are ways of contracting the virus?

The mosquito is definitely the most common way, the second way would be mother to baby, and then the third way would be sexual transmission.

Do you know of any vaccines in the works?

I know there are a couple of different vaccines that different people are working on. I also know that there are people working on drugs that will potentially help. Not so much in terms of new drug development, but a few old drugs that we already have. There are similarities between Zika virus, Chikungunya, Dengue, Yellow Fever and West Nile, so researchers are looking at the similarities of the treatments we already have for some of these other infections with the thought that perhaps we can repurpose them for the Zika virus.

What do you suggest people do if they are worried about Zika?

It’s prevention, prevention, prevention. The Asian Tiger mosquito that carries the virus needs very little water to reproduce, so getting rid of standing water around homes, screen doors, screen windows, using mosquito and insect repellent containing DEET when people are outside is really key, and also remembering that this mosquito doesn’t discriminate whether it is daytime or nighttime, indoors or outdoors.
Rev. Jesse
Jackson Visits Students in KC, Discusses Diversity in Missouri

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=7f1fadb4-ecbd-4a42-a080-38157a460d0e

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -
Civil rights activist Jesse Jackson was in Kansas City Tuesday morning, talking to students at Central Academy of Excellence.

He encourage students to stay involved and even got a few kids to register to vote in the upcoming election.

Jackson stressed the importance of education, in a community where students face more obstacles, and a culture where athletics take priority.

"In this state, it is about 8 percent African-American. And the University of Missouri at the football field is around 75 percent. We cannot go from picking cotton balls to picking up footballs, we must pursue academics with the same vigor that we pursue athletics," Jackson said.
We asked how he would encourage students to stay away from all the violence in Kansas City. He said violence and lack of education stems from poverty, and it's up to leaders to change that.

"If you want to wipe out poverty, then afford us Medicaid and afford livable wages and make temporary jobs more permanent jobs. And on the other hand make education affordable. We have the capacity we have the priority to provide every graduate a scholarship, it's an investment in our future with great returns," Jackson said.

He answered other media questions about issues in the country, like race relations and guns.

When asked if the Black Lives Matter movement is doing good or is divisive, he said the movement is liberating. He touched on assault weapons, saying they should be banned because police can't protect themselves from the public who uses them to kill.
Kaepernick takes courageous stand, others join him but there is no turning back

Few things in this country arouse passionate love, fury or patriotism on a mass scale like the American flag does.

One expert told me years ago that our flag is the closest thing this country has to a national religion, and Americans worship it at least as much as their other national religions of Major League Baseball, NFL football and the NBA. It’s no accident that people filling stadiums and arenas reverently remove their hats, put their hands over their hearts and face Old Glory when the national anthem is played opening games. They do it for the sacrifices of people in the military, veterans and even those who have served the Union in elected offices.

So it should come as no surprise that many people have reacted over-the-top negatively to San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick’s refusal for about two weeks to stand for “The Star-Spangled Banner” in some preseason National Football League games. Kaepernick cites U.S. oppression of African Americans and other people of color for his action.

He’s right but he’s going against the blending of America’s religions. At first Kaepernick sat when everyone else was standing, and then, last week he knelt along with teammate Eric Reid.

What he is doing isn’t unAmerican. It’s his way of focusing needed attention on racial injustice in this country not unlike the Black Lives Matter movement. Kaepernick is a rarity as a black quarterback in the NFL, which adds to the attention he brings to the problem of racism in America.

President Barack Obama was right to explain on Monday at a news conference wrapping up an international economic summit in Asia that Kaepernick was like some professional athletes in the past who have exercised their constitutional right of free speech. They have come out on a social concern. “If nothing else, what he’s done is he’s generated more conversation around some topics that need to be talked about,” Obama said.
Keep in mind, though, that free speech is rarely free.

Some athletes jumping into the social arena haven’t been professional ballplayers, but they still exercised their power to force change. Black University of Missouri-Columbia football players threatened a boycott of games last year in support graduate student Jonathan Butler’s hunger strike over unaddressed racial problems on campus. That followed the police shooting on Aug. 9, 2014, of 18-year-old African American Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., the resulting unrest and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement.

They are all tied together. The MU football players’ backing was enough to force the resignation of the MU system president and Columbia campus chancellor and set in motion major changes focused on inclusiveness.

On Sunday, U.S. Women’s National Team soccer star Megan Rapinoe took a knee when the national anthem was played at the start of a match between her Seattle Reign and the Chicago Red Stars. It was her way of supporting Kaepernick. “Being a gay American, I know what it means to look at the flag and not have it protect all of your liberties,” Rapinoe said.

The stand being taken by that these professional athletes is huge because they’re up against the powerful forces of sports, the flag, the national anthem and our unwavering public decorum when those things mix.

Two questions stand out: Now that they have started this practice of not standing (and or kneeling) do they plan to continue it during every game? If they stop, does that mean they have given up?

They have to be prepared to be in this for the long game.

Racism and homophobia are deeply rooted in the history of this country and are unlikely to go away any time soon. Kaepernick, Rapinoe, Reid and others bring badly needed attention to these all-too-American problems.

The athletes in this way help serve as the conscience of the country on such social matters, pushing America to be better.

It’s no different from Jackie Robinson integrating Major League Baseball in 1947 and enduring years of withering racial slurs. Muhammad Ali got the country’s attention in 1967 when he refused to be drafted in the Army during the Vietnam War, saying he was a conscientious objector. It took a 1971 Supreme Court ruling to put him on the right side of history, enabling him to fight his way to becoming the heavy weight champion again.
Olympic sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos caught hell when they stood on the medals platform at the 1968 Summer Games in Mexico City, bowed their heads and raised black-gloved fists in a black power salute during the playing of “The Star-Spangled Banner.”

The hell and outrage people have expressed up to now will likely pale in what’s to come for Kaepernick, Papinoe, Reid and others. I only hope that the drive and discipline they have as athletes will carry them through the protests they’ve started, that more professional athletes join them, that Americans honestly look at themselves because of the athletes’ actions and the country starts to change.

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**Stem Cell Supporter Or Obstructionist?**

**Kander vs. Blunt in Epic Missouri Senate Struggle**

09/06/2016 02:12 pm ET

By Don C. Reed

What if there was a cure for a terrible disease you or a loved one suffered from—but a politician passed a law against that cure?

Sound ridiculous? Maybe not. Consider Missouri Senator Roy Blunt (66), Republican, who has been in office for more than twenty years, and who seems to judges medical science by his ideological opinions.

Senator Blunt has repeatedly voted to deny funding to embryonic stem cell research. He also has stated he would ban it—and even co-sponsored a bill to put scientists in prison for an advanced form of stem cell research.
This year, he has an opponent, Democratic Secretary of State Jason Kander (35), who is in sync with modern science. Kander “has consistently applauded the life-saving work of scientists in the field” and strongly “supports funding for embryonic stem cell research.”

Unfortunately, Senator Blunt’s advance is being heavily funded by the billionaire Koch Brothers, Karl Rove, Sheldon Adelson, and other ultraconservative groups and individuals. Through Political Action Committees (PACs) they can pour in as much as they want—either to support Blunt or to oppose his rival.

To date, Mr. Blunt’s re-election hopes have benefited from the astonishing sum of $13,764,838—think how many ads thirteen million dollars can buy!

Is the Kander/Blunt race important?

It is if you are among the one in three Americans with an incurable disease.

“...chronic diseases affect approximately 133 million Americans, ...more than 40% of the total population of this country.”

Suffering cannot be quantified; but the financial expense is enormous.

“...chronic disease accounts for approximately 75% of the nation’s...health care spending—an estimated $5,300 per person in the U.S. each year.”

If we could alleviate just one chronic disease, we would save staggering amounts of money, ease suffering, and save lives.

That’s why stem cell research scientists are fighting for cure.

Consider three conditions: paralysis, diabetes, and blindness.

My son Roman Reed is paralyzed, having broken his neck in a 1994 college football accident. Ever since that terrible day, we have been fighting for cure. We were fortunate enough to pass a
law named after him, Assembly Bill 750 (Dutra, D-Fremont) the Roman Reed Spinal Cord Injury Research Act of 1999.

“Roman’s law” paid for the first state-funded embryonic stem cell research in America. On March 1, 2002, I held in my hand a rat which had been paralyzed, but which walked again, its nerves re-insulated by the embryonic stem cells.

Roy Blunt would shut such research down.

Fortunately, he does not control California. Thanks to embryonic stem cell research paid for by the California stem cell program, (the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, CIRM), numerous therapies are moving along.

In FDA-approved clinical trials, newly paralyzed people have been injected with precursor cells derived from embryonic stem cells.

The proposed therapy has cleared its first two sets of safety studies (with small to moderate doses of the cells), and is now ready for the next stage, full-strength administration, to see if it can help someone with the devastating condition.

Diabetes: a therapy using embryonic cells is in clinical trials...

as well as several ongoing efforts to alleviate blindness!

How do the people of Missouri feel about stem cell research? They are for it, and their support is actually written into the State Constitution.

In 2006, Missouri passed Amendment 2, specifically legalizing embryonic stem cell research, and all research therapy legal under federal law.

Roy Blunt is out of touch with the people of his state.

With Missouri’s wealth of respected research institutions— the University of Missouri, Stowers Medical Institute, Washington University in St. Louis, and more— the state
should be a world leader in regenerative medicine, and with all the biomedical jobs and revenue that implies.

Instead, the Stowers Medical Institute declined to build a $300 million medical research institute in Missouri, precisely because of the negative political atmosphere brought about by the anti-research votes of Mr. Blunt and others.

And there is something else that bothers me about Roy Blunt.

I voluntarily served three years in the U.S. Army in the early 1960’s, when the possibility of being sent to Viet Nam was strong. I did not go to Viet Nam, but still I served.

Roy Blunt? He applied three times for a student deferment so he would not have to do any military time. Not only that, when asked about it, his office somehow forgot to mention how hard Mr. Blunt had worked to stay out of the Army. They put it down to a high draft number, instead of the applications Blunt successfully filed to avoid military service.

What a difference from Jason Kander—who joined up to serve in the military when our country was attacked on 9.11.

Personally I will always vote for a fighter, as opposed to somebody who runs.

If you live in the “Show Me” State, consider volunteering for the Kander campaign.

Check out his website: https://www.jasonkander.com/

And one thing more. Like most people providing care for a family member with a chronic condition, I am not rich.

But I was so impressed with Jason Kander that I sent his campaign $25. It is not much, but if enough people chip in similar small donations, we can get the message out.

If you agree with me that America—and Missouri!—is best served by a strong new voice in the United States Senate, stand up for Jason Kander today.
Don C. Reed is the author of “STEM CELL BATTLES: Proposition 71 and Beyond: How Ordinary People Can Fight Back Against the Crushing Burden of Chronic Disease”, available now from Amazon.com.