University of Missouri System picks UConn provost as new president

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 8 hrs ago

A top administrator from the University of Connecticut has been selected to lead the University of Missouri system, according to multiple sources.

Mun Y. Choi, the provost at the University of Connecticut, will be named as the new president at a ceremony Wednesday morning.

His hiring will be a key step toward filling a yearlong leadership void at the four-campus system. The university system and its flagship Columbia campus have been led by interim administrators since campus protests tied to the issue of race rocked Mizzou last November.

The Missouri Board of Curators finalized the details of Choi’s hiring during the closed portion of their meeting Monday afternoon.

The announcement is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Wednesday at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City.

Choi would replace Timothy M. Wolfe, who resigned amid the protests. Former Mizzou Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton has been serving as interim president.

A search committee had previously set a goal of choosing a replacement by the end of this year.

One of Choi’s first big tasks as president will be to hire the next chancellor at the flagship campus, Mizzou. The president names the chancellor, and the curators approve the hire.
Hank Foley has served as the interim Mizzou chancellor since R. Bowen Loftin stepped down the same day as Wolfe last November. The administrators left their posts amid a slew of student protests and a hunger strike, triggered by racist incidents on and near campus.

The turmoil led to a series of decisions by university leaders to focus attention and money to hire diversity and inclusion leaders and increase the number of minority doctoral students and professors at Mizzou, in particular.

According to a University of Connecticut website, Choi has been the school’s provost since 2012. Before that he was the dean of the engineering school and a professor of mechanical engineering.

He earned his doctorate in mechanical and aerospace engineering from Princeton.

Choi is also the first academic to fill the role of system president in almost a decade. Wolfe came to the role from a software company. He replaced Gary Forsee, who was the chief executive officer of Sprint.

The last president to come from an academic background was Elson Floyd, who left the system in 2007 to lead Washington State University. Floyd died last year.

An academic background was important to faculty from at least one of the University of Missouri system schools.

“When folks from the system came to Faculty Council and asked what we were looking for in a president, one of the main things we said is a deep knowledge and understanding of academia,” Mizzou Faculty Council president Ben Trachtenberg said.

He called Choi “a real academic,” adding that he’s excited to meet him.

Typically, the next step up from a university provost is to lead a single campus. Trachtenberg said the larger jump to a multicampus system isn’t an issue to him.
“It’s all about the person,” he said. “I think qualifications of a person are more important than” typical next steps.

A colleague at the University of Connecticut lamented the announcement, calling Choi’s departure a loss for the East Coast school.

“He believes in making decisions based on evidence — he’s very much data-oriented,” said Rajeev Bansal, professor and electrical engineering department chair, who has worked with Choi for years.

“He’s an engineer, and for an engineer he’s a very good people person,” Bansal said. “In a large room, he would know all of the people who are there and remembers details about them. In a leadership position such as a president where he has a large constituency, he will do very well.”

The University of Connecticut enrolls 30,000 students, with a main campus and four regional campuses. The University of Missouri system has four campuses with a total enrollment of about 76,000 students.

University of Missouri system spokesman John Fougere declined to comment on the presidential search effort, citing the ongoing effort to keep names secret to protect candidates from backlash at their current jobs.

Fougere did comment on the unexpected decision to make the announcement in the state’s capital, saying it speaks to the university’s larger land-grant mission to serve the entire state.

“What better way to reinforce that statewide message, on the occasion of the announcement of the new UM system president and start of a new era for the university, than in our state’s capital city?” he said.
University of Missouri curators to name a UConn provost as system president Wednesday

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
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After a nine-month search, the University of Missouri curators have settled on a top administrator at the University of Connecticut as the 24th president of the university system.

Sources confirmed Monday that UConn provost Mun Y. Choi is the curators’ choice to lead the system, which includes the Kansas City, St. Louis, Rolla and Columbia campuses. The sources were familiar with the selection process and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The official announcement is to be made at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City.

Choi has an extensive background in engineering and is known for having more than 20 years of experience in developing nationally competitive innovative research programs. As UConn’s provost, Choi oversees academic affairs.

The new president will be expected to play a major role in mending damage done to the flagship campus in Columbia a year ago when racial protests there attracted a national spotlight and led to the ouster of system President Tim Wolfe and MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

Wolfe was unpopular with some faculty and was criticized for never bonding with students, who said he failed to address issues of racism and systemic racial discrimination at the university.

The university’s reputation was also bruised by the way curators handled the eventual firing of an MU communications professor who last fall called for “muscle” to remove a student reporter who was documenting the campus protest. The negative attention made an already fragile relationship between the university and state lawmakers even worse, with threats of funding cuts.
MU officials declined to comment on a closed-door curators’ meeting Monday. “There is no official confirmation of candidates from this office,” said John Fougere, spokesman for the curators.

A spokesman for the University of Connecticut also declined to comment, and Choi could not be reached for comment.

Since the presidential search process began in February, no information has been released about the professional background of candidates who’ve been interviewed or how many were being considered.

After word of the apparent selection of Choi spread across the MU campus, faculty said they felt positive based on what they had heard.

“From the very beginning of this search process, faculty made it very clear that we wanted a president who had significant experience in running a university,” said Ben Trachtenberg, MU Faculty Council president.

The last two presidents to lead the university system — Gary Forsee and then Wolfe — had been business executives before taking the reins.

That Choi has been provost at UConn since December 2012 “is a good sign,” Trachtenberg said. “I am looking forward to meeting Dr. Choi and hearing his vision.”

Choi was appointed provost in Connecticut after having been interim provost there for the previous six months.

At the time he was appointed UConn provost, university President Susan Herbst boasted in a letter announcing Choi’s appointment that when he was dean of engineering, “undergraduate applications to the department went up by 124 percent and the number of undergraduate degrees earned increased by 64 percent. In addition, research grants increased by 143 percent.”

She also noted Choi’s “nearly two decades of experience in developing innovative research programs that are nationally competitive, original educational programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels to attract and retain students, and the building (of) industry partnerships and private philanthropy to grow and support faculty, students and staff.”

Choi came to UConn from Drexel University in Philadelphia, where he was department head of mechanical engineering and associate dean for research. Prior to that, he was a faculty member in the mechanical engineering department at the University of Illinois from 1994 to 2000.
At some point before his teaching career took off, Choi was a National Research Council postdoctoral fellow at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. He received his master’s degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering and his doctorate in mechanical engineering from Princeton University. His undergraduate engineering degree is from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The University of Connecticut system has about 30,000 students, less than half the 77,700 students enrolled in the UM System. And while the UM System is a member of the Association of American Universities — which has 62 leading public and private research universities as members — UConn is not.

One possible connection to MU is that in 2012, Choi and now interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley were among the three finalist for the UConn provost position. At the time, Foley was vice president for research and dean of the graduate school at Penn State and also president of the Penn State Research Foundation.

While Choi was hired at Connecticut, in June 2013 Foley was named executive vice president for academic affairs for the UM System.

The Star was told that more than three weeks ago, the 16-member university Presidential Search Committee, made up of curators, alumni, two faculty members, a staff member and two students, had selected three final candidates from a preferred list of five.

Those choices were made after two days of closed-door meetings at the Kansas City Airport Marriott hotel. A final three names were said to have been passed to curators more than a week ago, with information about why the search committee liked each one. But no recommendation of its preference was given to curators.

Michael Middleton has been serving as interim president of the UM System since November. He came out of retirement to take the post until a new president could be found.
University of Missouri to name Connecticut provost as president Wednesday

Mun Y. Choi, provost at the University of Connecticut, will be presented Wednesday in Jefferson City as the 24th permanent president of the University of Missouri.

Sources close to the selection confirmed a report in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch that Choi, provost at Connecticut since 2012, is the choice.

After a brief closed session of the UM Board of Curators to approve the negotiated terms, UM System spokesman John Fougere issued a news release setting the announcement for 9:30 a.m. Wednesday at the Capitol Plaza Hotel.

The announcement is being made in Jefferson City rather than Columbia, where the system administration and flagship campus are located, to emphasize the university’s statewide mission, Fougere told reporters.

“We all know the University of Missouri System is the state’s public land grant institution of higher education,” Fougere said. “We have a unique mission that is enshrined in the Missouri Constitution of serving all 114 counties and all 6 million Missourians, so what better way to reinforce that message than on the day in which we celebrate a new era in the University of Missouri System history by going to our state’s capital city to once again make that point.”

Choi joined the Connecticut faculty in 2008 as dean of engineering and professor of mechanical engineering, according to the University of Connecticut provost's office website.

Choi received his bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1987. He received his master's and doctorate in mechanical and aerospace engineering from Princeton University in 1989 and 1992, respectively, according to his biography on the university's Department of Mechanical Engineering website.

Choi was a faculty member at the University of Illinois from 1994 to 2000 before joining Drexel University in 2000 and as department head of mechanical engineering and associate dean for research.

The announcement will be made 359 days after Tim Wolfe resigned amid turmoil marked by campus protests over racial issues and administrative differences that had poisoned his relations with MU campus Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin. The search began in earnest in February with the
selection of a Presidential Search Committee that included the curators and seven other student,
faculty and staff representatives.

The university operates campuses in Kansas City, Rolla and St. Louis in addition to Columbia.
There are no set dates for introducing the new president to the four campuses, Fougere said.

“We do not have that planned at this time, but we should do that very shortly after the
announcement on Wednesday,” he said.

**MISSOURIAN**

**UPDATE: UConn provost to lead University of Missouri System**

RUTH SERVEN, 17 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — **The next president of the University of Missouri System will be the first in
10 years with an academic background and the first Asian-American system president.**

Mun Choi will be named as the next system president of the four campuses on Wednesday, a
source close to the search confirmed Monday afternoon. The position is the university's chief
academic officer for its five campuses.

Choi has been the provost of the University of Connecticut in Storrs, Connecticut, since 2012.
Founded in 1881, the Connecticut system has about 30,000 students; the four-campus UM
System has about 77,700 students. The University of Connecticut is not a member of the
Association of American Universities, as MU is.

The official announcement will be made at a news conference at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday at the
Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City. Spokesman John Fougere confirmed that the next president
will be present, though he would not confirm the identities of any candidates.

As when Tim Wolfe was named UM System president in December 2011, the search process,
which began in January, has been closed and highly secretive. A story in the St. Louis Post-
Dispatch announced Choi will be the next president Monday afternoon. Later in the day, The Hartford Courant, Connecticut's major newspaper, also reported that Choi will join UM.

Unlike his predecessors, Wolfe and Gary Forsee, Choi has spent his career in research and academia. His field is mechanical engineering, and he was dean of the School of Engineering at Connecticut before becoming provost. Before joining the University of Connecticut, he was associate dean of research at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

He also taught at the University of Illinois-Chicago. His doctorate in mechanical and aerospace engineering is from Princeton University.

Choi was born in South Korea and moved to the United States as a child with his family, according to the University of Connecticut.

In 2012 when he applied to be provost of the University of Connecticut, Choi was selected over Hank Foley, who was then vice president for research and dean of graduate studies at Penn State. Foley is now the interim chancellor at MU.

Choi's 2015 salary, including benefits, was $471,679, according to a database of state expenditures that tracks employee salaries.

When Choi was dean of Connecticut's School of Engineering, undergraduate applications and research grants more than doubled, and the number of undergraduate degrees increased by 64 percent, according to the Hartford Courant.

As provost at University of Connecticut, Choi recommended revoking comedian Bill Cosby's honorary fine arts degree after dozens of women came forward with allegations of sexual assault. A similar recommendation was made at MU.

Choi's predecessor for the UM System position, Wolfe, resigned Nov. 9, 2015, after race-related protests. Activist group Concerned Student 1950 had called for his removal and accused him of
University of Missouri names new system president


COLUMBIA, MO (KTVI) – Mun Choi, the provost at the University of Connecticut, is expected to be named the new president of the University of Missouri system later this week.

According to our partners at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the Missouri Board of Curators will finalize Choi’s hiring Monday afternoon, with an official announcement coming on Wednesday.

Mike Middleton, the University of Missouri’s former deputy chancellor, had been serving as interim president. The Mizzou system is comprised of four schools: the University of Missouri (Columbia), the University of Missouri (Kansas City), the University of Missouri (St. Louis), and the Missouri University of Science and Technology.

Choi would succeed Timothy Wolfe, who resigned in November 2015.

Prior to being named provost in 2012, Choi served as UConn’s dean of the engineering and was a professor of mechanical engineering.

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UM System Board of Curators Set to Announce New System President Wednesday

In a release sent to news agencies across the state, the University of Missouri System's Board of Curators announced Monday that it plans to announce a new president Wednesday morning. The announcement event, which is slated to take place at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City, will begin at 9:30 a.m.

Since former UM System President Timothy Wolfe resigned amid student protests and accusations of racism last November, deputy chancellor emeritus Michael Middleton has been serving as interim system president.

Though the board of curators has not publicly named the future system president, St. Louis Post Dispatch education reporter Ashley Jost says the pick is likely to be Mun Y. Choi, the current provost at the University of Connecticut.

Choi has an academic background, which is a diversion from the UM Corad of Curators last two hires for president. Gary Forsee and Tim Wolfe both had significant business backgrounds when they were hired to take the helm of
the four campus system. According to his online profile at UConn, He received his Bachelor's Degree from the University of Illinois in 1987, and his M.A. (1989) and Ph.D. (1992) in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering from Princeton University.

From 1994-2000 he was a faculty member in the Mechanical Engineering Department and the University of Illinois, then moved to Drexel University to be the Department Head of Mechanical Engineering and Associate Dean for Research. He moved to the University of Connecticut in 2008, and became Provost there in 2012.

Sources confirm reports of Mun Choi as UM System president are accurate

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Sources tell ABC 17 News that reports indicating Mun Choi from the University of Connecticut will be the next UM System President are accurate.

Choi started at the University of Connecticut in 2008 as the dean of engineering and also as a professor of mechanical engineering. He then took the position as provost and vice chancellor of academic affairs in 2012.

Choi received his undergraduate degree at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Choi went on to receive his doctorate in mechanical and aerospace engineering from Princeton.

Unlike his predecessors, Choi's background is in education. Both Tim Wolfe and Gary Forsee, the previous two permanent system presidents, worked extensively in the private sector before taking the job.

After the unrest that plagued MU starting in August 2015, the position of president has been highly controversial. ABC 17 News put together a timeline of events from the beginning of the August 2015, and has updated it with the most recent and prominent events.
August 2015:

The University of Missouri announced it would no longer pay for graduate students' health insurance. The decision was ultimately reversed, but it sparked rallies with hundreds students demanding change and voicing concerns over racial issues on campus.

September 2015:

Former Missouri Student Association President Payton Head posts on Facebook that he has experienced discrimination at MU.

Former MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin issues a statement denouncing "recent incidents of bias and discrimination" but students later protest saying nothing has been done to address their concerns.

October 2015:

Loftin orders diversity and inclusion training for all students and staff in 2016.

Days later, protesters block Wolfe's car during Mizzou's homecoming parade to express their concerns. Tensions escalate when Wolfe doesn't immediately respond to a claim from graduate student, Jonathon Butler, that he was bumped by Wolfe's vehicle in that parade.

The group Concerned Student 1950 issues a list of demands that includes an apology from Wolfe as well as his resignation.

November 2015:

Wolfe issues a statement addressing race issues as graduate student Jonathon Butler continues a hunger strike protesting "inequalities, inequities and obstacles faced by students, faculty and staff at the University of Missouri." At the same time, protesters set up a tent city on campus.

Professor Melissa Click is caught on camera harassing a student journalist and calling for "muscle" to have him removed from Carnahan Quadrangle.

Several MU football players tweet their support of the protests, as well as Butler, announcing they will boycott any future football related activities until Wolfe resigns.

MU head football coach Gary Pinkel comes out in support of his player's actions.

UM System President Tim Wolfe resigns. MU football players resume team activities.

The University of Missouri Board of Curators announces Mike Middleton as the interim President for the UM System. At the same time, the board turns over MU Chancellor responsibilities from R. Bowen Loftin to interim Chancellor Hank Foley.

MU head football coach Gary Pinkel announces he will retire from his position at the end of the season due to health concerns.

December 2015:

Rep. Rick Brattin files a bill that would revoke the scholarship of any college athlete who refuses to play for non-health reasons. He later withdraws the bill amid backlash.

January 2015:
Wolfe fires back at MU officials in a biting email.

Senator Kurt Schaefer, as well as other lawmakers, address Wolfe's claims in his email.

The UM System Board of Curators suspends Professor Melissa Click without pay after she is charged with third-degree assault. Click was caught on camera grabbing a student's arm during the November protests.

University of Missouri's Student Association president-elect Hayden Gomez resigns. Vice president Christopher Hanner briefly takes over president responsibilities, appointing former MSA president Payton Head as vice president before he subsequently resigns. Head is now serving as interim MSA president.

January 2016:

Ad Hoc Joint Committee on Protests, Public Spaces, Free Speech, and the Press is formed by Interim Chancellor Hank Foley and Faculty Council Chairman Ben Trachtenberg.

February 2016:

Mizzou and UM System officials testify at State Capitol about their strides in diversity.

April 2016:

MU holds open forum to help search for new president.
Search committee approves qualifications for next UM system president.

July 2016:

University of Missouri Review Commission holds first meeting.

August 2016:

University of Missouri holds forum on speech, protest policy recommendations.
University of Missouri Review Commission meets for second time.
University of Missouri to announce new system president Wednesday

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=d9f337ae-37d8-489f-90fa-f3e5c33419e4

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri said Monday they will announce the new University System President on Wednesday.

According to system spokesman John Fougere, that announcement will happen at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City at 9:30 a.m. by Board of Curator Chair Pam Henrickson.

This will be the system's 24th president.

Last November, then President Tim Wolfe resigned following racial tensions at the University of Missouri. Mike Middleton was named interim president of the system.
UM curators to announce new president Wednesday

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri Board of Curators will announce its pick for UM System president at a news conference Wednesday morning.

The position, which governs all four university campuses, has been vacant since racially-charged protests last November triggered the resignation of UM President Tim Wolfe and MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

Mike Middleton, a law professor at the Columbia campus, is currently serving as interim president.

The conference will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City.

Hence, This Is Racist

Academics must stop being surprised when students of color are able to thoughtfully articulate themselves in their writing and in class discussions, writes Charles H. F. Davis III.

No MU Mention

In a recent article, “Eight Actions to Reduce Racism in College Classrooms,” Shaun R. Harper, founder and executive director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania, and I offer a series of recommendations emerging from the more than 40 campus climate assessments conducted by the center. The first action challenges college faculty to recognize their implicit biases and to remediate their racial illiteracy.
As discussed in Harper's forthcoming book, *Race Matters in College*, college and university faculty members are the byproducts of their own educational experiences. Whether in K-12 schools, college or graduate school, too few of us were given sufficient opportunity to learn about race and racism or meaningfully engage with others from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

As a result, too little attention has been paid to the problematic and stereotypical ways we have been socialized to think about people of color. Naturally, the failure to challenge such biases prior to entering the professoriate has allowed prejudicial racial attitudes of some colleagues, particularly white faculty who are the overwhelming majority of college and university professors, to inform racist pedagogical practices in their classrooms.

The recent case involving a first-generation Latina student, Tiffany Martínez, at Suffolk University, is but one example. An accomplished undergraduate, published journal author and McNair scholar, Martínez wrote a personal blog post titled “Academia, Love Me Back.” In her heartfelt plea, Martínez first recounts an experience she described as both disrespectful and invalidating and then explains that a sociology professor accused her of plagiarism, not privately, but in front of the entire class. The professor’s claim was further illustrated by emphatic written statements on her paper such as “this is not your word” and “please go back and indicate where you cut and paste.”

One such comment was written in the margin near the word “hence,” which the professor had circled, an important detail, given Martínez merely used it as an appropriate transition to connect two related sentences. Was it that surprising to Martínez’s professor that she knew how to appropriately use a transitory word? Although some may dismiss this as a minor incident, Martínez reminds us of the internalized racism and self-doubt resulting from years of educational violence. Like the many students of color from whom we hear similar stories in our campus climate assessments, what transpired for Martínez was yet another debilitating and painful experience of marginalization.

In this case, Martínez’s professor was in disbelief that a Latina student was capable of using language consistent with what is regarded as strong, academic and scholarly writing. Such disbelief is likely to have been informed by common stereotypical portrayals of Latinas with which Martínez’s professor was most familiar, which are unlikely to have been reflective of the intellectually rich contributions of Hispanic, Latina and Chicana scholars like Laura Rendón, Gloria Anzaldúa and many others. Instead of acknowledging that Martínez is as capable as her white peers, the professor assumed intellectual incompetence and publicly
reduced her demonstrated genius to an act of theft. Such assumptions and actions were not only pedagogically irresponsible, but demonstrably racist.

It is imperative that our colleagues stop being surprised when students of color are able to thoughtfully articulate themselves in their writing and in class discussions. Such low expectations of students of color who have, at minimum, earned admission to our institutions effectively erases their demonstrated capabilities and ongoing potential to meet subjective academic standards.

Furthermore, it is categorically unfair that students of color are routinely targeted and attacked with allegations of academic dishonesty due to the limits placed on their genius by the white imagination. Not only are white students not subjected to the same scrutiny and humiliation by their same-race professors, but they are also regularly excused and validated when proven to have committed the very offenses that the academy abhors.

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Yale Graduate Students’ ‘Microunit’ Unionization Strategy Could Have Nationwide Implications

No MU Mention

A quarter-century-long fight for a graduate-assistant union at Yale University has taken a new twist that could make it easier for unions to gain a foothold on campuses.

Unite Here Local 33 has filed petitions for union elections in nine academic departments, focusing on those where union support is strong. The formation of graduate unions in departmental "microunits" is a test case for higher education, several labor-law experts said. Yale opposes the strategy and has asked a regional director of the National Labor Relations Board in Hartford, Conn., to rule whether it is legal.

The Yale battle could have implications for graduate collective-bargaining at other private colleges. At colleges where support for a campuswide bargaining unit does not exist, activists would be able to file for union elections in departments where they know they can win. Critics, including graduate students, deride the strategy as
"gerrymandering." Organizers describe it more benignly: "Departments that want to have a union will have one, and those that don’t won’t," says Aaron Greenberg, a political-science doctoral student and chair of Local 33.

The petitions for the Yale bargaining units were the first filed following an NLRB ruling in August involving Columbia University that gave graduate teaching and research assistants at private colleges the right to unionize. Graduate students at several colleges have begun to organize in earnest, and an election has been set at Harvard University for November.

It’s unclear if other union efforts will adopt the approach taken at Yale. A campuswide union has greater political clout, and organizers are generally inclined to build as big a tent as possible. For example, graduate unions often include research assistants in addition to teaching assistants, even though including the former may make winning a union election a steeper climb.

Yale’s history of graduate unionization suggests why a departmental approach might make sense. In 2003 graduate-union organizers held a symbolic vote in an effort to demonstrate overwhelming support for a graduate union. To the shock of activists, the vote narrowly failed, 694 to 651.

A grad-student victory in the Yale case could give activists a potent new tool in their organizing kit. Administrators, meanwhile, are concerned at the possibility of managing potentially dozens of collective-bargaining agreements with graduate students, says William B. Gould IV, a Stanford University emeritus law professor and former chairman of the National Labor Relations Board.

The ability to form graduate unions at the departmental level could make organizing a union easier, Mr. Gould says. Campuswide organizing is "like trying to herd a group of cats together who have evolved in dissimilar situations," he says. "You have to exert more energy in organizing. The more decentralized it is, the easier the organizing job is."

‘Community of Interest’

Collective-bargaining microunits received renewed interest from union activists following a 2011 labor-board ruling that affirmed the right of a group of certified nursing assistants to form a bargaining unit, says William A. Herbert, executive director of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, at Hunter College of the City University of New York. The employer, Specialty Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center of Mobile, had
unsuccessfully argued that the appropriate unit should also include other service and maintenance employees at its facility.

The labor board in that case also clarified that when an employer challenges a bargaining unit, as Yale has done, the employer must show that the employees excluded from the unit have an "overwhelming community of interest" with those who are included.

Lynn Cooley, dean of the Yale graduate school, has tried to make that case. Since all Yale doctoral students teach at some point, they are all part of the university’s Teaching Fellow Program, which is administered centrally in the graduate school. The policies that govern the program and expectations of work hours apply to all students, Ms. Cooley says, and all students take part in the same basic training to teach in a Yale classroom.

"If we have a union on campus for teaching fellows," Ms. Cooley says, "all the teaching fellows and all the departments should be able to participate in that decision."

Pro-union graduate students, meanwhile, argue that departments are, in fact, appropriate bargaining units because the experiences and working conditions of students differ depending on their discipline. In the history of art, for example, discussion sessions with undergraduates are held in museums, where graduate teachers try to shape how students think about art. "It’s a specific way of thinking about teaching that is different than other departments on campus," says Emily Sessions, a fourth-year doctoral student in the department.

To determine whether the microunit strategy is appropriate, the labor board will also consider whether the workers have distinct skills, training, and job functions, and whether they are supervised separately and are interchangeable with other units, says Michael J. Wishnie, a Yale law professor.

Yale may have an uphill climb in stopping the departmental strategy, he says. "The inquiry is whether the proposed bargaining unit is an appropriate unit, not the most appropriate unit," Mr. Wishnie says. "So there’s a little bit of a thumb on the scale in favor of the workers."

The microunits strategy isn’t just pitting administrators against students; it’s also divisive among students. Alexandru Georgescu, a sixth-year physics Ph.D. student, says Local 33 is trying to "bypass a normal democratic election." It wouldn’t make sense for Yale to provide different levels of health care or dental support to unionized and nonunionized students, he says, so the negotiations with unionized students
would, by default, affect all doctoral students. "They’re saying, We’re going to have a union whether you want one or not," Mr. Georgescu says.

What’s more, both pro- and anti-union students in departments where an election petition hasn’t been filed complain they don’t have a voice on a matter that could affect them, says Nicholas Vincent, chair of the Graduate Student Assembly. "There’s a theme of disenfranchisement," he says.

That led the student group to pass a resolution in October 44 to 17 against the microunits strategy. Ultimately, however, the decisions that matter most are that of the regional director and possibly the full labor board if an appeal is filed. Hearings before the regional director concluded in October, and a decision could come as early as November.