New UM president vows to tackle college affordability on a tour of Mizzou

COLUMBIA, Mo. • With a few months to go before he takes office, it’s a little early for incoming University of Missouri president Mun Choi to talk about how he’ll address budget concerns or hiring decisions at the four-campus system.

But it’s not too soon to listen.

Greeted with pomp and circumstance of a marching band and a tiger mascot, Choi stopped at the University of Missouri-Columbia on Thursday. He started the day with a reception, meeting with everyone from former Mizzou chancellor R. Bowen Loftin to incoming state Sen. Caleb Rowden, a Republican from Columbia.

After the reception and before a day of meetings with faculty, staff and student leaders, Choi spoke briefly about an assortment of topics, including college affordability.

A national issue, he identified affordability as a priority of his — particularly when there’s a 10 percent to 15 percent gap in graduation rates among students who receive federal need-based grants versus those who don’t among the university system campuses.

College costs don’t stop at a tuition bill, he pointed out. At his current employer, the University of Connecticut, a chemistry professor wrote a textbook that replaces one that students formerly paid upwards of $300 to access.

He said multiple universities are exploring the idea of open-source textbooks for introductory courses as a small means to address college costs.

Choi also addressed a smattering of other subjects, including his decision to move into the president’s residence, Providence Point. A university official previously said Choi wasn’t going to move into the university-owned home.

He also talked about his contract with the university, which doesn’t include performance pay to supplement his $530,000 salary, unlike the contract of his predecessor.

“I’m being paid to perform,” he said. “I don’t need additional incentive to perform.”

Choi ends his weeklong tour of the campuses Friday in Kansas City. He is expected to return to Missouri soon for a meeting with Gov.-elect Eric Greitens on Dec. 11.
Incoming University of Missouri President Mun Choi on Thursday set goals for emphasizing student success and expanding research on the four UM System campuses after he takes over March 1.

Near the end of an eight-minute talk to a full house at Memorial Union, Choi said he wants to examine the gap in graduation rates between students who receive Pell grants and those who do not. Pell grants provide need-based financial aid from the federal treasury, and Choi cited statistics that say fewer students who receive them graduate.

“We have to close that gap,” Choi said.

Speaking to reporters at the end of the reception, Choi said the difference is about 10 to 15 percent on the four campuses. There are several reasons for the gap, including the difference between financial aid and the cost of attending school. He wants more student aid and programs that reduce costs, such as open-source textbooks that students can use at little or no cost.

“All of these are things we can do to be creative and innovative to support higher graduation rates and outcomes,” Choi said.

The reception began the third of four visits scheduled this week. Choi visited University of Missouri-St. Louis on Tuesday and the Missouri University of Science and Technology on Wednesday in Rolla. The visits will conclude Friday on the University of Missouri-Kansas City campus.

The university’s research mission is a top priority alongside student success, Choi said.

“We have an obligation to use research to not only increase the fundamental knowledge that is available that can benefit society but also practical applications that benefit citizens of this state and beyond,” he said.

Choi is hearing high praise at each stop and that is likely to continue until he takes over the system. To keep it up past March 1, he needs to fill posts now held by interim appointees and create a stable administration, said Patrick Graham, student representative on the Board of Curators.
Searches to fill some of those posts might start soon, but others might be evaluated to determine whether they are needed, Choi told reporters. “It is very important for me to work closely with all of the leaders to identify where the needs are,” he said.

Choi is being well received because he began his career as a faculty member and worked his way up the academic ladder, Graham said. He is the first president in 10 years with an academic background.

“I have only heard good reactions so far,” Graham said.

Interim Chancellor Hank Foley, who opened the reception, said he also is pleased with Choi because the incoming president has an academic background. The most recent system president, Tim Wolfe, and his predecessor, Gary Forsee, both had business backgrounds.

“We are not just another business,” Foley said. “We’re an enterprise that looks like a business but has many other goals and aspirations.”

When asked about attributes needed in a president, Foley said he told the curators to look for someone with high energy, high integrity and a high intellect.

“Mun Choi possesses each in high quantity,” Foley said.

State Rep. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, met Choi for the first time Thursday. He said he is impressed and that Choi has allayed his fears that someone who had no ties to the state would not understand the events that produced an opening in the presidency. Wolfe resigned amid protests over racial issues on campus and administrative turmoil.

“My concern in him being someone who wasn’t from the state and not part of the university is that he would not understand the gravity of what happened over the last 12 to 18 months,” Rowden said.

In his remarks, Choi said he intends to live in the Providence Point residence assigned to the president and to be visible on campus. He said his wife, Suzanne Choi, loves the home and noted it is close to the Marching Mizzou practice field.

“I am really going to enjoy listening to them, and maybe I will even join them on the field as they are practicing,” he said.
Choi emphasizes UM System growth, land grant mission in visit to MU

COLUMBIA — Mun Choi’s message as he visited MU for the first time was about the importance of students and growth.

"The key individuals that we have to be mindful of are the students — we really owe it to them," said Choi, the new president of the University of Missouri System. "And we have a broad responsibility, each and every one of us, to be able to provide access, opportunity but also, very importantly, encouragement so they develop the confidence to tackle the many challenges that lie ahead in their careers."

Choi, whose appointment was announced last month by the UM System Board of Curators, is touring the four system campuses this week. He was greeted at a Thursday morning reception by a standing ovation in Stotler Lounge of the Memorial Student Union.

"M-I-Z!" he began.

The standing-room-only crowd did its part. "Z-O-U!"

In a speech, Choi expressed an optimistic vision and outlined his plans to promote growth, both in "stature and reputation," for a system struggling with budget cuts, administrative shuffling and enrollment decline.

He said he plans to make school more affordable for students, increase graduation rates and promote research and philanthropy in the UM System. Success for students means success for Missouri, he said.

"As a land grant university, it's our responsibility to bring benefits to all 114 counties of this state," he said. He will meet with the governor-elect, Eric Greitens, in the coming weeks to put this mission into motion.

Choi also emphasized the importance of research and excellent instruction.

"We have an obligation to use research to not only increase the fundamental value that is available that can benefit society, but also to have practical application that benefit this state and beyond," he said.
“I think it's a big step in a positive direction that the UM System is taking to increase diversity in terms of leadership,” Miles, president of the Asian American Association, said in an email shortly after Choi was hired. “I can't speak for the other UM schools, but here at Mizzou, Asian-Americans are so underrepresented (less than 3 percent of the student population). Having him in such an important role is inspiring.”

Yong recalled being in the MU Student Center when the selection of Choi was announced. She said her heart started pounding, and she looked around in disbelief.

“You can’t be what you can’t see — I really believe that,” Yong said last month. "You need to have someone to model yourself after and serve to inspire you.”

Yong also appreciates Choi's career in academia rather than business, as was the background for the past two system presidents, Tim Wolfe and Gary Forsee. Choi has been provost at the University of Connecticut since 2012, before which he was the dean of the School of Engineering.

"It’s important to have someone who understands what it’s like to be in those positions," Yong said. "How can you lead a group of people that you’ve never been a part of?"

After the reception, Patrick Graham, student representative to the Board of Curators, said everyone should be excited to have Choi as the head of the system. He is a respected scholar and a dynamic and personal leader, Graham said, "and what we need right now at the UM System and the state of Missouri."

"He is the real deal," Graham, a senior at MU, said.

Also in the audience was Elizabeth Lobo, dean of the College of Engineering. Lobo said she was thrilled to have an engineer as president. Choi's academic background is in mechanical engineering, and he led the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Drexel University in Philadelphia before going to UConn.

Lobo said Choi's points were "timely and spot on for what we, as a university, want to achieve."

Berkley Hudson, an associate professor of journalism and chair of the MU Faculty Council's Race Relations Committee, commented on the good energy and atmosphere in the room. Hudson said he was pleased to hear Choi emphasize the importance of students.

“He made the connections with students," Hudson said. "It’s going to be important for him to be connected with students even though his job is more global."

Choi, who will officially become president March 1, will have an annual base salary of $530,000. He'll also receive benefits, a car and a house or housing allowance. He and his family plan to live at Providence Point.
"We are the economic engine that brings in not only work force training but also opportunities for companies to remain in the state of Missouri," Choi said. "We (also) can’t forget the value of training humans, historians and social scientists that are creating a more powerful world for all of citizens. I think that’s going to be key."

During Choi’s remarks, senior Tessa Miles and sophomore Ashley Yong, members of MU’s Asian American Association, stood with other members of the group. In earlier interviews, each expressed excitement about having the system’s first Asian-American president. Choi was born in South Korea and moved as a boy to Chicago, where his parents ran a clothing manufacturing business.

President-Designate Visits MU

University of Missouri System President-designate Dr. Mun Choi addressed about 200 people about his upcoming inauguration in Stotler Lounge on Dec. 1.

“I am truly humbled and honored to serve the University of Missouri system by working closely with faculty, students, staff, retirees, alumni, civic leaders and industry leaders to create one of the greatest university systems in the country,” Choi said.

The stop at MU was the third of four inaugural visits to the system’s campuses this week. Other stops included the University of Missouri- St. Louis, Missouri S&T and the University of Missouri- Kansas City.

The university’s staff members, student body, alumni and community leaders were encouraged to attend the hour-long event held at 9:00 a.m. Interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley and Board of Curators Chair Pamela Henrickson introduced Choi’s speech with some words about the new system president’s selection process.

“I asked that they choose someone with high integrity, high energy and high intellect.” Foley said. “I think they hit it out of the park.”

Choi is currently the provost at the University of Connecticut. He was selected for UM system president after a nine month search by the Board of Curators. The search team consisted of the
Board of Curators, student representatives, co-chairs and four additional representatives. The national search took over half a year, but members of the team said it was a necessary amount of time.

“It was worth it in the end because I think the search was done right and it yielded a good result,” Patrick Graham, student representative, said.

The search was a result of the resignation of former system president Tim Wolfe last November after protests erupted on MU’s campus. The protests, conducted by a group called Concerned Student 1950, were a response to claims that Wolfe failed to address instances of racism on MU’s campus.

Choi’s inauguration will mark the first time the UM system has had a president with Asian-American heritage. While he said he plans to keep the campus inclusive for all, he also wants to focus on the financial state of the system, increasing graduation rates and improving opportunities for research.

“We have a broad responsibility, each and every one of us, to provide access, opportunity, but also encouragement so [students] develop confidence to tackle the many challenges that lie ahead,” Choi said.

Choi will officially replace Interim System President Michael Middleton as UM System President on March 1, 2017.

GEORGE KENNEDY: Great institutions require great leaders

If you’re a friend of our university, and if you’ve been paying attention to the news, you could hardly avoid being at least a little discouraged these days.
What with scandal in the Athletics Department, shortfalls in the budget, declining enrollment, forced retirements and grim prospects in the upcoming legislative session, causes of optimism are in short supply.

**So I hope you were among the 300 or so of us who gathered Thursday morning in the Memorial Student Union to meet Dr. Mun Choi, the new president of the four-campus University of Missouri System.**

The upbeat tone was set at the beginning, when Truman the Tiger led Marching Mizzou into Stotler Lounge. There was music, cheering, laughter and the obligatory “M…I…Z” call and response.

Interim Chancellor Hank Foley spoke first. He said he had hoped for a president with strong academic credentials, high energy and high integrity. He assured us that Dr. Choi fills that bill.

Board of Curators Chair Pam Henrickson, who led the secretive search for a successor to Tim Wolfe, agreed.

“Great institutions require great leaders,” she noted.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether this aerospace engineering scholar who comes to us from the No. 2 job at the much smaller University of Connecticut will be a great leader. (For that matter, there’s room to question just how great the institution he will lead is today and will be next year.)

I think he’s off to a strong start. For one thing, he makes a good speech. Without looking often at his notes, he spoke eloquently about how he sees the role of the land-grant university in teaching, research and economic development.

He pledged to work at getting to know the multiple stakeholders, from students and parents to faculty and staff, legislators and the state’s 6 million citizens. He has done his homework, as he
demonstrated when he mentioned our 114 counties and named a couple, including Pemiscot, down in the Bootheel.

After the main event, I had a chance to chat with several members of the search committee, all of whom were enthusiastic about their choice. The search was the most closed I can recall, so I asked Jon Sundvold about it.

Jon reminded me that he joined the Board of Curators when the search was already underway. At that time, he said, there were maybe 40 candidates, most of them with academic backgrounds. The final three – whose identities were never revealed – were all extremely impressive, he said. Dr. Choi emerged from a strong field despite some concern that he hadn’t held the top job.

In a brief news conference, our new president showed another characteristic that will serve him well, a warm sense of humor.

He remarked that one advantage of living at Providence Point, the official residence of the president, will be that Marching Mizzou practices just 200 yards away. He might join a practice, he suggested. Having seen him pose for smiling pictures with Truman and a variety of students, I could imagine his doing just that.

In response to another question, he said he expects to launch searches to fill permanently some key positions. His earlier words of praise for Interim Chancellor Foley suggested, I hoped, that he may think as a good many of us do that we already have the right chancellor for our campus.

At the end, he struck another welcome note with his answer to a question about whether his pay should include performance incentives, as the salaries of some athletic coaches do.

His promised $530,000 salary, which the Columbia Daily Tribune reports will be less than several coaches and a few School of Medicine faculty receive, will be perfectly adequate, he assured us.

Besides, he said, “I’m being paid to perform.”
I came away with the strong impression that he will.

At welcome reception, new UM System president lays out plans for the university

UM System President-designate Mun Y. Choi described the UM System’s commitment to students, research and excellence at a welcome reception for him on MU’s campus Thursday.

Choi explained his intention to increase graduation rates and reduce the costs of education, and he spoke of the importance of the UM System supporting each campus.

“The key individuals that we have to be mindful of are the students,” Choi said. “We have a broad responsibility, each and every one of us, to be able to provide access, opportunity, but also very importantly, encourage them so that they develop the confidence to take on the many challenges that lie ahead in their careers.”

Choi’s speech to a crowd of faculty, staff, students, alumni and community leaders was preceded by remarks from interim Chancellor Hank Foley and Board of Curators Chairwoman Pam Henrickson.

“I asked that they choose someone with high integrity, high energy and high intellect,” Foley said. “Dr. Choi possesses each of those in large qualities and I know that he is destined to do great things for Mizzou, for the University of Missouri System and indeed for the state of Missouri.”

Choi’s statements about achieving excellence and ensuring that students feel supported stood out as an “important message to start a tenure with,” RHA President Matt Bourke said.

In his remarks, Choi said that providing open source textbooks and closing the gap in graduation rates between students who have Pell Grants and those who do not, are methods to promote student success.

“In many cases we have students, because we are not able to provide enough scholarships for the unmet need, who have to work,” Choi said to reporters after the reception. “There are a lot of demands on their time to attend school and also work to pay for their education.”
Choi’s remarks also centered on MU’s responsibility as a land-grant university to every citizen of Missouri.

“We have an obligation to use research to not only increase the fundamental knowledge that’s available that can benefit society but also practical applications that benefit citizens of the state and beyond,” Choi said.

The UM System needs someone with “strong academic credentials” to fill the role of president because “we are not just another business,” Foley said.

“Mun is known for his ability to set the direction of change and innovation,” Henrickson said. “He not only comes up with bold ideas, he knows how to translate those ideas into action and to achieve results.”

Contrary to previous comments from UM System spokesman John Fougere, Choi said he will live in the official UM System presidential home, called Providence Point. Unlike his predecessors, Choi will not receive performance incentives.

“I felt that the salary that was offered to me was a very competitive and fair salary,” Choi told reporters. “I did not want to include in there the performance guarantee, because I’m being paid to perform. I don’t need additional incentives to be able to perform.”

Over the next few months, Choi said he plans to learn more about the UM System and working with faculty, students, staff and community leaders.

“Together, let’s develop that commitment of real excellence, having a university system that we can call upon as one of the best in the United States,” Choi said.

New UM System President talks finances in Columbia

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=f82a47db-7779-442e-934e-51fd3b8d29d5
COLUMBIA - University of Missouri leaders introduced the incoming University of Missouri System president as an academic, rather than a businessman, in his debut appearance on the university's flagship campus in Columbia Thursday.

But president-designate Dr. Mun Choi still hopes to provide the economic guidance and support for students after last year's budget shortfalls and racial protests. Choi follows Tim Wolfe, who came to the president's position after a career as a business executive.

"I asked that they choose someone with high integrity, high energy, and high intellect, and I think they got all three," MU Interim Chancellor Dr. Hank Foley said.

Choi said economic development is a top priority, with students' needs always coming first.

"We are the economic engine that brings in not only workforce training, but also companies to remain in the state of Missouri because of the graduates we provide," Choi said.

Choi recently accepted a $530,000 contract as system president, which is about $50,000 more than ousted President Tim Wolfe's base pay. An MU spokesperson said the difference accounts for performance payouts from other, previous contracts like Wolfe's. He said this is because performance payouts are not part of Choi's contract.

The pay increase raised eyebrows in November as the university continues to carry out job cuts and a hiring freeze to make up for millions of lost dollars. When asked about the contract, Choi defended his salary along with his commitment to the university.

"Because it is a competitive salary, I did not want to include in there performance guarantees because I'm being paid to perform," Choi said. "I don't need additional incentive to be able to perform."

Former MU Student Body President Payton Head was vocal during Concerned Student 1950 protests last fall. Head shook hands with Choi at the event and said he's excited to finally start looking ahead.

"All of this progress has to continue going," Head said. "Yes we have one step put in place, which is getting a system president, but now the work begins, and I'm pretty sure Dr. Choi is committed to that."

Head added, "I'm here to be a support system and I know all the people in this room are here to be a support system as well."

Former Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and newly elected state Senator Caleb Rowden (R-Missouri) also attended.
Incoming UM System President emphasizes economic development at MU

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=6893a581-c821-4986-a4b4-56bb936b151a

COLUMBIA, Mo - For his third stop on his UM System visits, UM System President-designate Dr. Mun Choi visited Mizzou's campus to talk to students, faculty and members of the Columbia community.

Dr. Choi follows former System President Tim Wolfe, who stepped down in November 2015 after the campus protests.

He spoke to about 100 people in Memorial Union about the importance of recognizing the University of Missouri Columbia as the flagship university of the UM System.

"Student success is our success, so we have to find ways to be very innovative to meet the unmet needs we have for students throughout the system," he said Thursday morning.

In a few weeks, Dr. Choi will be meeting with Gov.-elect Eric Greitens to discuss priorities for the system. Dr. Choi said he wants to form a strong partnership in Jefferson City. This year, many lawmakers fought to yank funding to the University of Missouri System after unrest at the school last November.

"I think it's very important being the land grant university that services so many citizens," he said. "It's important for us to demonstrate the value we provide not only in workforce training for the important jobs in the state but also creating innovation that brings in entrepreneurial opportunities and additional companies into the state of Missouri."

Bill Turpin is the president of the Missouri Innovation Center, a nonprofit that works closely with the university to create entrepreneurial opportunities in mid-Missouri. He said he was looking forward to working with Dr. Choi because "there's a fresh opportunity to create a dialog around becoming the best in the nation."

"In Connecticut he worked very closely with the state and some nonprofits to create a whole economic plan for the state," said Turpin. "If he could do that here, we get a statewide endorsement and plan to take the flagship university to support the entire state and we could
work together a little better than we have in the past."

Turpin said he thinks Mun Choi's educational background will make him a strong system president. The last two presidents, Tim Wolfe and his predecessor, Gary Forsee, had backgrounds in business.

"He's going to get stuff done," said Turpin. "I think that's an important thing at a university, there's always that academic freedom and I think with his academic background he knows how to do that."

Dr. Choi told reporters Thursday he still needed some time to fully understand the financial state of the University of Missouri Columbia but he said it's important for people to recognize that investment in Mizzou is key.

"We are the economic engine that brings in not only workforce training, but also opportunities for companies to remain in the state of Missouri because of the graduates we provide," he said.

Dr. Choi emphasized workforce training and economic development several times Thursday morning, both in his speech to attendees of the reception and to reporters afterwards. He also wanted to increase research opportunities as well.

As someone with an economic background, Turpin said there were many opportunities to strengthen and accomplish those goals.

"We don't know yet about him but he's got a great track record in Connecticut and he got stuff done," he said. "I think going over to Jeff City, working with the other campuses, and getting us all to work together is the biggest possible thing he could do."

Dr. Choi will take over the system March 1. At that time, he will also focus on filling the many interim positions on Mizzou's campus.

"I think its important for me to work closely with all of the leaders to identify where our needs are," he said.
COLUMBIA — UM System President Designate, Mun Choi visited the Mizzou campus to speak with faculty, staff, alumni, and community leaders Thursday.

"I am truly humbled and honored to serve the University of Missouri System by working closely with faculty, students, staff, retirees, alum, civic leaders, and industry leaders to create one of the greatest university systems in the country," System President Designate Mun Choi said.

University of Missouri Interim Chancellor Hank Foley said it was important the new president have an understanding of academia.

"To have someone familiar with academia with it's multiple constituencies, governance structures, and yes, pace, would be beneficial to us on campus," Interim Chancellor Foley said.

Choi said he is excited to learn more about the system in order to tackle challenges as system president.

"I believe that I have to spend the next three to four months learning the real important aspirations of all of the stakeholders of this university system," Choi said. "We have four different campus with different unique aspects and attributes. My goal is to really develop ways to grow excellence at the University of Missouri System."

Choi was most recently provost at the University of Connecticut. He will fill the permanent position left open by Tim Wolfe who resigned last November amidst racial tension on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. Choi said the issues on campus were handled well by leadership.
Genetically Modified Pigs Could Ease Organ Shortage

Researchers breed animals whose organs may be compatible with humans

By AMY DOCKSER MARCUS

Updated Dec. 1, 2016 12:44 p.m. ET

Genetically modified pigs produced by the National Swine Resource and Research Center for researchers at the University of Missouri. The researchers are studying the possibility of someday transplanting porcine islets made with the gene editing technology Crispr into people with diabetes as a possible treatment. PHOTO: MELISSA SAMUEL/THE NATIONAL SWINE RESOURCE AND RESEARCH CENTER; UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
There are more than 120,000 people in the U.S. waiting for an organ transplant and not enough donors. The dire shortage has led some researchers to consider an unusual solution: They are breeding genetically modified pigs whose organs could be compatible for human transplant.

Researchers have been trying for decades to make animal-to-human transplants work, a process known as xenotransplantation. Pigs are a particularly promising source of organs. They produce big litters. Organs such as the kidney and liver are similar in size to those of humans. “Nobody has come up with a better animal,” says Joseph Tector, a professor of surgery who runs the xenotransplantation program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

A previous push into xenotransplantation by companies and scientists in the 1990s faltered due to a number of factors. In early experiments with nonhuman primates, their immune system attacked and rejected the pig organs. There were concerns that remnants of retroviruses in pigs’ genetic makeup, while harmless to the pigs, might end up infecting humans. Trying to modify the pig genome was a slow process; it often took years to successfully modify a single gene.

Then last year, a group led by George Church of Harvard University published a paper describing their use of a new gene-editing technology called Crispr-Cas9. Unlike previous gene-editing systems, Crispr allowed the researchers to make multiple changes simultaneously to inactivate viral remnants in the pigs’ genes.

Crispr has helped renew enthusiasm for xenotransplantation.

Luhan Yang, one of the authors of the paper and now president and chief scientific officer of EGenesis Bio, which she and Dr. Church co-founded, says the company has used Crispr to create pig embryos designed to keep human immune systems from rejecting them. They have also used Crispr to inactivate pig retroviruses. The researchers are gathering data and hope to have pigs next year whose organs can be tested in trials with animals.

“Patients are dying. I am sensitive to their urgency,” Dr. Yang said.
Earlier this year, the University of Alabama at Birmingham received a $19.5 million grant from United Therapeutics Corp., a biotech company in Silver Spring, Md., to establish a Xenotransplantation Institute and facility to make Crispr pigs.

Dr. Tector said he and collaborators previously used Crispr to create pigs with three genes knocked out that play a crucial role in why human immune systems reject a pig organ. He has preliminary data with pig kidneys transplanted into two rhesus monkeys; the longest lived more than a year.

More data and more experiments are needed, and potentially more modifications in the pigs are planned. Dr. Tector says they hope to start discussions with the Food and Drug Administration next year about which further experiments they need in order to launch a small pilot trial to transplant genetically modified pig kidneys into people.

Dr. Tector says any pilot trial would likely involve people over the age of 65, one of the fastest-growing groups on the kidney-transplant waiting list of the United Network for Organ Sharing. Patients who are older are particularly vulnerable to dying before getting a transplant because of very long waiting times.

“For some, this will be their only option to get a kidney,” says Dr. Tector.

Bernhard Hering, director of the University of Minnesota islet cell transplant program, and Christopher Burlak, scientific program director of the university’s Schulze Diabetes Institute, are using Crispr to study genetically modified pig pancreatic islets, which are clusters of cells, some of which produce insulin.

The goal is to create pig islets that the human immune system won’t recognize as foreign, so they can be transplanted into people with Type 1 diabetes without the patients’ having to take immunosuppressive drugs to prevent rejection.

The scientists say they want to gather more data before trying the modified pig islets in people. “What will happen if we cause a major complication?” says Dr. Hering. “We want our first patient to benefit.”
In light of advances such as Crispr, the International Xenotransplantation Association updated its consensus statement this year, saying that in preclinical work, five of eight animals that get the modified porcine islets need to survive six months or longer. Dr. Burlak said that the surviving animals should be healthy and diabetes-free.

A spokeswoman for the FDA said in an email that applications to start human studies will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with viruses being a key concern. Some pig viruses may be new and not picked up by current techniques or be latent and cause disease years later. She said the FDA recommends that xenotransplantation be limited to people with serious or life-threatening diseases for whom other therapies aren’t available or aren’t adequate.

Medical school dean talks student mistreatment, research funding

COLUMBIA, Mo. - The University of Missouri's School of Medicine has a new action plan its dean feels will help put them in the good graces of national accreditation.

Dr. Patrick Delafontaine met with the University of Missouri Board of Curators Thursday afternoon at University Hospital. Among presentations regarding MU Health's finances and future plans, Delafontaine updated the board on the school's progress in different areas.

ABC 17 News reported in September when the Liaison Committee on Medical Education said MU was out of compliance on four of 95 categories. Among those was diversity in its student body and student mistreatment. The committee will return in 2018 for an audit of the school to discuss accreditation.

Dr. Delafontaine said it submitted its action plan to the LCME Wednesday, detailing how it will improve. The incoming medical student class "is among most diverse," Delafontaine said, with 27 percent of the class identifying as an ethnic minority. The school took the most applications in its history this year, and Dr. Laine Young-Walker was tapped recently to help improve diversity rates as assistant dean of student programs.
But as the school entertains a record amount of applicants, that office will also tackle reports of student mistreatment, which Delafontaine said double the national average. The school recently launched a committee for students to report mistreatment anonymously, called CiRCLE, which will investigate the reports and try to "close the loop" of mistreatment.

"We're encouraging reporting on any situation where a student would feel humiliated or embarrassed," Delafontaine told ABC 17 News.

Mistreatment is not an easy definition, however. Students answer a questionnaire, Delafontaine said, that asks if they've ever been "humiliated" by anyone at the school, which he calls a "very open-ended question." A National Institute of Health study done at UCLA from 1996 to 2008 found persisting incidents of "physical, verbal, sexual harassment, ethnic, and power mistreatment," mainly coming from clinical staff and residents, with more than half of the nearly 2,000 that participated reporting mistreatment. Delafontaine said a student may consider not knowing a staff member's question during medical rounds as "humiliating."

"It's not necessarily one definition," Delafontaine said. "So a real conversation needs to be had with the students, how do we define this. But, of course, it's there answer is what counts. It's the way they feel. We need to correct that. It's unacceptable that we have a rate that is higher than the average."

The work on student mistreatment comes as the school of medicine focuses on increasing national research grant funding, an important metric in improving MU's ranking in the American Association of Universities. The School of Medicine contributes nearly a quarter of all of the school's research money, which campus-wide took a nearly $24 million dollar dip from 2010 to 2016.

Delafontaine said the competitiveness to secure that money has increased while the NIH's funding has decreased. In response, the school hired three new department heads - Drs. Kevin Staveley-O'Carroll in surgery and to direct the Ellis Fischel Cancer Center, Talissa Altes to lead Radiology and Edward Yeh to head oncology - with significant research backgrounds.

"They've got a strong record of research in their respective areas of specialty, and that is a very important step in growing the academic mission of the health system."

MU School of Medicine making strides in diversity, dean says
COLUMBIA — **Doubts about the Affordable Care Act shadowed an upbeat message on the MU School of Medicine's progress in its reaccreditation attempt.**

Dean Patrice Delafontaine said Thursday that the school has increased its number of minority students in an effort to meet requirements for reaccreditation.

"It's a very significant increase," Delafontaine said at a meeting of the University of Missouri System Curators' standing health committee. "Our last (Liaison Committee on Medical Education) visit was eight years ago, and diversity was identified as an issue then too. If you look at our number of diverse students since then, it's been a flat line until this year, when we have 27 percent."

Delafontaine pointed to renewed focus on the school's pipeline program and scholarships as leading factors in the increase.

"We're really trying to implement best practices across all levels of the system," he said.

The school's accrediting body, the Liaison Committee on Medical Education, demanded fixes to student mistreatment, the school's curriculum and diversity in June. It gave the school two years to make changes before losing accreditation.

Delafontaine did not mention the other issues noted by the LCME, but said the school submitted an action plan for solving the problems Wednesday.

**Other business:**

The rest of the committee meeting centered on doubts about the future of Medicare and Medicaid funding through the Affordable Care Act and the impact that any changes made to the act would have on MU Health Care.

The committee expects that the amount of people on high-deductible health plans will increase and that a Republican-dominated legislature might repeal minimum benefits, said MU Health Care's CEO, Mitch Wasden. "We expect skinnied-down plans, which would put more pressure on health systems."

High-deductible plans typically wouldn't cover medical bills until they run over a thousand dollars — which tends to save money for everyone, as consumers think harder about getting treatments or try to compare prices.

However, rising health care costs and high deductibles may put more pressure on how aggressively the hospital collects its bills, Wasden said. This may pose a problem for doctors, who still want to treat patients, even if they know patients can't pay.

"It seems like this would be a really big problem moving forward," said Curator Phillip Snowden.
"Absolutely," Wasden responded.

Mizzou gets anonymous $1.4M donation for stadium upgrade

COLUMBIA, Mo. • The University of Missouri has received an anonymous $1.4 million donation toward its plan to build a new south end zone facility at its football stadium.

The university has been accepting contributions for the new facility for several months, the Columbia Missourian reported.

"I haven't been here very long yet, but that was one of the first things that stood out to me is just how much passion Mizzou fans have for their Tigers," said the school's athletic director, Jim Sterk. "It's been fun to see how much excitement there is for our vision with this facility, and we are so grateful for the support."

The university has raised $68.4 million of the $75 million it hopes to raise for the Memorial Stadium project, which is still in the planning stages.

"We have an opportunity to build a facility that makes a lasting impact for this program, and in order to do that, we need buy-in from our donors and fans, and they are doing exactly that," football coach Barry Odom said. "It's gratifying to see the excitement and passion they have for this."
Health officials say mumps outbreak could spread here

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. (KY3) - The mumps outbreak continues in northwest Arkansas, as well as up in Columbia, Missouri. Health officials say it could show up here too.

The Arkansas Department of Health says there are a total of more than 1,600 cases there, many in the northwest corner of the state. At the University of Missouri, in Columbia, the case count is up to 128.

The outbreak at the university started in early November, and now MU is urging student groups to cancel some social events. Most of the cases there are linked to students in fraternities and sororities.

Health officials here in Springfield say mumps can be spread through a cough or sneeze or even just talking with someone. Kids in Missouri are required to have two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, or MMR, before kindergarten. Though the vaccine isn't perfect, it's shown to be 88 percent effective in protecting against the mumps.

"We always recommend to individuals that prevention is key, so check your vaccination status. If you did not get two vaccines as a child, we would definitely recommend you go get the vaccination now. Also if you're just unaware of your vaccination status; you cannot find your vaccine record, we also recommend," says Kendra Findley, Administrator of Community Health and Epidemiology for Springfield-Greene County Health Department.

Findley says mumps actually has a 12 to 25 day incubation period before symptoms appear, like muscle aches, low grade fever, headache and fatigue. Days later comes the classic symptom of swollen salivary glands on one or both sides of the face.
The number of mumps cases among students has risen to 128, the Student Health Center confirmed in a news release Wednesday.

The Student Health Center acknowledged cases of the disease Nov. 4, when the center sent out a university-wide email confirming eight students were diagnosed. Each of those students, and everyone diagnosed since, has received the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine to protect against the illness.

**MU spokesman Christian Basi said fewer than 50 students on campus — less than half of one percent of the student population — are exempt from the vaccination.**

But Dr. Michael Cooperstock, medical director of MU Health Care’s Infection Control Department, said that because the two MMR vaccines students are required to get are only about 88 percent effective, the spread of such infectious diseases is not unlikely.

“There will be quite a few people who will still be susceptible even though they have had both of the vaccines they are supposed to have,” Cooperstock said.

Basi said the university is encouraging student organizations to postpone or cancel social events for the remaining three weeks of the semester. Because of the virus, the university canceled the “late-night breakfast” event it had scheduled during finals week.

However, Basi said the university has not considered canceling any classes or tests because of the mumps. He said students who are diagnosed at the Student Health Center will receive paperwork they can give to their professors if they have to miss class.

Mumps, though less common, is very similar to other upper-respiratory viruses like influenza.

“The initial symptoms of mumps are indistinguishable from an ordinary respiratory tract infection — fever, achiness, that sort of thing,” Cooperstock said. “Only after several days does it become apparent that it’s mumps, because that is when the salivary glands begin to swell up and get sore.”

Cooperstock also said that since there is no specific antiviral treatment for mumps, the cure is much like it would be for the flu: aspirin and sleep.
Mumps is about as infectious as the flu. Part of what makes the disease spread is that a person may contract the virus — and may be contagious — up to two weeks before the onset of symptoms. Cooperstock said this is the case with many infectious diseases.

College campuses are also a prime location for viral outbreaks because many people live in close proximity and are using the same facilities.

The longer incubation period can cause the spread of mumps to be slow. Cooperstock said the cases at MU are spreading at the rate he would expect them to in a campus population, and there is no good way of telling how long it will last.

“We were hoping the Thanksgiving break might make a break in the action, but that’s not necessarily true,” Cooperstock said. “So we might just have to wait and see. It’s hard to predict.” Mumps outbreaks on campuses are also not unheard of. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, several hundred students contracted the virus at colleges in Illinois and Iowa last academic year, and in 2014, a case in Ohio spread to over 400 students.

The virus was much more common before the MMR vaccines were developed. The number of cases in the U.S. dropped by 99 percent after the mumps vaccine program began in 1967, according to the CDC. Now, the number of annual cases fluctuates between 200 and 2,000 cases in the U.S. per year.

Cooperstock advises students who have contracted mumps to avoid contact with others to not spread the virus. He also said students should wash their hands often and cough and sneeze into their sleeves.

For students whose roommates may have contracted the disease, he said to sleep in a different room if possible.

However, he also said that if the student is vaccinated, they will likely be protected against mumps.

“If they have had both of those vaccines there is still an 85 percent chance they are going to be protected,” he said.

If you have symptoms, call the Student Health Center at 573-882-7481 or contact your health care provider.
Former Mizzou tutor-turned-whistleblower Yolanda Kumar starts GoFundMe page

By Tod Palmer

COLUMBIA - Former University of Missouri tutor Yolanda Kumar has set up a GoFundMe account “to assist with my legal and living costs” following her allegation last week that she helped perpetrate academic fraud.

Kumar resigned from her position as a tutor with Mizzou’s Total Person Program on Nov. 7 after she self-reported her role in “academic dishonesty,” a term she later used in a private Facebook post to friends that went public and brought the investigation to light.

Without income and facing significant legal fees after her admission triggered an NCAA investigation, Kumar said she has turned to the crowdfunding for assistance.

“I am a single mother and sole provider of an amazingly strong 14 year old young man,” Kumar wrote on the webpage. “You kindness and generosity is greatly appreciated.”

According to MU employment records, Kumar worked as a tutor for the athletic department on three separate occasions — September 2010 to September 2011, March 2013 to August 2013 and June 2014 until her resignation last month.

Kumar resigned five days after she said she called MU Executive Associate Athletic Director for Compliance Mary Ann Austin and blew the whistle on herself for a range of “academic dishonesty.”

She alleged in an exclusive interview with The Star last week that she completed online classes and took or assisted with mathematics placement tests for 15 Tigers student-athletes in violation of NCAA rules.

MU announced Nov. 22 it was “conducting a review of the allegations” and had self-reported the potential violations to the NCAA in a statement from the athletic department.

Kumar’s “Whistleblower Legal & Expense Fund” GoFundMe page, which has a $35,000 goal, had raised $275 in the first three hours, including a $250 donation from Mary Willingham.

A woman by the same name, Mary Willingham, was the whistleblower in the ongoing University of North Carolina academic fraud scandal.
Kumar worked as a graduate statistics instructor at MU for five years from September 2004 to June 2009 and served as an adjunct math instructor for three years from September 2010 to June 2013.

She also was an adjunct statistics instructor from April 2011 to September 2011, a position that became a full-time instructor position in the statistics department during the 2011-12 academic year.

MISSOURIAN

Former Missouri tutor Yolanda Kumar starts Go Fund Me page

Yolanda Kumar, the former Missouri tutor who self-reported instances of academic dishonesty and prompted an NCAA investigation into the athletics department, raised $320 on a Go Fund Me page for legal and personal expenses Thursday.

Kumar said her goal was to raise $35,000. The page was open for six hours before becoming unavailable. It was reopened hours later, but some comments had been removed.

"I am a single mother and sole provider of an amazingly strong 14-year-old young man," Kumar wrote on the page. "Your kindness and generosity is greatly appreciated."

On Nov. 22, Kumar posted a photo of a private Facebook message divulging instances of academic fraud during her six years as an academic tutor for the Missouri athletics department. Kumar admitted to completing online courses and taking exams for athletes of revenue-generating sports at the urging of two academic coordinators.

She reported herself Nov. 2 and resigned from her tutoring position Nov. 7.

Kumar spoke with a legal firm prior to making the post but told the firm that she could not afford the retainer, according to the Go Fund Me page.

One of the donors to Kumar's fund was a Mary Willingham, who donated $250. A woman by the same name was a former athletics literacy counselor who was involved in a University of North Carolina academic fraud investigation in 2014. She was accused of curating fake classes to keep athletes eligible by allowing them to do little to no work and not attend class.

"Yolanda, thank you for speaking out. I'm sorry for what you have to tolerate," Willingham commented on Kumar's Go Fund Me page. "The college sport system is corrupt. The NCAA is a cartel. It's time to stop the nonsense and provide our athletes a real education in exchange for
Joint session establishes subcommittee to create new governing documents

The student governments of joint session passed three resolutions in their semesterly meeting Tuesday.

Joint session is composed of 10 student governments: the Missouri Students Association, the Residence Halls Association, the Legion of Black Collegians, Four Front, the Interfraternity Council, the Panhellenic Association, and the National Pan-hellenic Council, the Multicultural Greek Council, the Graduate Professional Council and the Missouri International Student Council. Each government receives one vote on joint session legislation. All organizations were in attendance.

The third piece of legislation discussed, Resolution 16-03, took up the majority of time. The resolution establishes a joint session subcommittee, made up of one individual appointed by the president from each of the governments, to create a new proposed form of governing documents.

Governing documents codify and record joint session “in order to ensure its future success in representing the students of the University of Missouri,” according to Resolution 16-03. Missouri Students Association President Sean Earl said the new subcommittee’s composition of documents intends to “solidify the structure of joint session.”

The current joint session governing documents are almost three years old. The subcommittee’s purpose is to reevaluate those articles and to focus on improving the organization of joint session.

A similar idea was proposed at last semester’s joint session. That resolution would have created a steering committee of representatives to plan future joint session meetings. The resolution was tabled after discussion on the legislation became an off-topic conversation on the overall organization of the meetings.

The subcommittee would present the proposed governing documents to President’s Council for review and eventually joint session in spring 2017. President’s Council is a meeting between presidents of joint session governments twice a semester.

The legislation would give the President’s Council the authority to manage the subcommittee responsible for drafting joint session’s governing documents. Some representatives disagreed on
how much power the council would have in comparison to joint session as a result of the subcommittee.

“I saw a little bit of a disagreement on how much power the President’s Council actually has compared to joint session under the collected rules of joint session,” Senate Speaker Mark McDaniel said. “Due to the subcommittee, right now the President’s Council is getting its first official power through joint session to manage the subcommittee.”

Two amendments were added to the resolution specifying President’s Council’s control and creation of the subcommittee. Even with the amendments, the Legion of Black Collegians and the Panhellenic Association both voted against the resolution.

The other two resolutions, 16-01 and 16-02, passed unanimously.

Resolution 16-01 signs the organizations of joint session onto the “It’s On Us” campaign. Several organizations had already signed the pledge or worked to expand awareness of “It’s On Us”. IFC is also requiring all members to sign the pledge themselves this year.

Resolution 16-02 establishes the Latino/a Graduate Professional Network and the Association of Black Graduate and Professional Students as official members of joint session.

Judge allows evidence from unrelated cases in rape trial

A judge ruled this week that the prosecution can introduce evidence in a man’s upcoming rape trial related to two potential other victims in similar but unrelated cases, making use of a constitutional amendment passed by Missouri voters in 2014.

Usually, evidence of prior bad acts or behavior similar to what a defendant has been charged with are not admissible in court, but an amendment to the Missouri Constitution approved by voters in 2014 allows using that type of evidence in sex crimes when it involves victims younger than 18. In what could be the first case of the amendment being successfully applied in Boone County, Prosecuting Attorney Dan Knight will be able to use evidence alleging that Joanthony D. Johnson sexually assaulted two other women when he goes to trial on charges of first-degree rape and two counts of distribution of a controlled substance.

Johnson, 27, is suspected of giving drugs to a 17-year-old female in February and then sexually assaulting her while she was incapacitated. He also is charged with first-degree sodomy for
allegedly committing a similar crime against a different woman in August 2015. His trial date for the August 2015 case is not set.

Circuit Judge Jeff Harris ruled Tuesday that Knight can use evidence related to two other women but did not rule on whether the state will be able to admit police body camera footage of a third woman passed out and locked in Johnson’s bedroom in September 2015. Harris has not decided whether cellphone videos Johnson allegedly took of sexual assaults Sept. 18, Oct. 8, Nov. 14 and Nov. 20, 2015, with unidentified women will be allowed at trial.

In his order, Harris wrote that he withheld ruling on the body camera footage because further context of the scene was needed before a decision could be made. As for the cellphone videos, Harris wrote that it is unclear whether it’s necessary to identify the victims and that more information was needed.

Knight and Boone County Assistant Public Defender Sarah Aplin, Johnson’s attorney, argued Knight’s motion to allow the evidence Nov. 14. Knight declined to comment, and Aplin did not respond to a message seeking comment.

Missouri’s law is akin to a federal rule that allows propensity evidence in sex crimes cases to show that a person is likely to have committed the crime because of prior behavior or to corroborate the victim’s story. Frank Bowman, a professor at the University of Missouri School of Law, said a judge decides whether to admit evidence in each case and must decide whether allowing it has more value in proving the allegation than the prejudicial effect it could have on the defendant. There is no set measurement for a judge to use in making the decision, Bowman said, leaving it up to individual judges to make a determination of balance between possible juror bias and relevance to the case.

Bowman said the general thinking is that the more prior incidents there are, the better the argument that the defendant committed the crime. In a case like Johnson’s, Bowman said, the state could have tried to admit the evidence without the constitutional amendment because state and federal law allow evidence of prior behavior to be admitted for other reasons, such as helping to determine a motive.

“It’s just another reason, by the way, that having these statutes is probably a bad idea because prior bad acts can come in even without these kinds of statutes, but the limits on the use of them are more stringent,” Bowman said.

**What’s in a Name?**

University presidents articulate specific commitments to support undocumented immigrant students, but in many cases eschew the term -- “sanctuary campus” -- preferred by activists.
Since the election, leaders of dozens of colleges and universities across the country have faced protests and petition drives calling on them to declare their institutions “sanctuary campuses” for undocumented immigrant students.

The calls have come from students, alumni, faculty and staff who are concerned about the prospect of stepped-up enforcement of immigration laws under a Donald J. Trump presidency and the possible elimination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program, under which more than 700,000 young people have gained temporary protection from the possibility of deportation.

As formal responses to the various sanctuary campus petitions from college leaders have begun to roll in, some presidents have walked a fine line, outlining specific ways in which their institutions will not as a matter of policy voluntarily cooperate with federal officials in immigration law enforcement while avoiding adoption of the politically charged -- from some perspectives toxic -- term “sanctuary.”

In one such letter, Princeton University President Christopher L. Eisgruber said the university would protect its undocumented immigrant students “to the maximum extent that the law allows …. For example, we do not disclose private information about our students, faculty or staff to law enforcement officers unless we are presented with a subpoena or comparably binding requirement.”

At the same time, Eisgruber rejected the “sanctuary” label as counterproductive and potentially dangerous, writing that immigration lawyers consulted by Princeton “have told us that this concept has no basis in law, and that colleges and universities have no authority to exempt any part of their campuses from the nation’s immigration laws.”

“As a constitutional scholar myself, I agree with that judgment and believe that it connects to one of the country’s most basic principles: its commitment to the rule of law,” Eisgruber wrote. “That principle deserves special attention in this uncertain and contentious time. In a country that respects the rule of law, every person and every official, no matter what office he or she may hold, is subject to the law and must respect the rights of others. Princeton University will invoke that principle in courts and elsewhere to protect the rights of its community and the individuals within it. But we jeopardize our ability to make those arguments effectively, and may even put our DACA students at greater risk, if we suggest that our campus is beyond the law’s reach.”

To proponents of the movement, the adoption of the term “sanctuary campus” represents a powerful statement of a university’s commitment to protect some of its most vulnerable students, those who lack legal immigration status. And some college presidents -- including those at Portland State University, Reed College and Wesleyan University, have embraced the term, in each instance defining
“sanctuary campus” in terms of limiting the university’s voluntary assistance with immigration enforcement actions while leaving open the possibility that they could be legally compelled to cooperate. For example, Reed President John R. Kroger wrote, “Reed will not assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement in the investigation of the immigration status of our students, staff or faculty absent a direct court order,” while Wesleyan University President Michael S. Roth wrote that the institution “will not voluntarily assist in any efforts by the federal government to deport our students, faculty or staff solely because of their citizenship status.”

Similarly, Portland State University President Wim Wiewel wrote that the university “will not facilitate or consent to immigration enforcement activities on our campus unless legally compelled to do so or in the event of clear exigent circumstances such as an imminent risk to the health or safety of others” and that it “will not share confidential student information, such as immigration status, with the federal government unless required by court order.”

“We as a community share a commitment to the protection and support of all of our students, regardless of immigration status, national origin, religion or any similar characteristics,” Wiewel wrote. “Therefore, we declare that Portland State University is a sanctuary campus dedicated to the principles of equity, diversity and safety.”

But even advocates for undocumented immigrant students have questioned the usefulness of the “sanctuary” term. Writing an opinion piece for Inside Higher Ed, Michael A. Olivas, an expert on immigration and higher education law and the acting president of the University of Houston Downtown, described the term “sanctuary” as lacking in legal meaning and “too fraught with restrictionist meanings or misunderstandings about the difference between ‘defying the law’ or choosing not to implement discretionary practices.”

“To many folks, the term depicts a defiance of law and serves as a trope for unauthorized immigration and liberal pieties,” Olivas wrote. “That it has become tinged with racist and anti-Mexican sentiment renders the term even more poisonous. One person’s safe harbor is another person’s harboring, in the dueling metaphors, if not the actual immigration law.”

The term “sanctuary campus” is a twist on the idea of “sanctuary cities,” which as a matter of policy limit their cooperation with federal requests to hold immigrants in detention. President-elect Trump has threatened to withhold federal funding from sanctuary cities, and there’s reason to think “sanctuary campuses” could face similar threats.

In Georgia, the chair of the higher education appropriations subcommittee in the state House of Representatives, Earl Ehrhart, decided to put forward legislation barring institutions that violate federal or state laws from receiving state funds
after Emory University issued a letter suggesting it was considering sanctuary campus status. Emory President Claire E. Sterk’s letter to students, staff and faculty did not make any commitments to the sanctuary campus idea either way, but said only that “a letter requesting the need for a sanctuary campus and ways to protect all members of the Emory community is being reviewed by the university leadership.”

“If they’re going of follow the law, they can’t be a sanctuary campus,” said Representative Ehrhart, a Republican from the greater Atlanta area. “They’re mutually exclusive. Consequently, I’m going to attempt to pass legislation that makes it clear up front that state funding will be lost if you don’t follow the law. It’ll be a real clear consequence. If they go ahead and declare themselves a sanctuary, they’ll lose their state funding.”

Emory, in a statement, said the university “follows all federal laws and policies and will continue to do so … Emory University’s administration received a petition from a group of students, faculty and staff. The petition outlines concerns arising from the possible elimination of DACA. Emory administrators are evaluating the petition in an inclusive process to determine how best to serve those in our community whose immigration status may put them at risk.”

At Vanderbilt University, the student government on Wednesday voted 26 to one, with one abstention, in favor of a resolution calling on the university to become a sanctuary campus. The day before, Chancellor Nicholas S. Zeppos had issued a letter addressing the sanctuary campus call.

“We do not have the option of refusing to follow the law, but I want to emphasize that we are not a law enforcement agency. We are a university,” Zeppos wrote. “We are served by Vanderbilt University Police Department, and no VUPD officer is permitted to undertake an inquiry into the citizenship or immigration status of our students or others on our campus. We do not routinely release to the public or to public officials any citizenship or immigration information that may be in our possession, unless compelled to do so by law.”

Zeppos declined an interview request. Tariq Thachil, an associate professor of political science at Vanderbilt involved with a petition drive for a sanctuary campus, said that organizers “appreciate the fact that he’s coming out and clarifying some of the positions. I think we still would want to seek a little bit further clarification, because there’s some ambiguity in the language” -- specifically, Thachil said, in relation to the use of the words “undertake” and “routinely.”

Lisa Guenther, an associate professor of philosophy at Vanderbilt, described Zeppos’s letter as “encouraging but vague.”

“One thing that disturbed me about the letter was that the chancellor framed the sanctuary campus movement as a commitment to lawlessness, as if the students
were asking Vanderbilt to directly defy the law,” Guenther said. “He says in his letter we can’t break the law, but the sanctuary campus movement is not a call for lawlessness. Every campus that has declared itself a sanctuary has made it clear that they cannot provide sanctuary in defiance of, for example, a warrant for the arrest of someone.”

Guenther acknowledged, however, that a petition to Zeppos she helped organize calling on Vanderbilt to publicly declare itself a sanctuary campus is not nuanced in regard to that distinction. Rather, the petition, which Guenther said uses language put forward by student activists, proposes “cutting ties with all law enforcement agencies that collaborate with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) and Customs and Border Patrol (CBP),” “refusing law enforcement agencies who collaborate with ICE access to any Vanderbilt properties or information,” and “instituting a policy prohibiting campus police from inquiring about immigration status, enforcing immigration laws or participating with ICE/CBP in actions.” The petition also calls for Vanderbilt to refuse “to cooperate with any ‘registration’ system that seeks to target or surveil Muslims.”

“I see that as a kind of opening gambit,” Guenther said of the proposals put forward in the petition. “Now I think we’re trying to move into the phase of trying to formulate some commitments that we all can live with and that are actually legally possible to implement.”

Two other letters and statements sent by university leaders this week identify specific commitments to supporting students who lack legal status to live in the U.S. while avoiding use of the word “sanctuary” altogether. The president’s office at the University of California announced on Wednesday that it would “vigorously protect the privacy and civil rights of the undocumented members of the UC community and will direct its police departments not to undertake joint efforts with any government agencies to enforce federal immigration law.” UC articulated the following specific commitments for all of its campuses and medical facilities:

- “The university will continue to admit students consistent with its nondiscrimination policies so that undocumented students will be considered for admission under the same criteria as U.S. citizens or permanent residents.”
- “No confidential student records will be released without a judicial warrant, subpoena or court order, unless authorized by the student or required by law.”
- “No UC campus police department will undertake joint efforts with local, state or federal law enforcement agencies to investigate, detain or arrest individuals for violation of federal immigration law.”
- “Campus police officers will not contact, detain, question or arrest any individual solely on the basis of (suspected) undocumented immigration status.”
• “The university will not cooperate with any federal effort to create a registry of individuals based on any protected characteristics such as religion, national origin, race or sexual orientation.”

• “UC medical centers will treat all patients without regard to race, religion, national origin, citizenship or other protected characteristics and will vigorously enforce nondiscrimination and privacy laws and policies.”

Meanwhile, a letter sent by Harvard University President Drew Faust on Monday reiterated the policy of the university police department to not inquire about the immigration status of students, faculty or staff and said that the department is not involved in enforcing federal immigration laws. Further, Faust wrote that the university “will not voluntarily share information on the immigration status of undocumented members of our community” and that “law enforcement officials seeking to enter campus are expected to check in first with the [Harvard University Police Department] and, in cases involving the enforcement of the immigration laws, will be required to obtain a warrant.”

Faust’s letter includes no mention of the word “sanctuary,” a fact that a university spokesman declined to comment on -- and a fact that didn’t go unnoticed by activists involved in the PUSH, or Protect Undocumented Students at Harvard, movement, who wrote an op-ed to The Harvard Crimson calling Faust out on the omission.

“Declaring Harvard University as a sanctuary campus is more than a symbolic gesture, as it is a necessary step in reaffirming the university’s commitment to undocumented students and students from mixed-status families,” they wrote.

“Declaring Harvard as a sanctuary campus would also stand as a denouncement of a heightened culture of xenophobia and bias that renders certain communities vulnerable, particularly undocumented students, students of color, LGBTQ students and Muslim students. In addition to reaffirming the university’s commitment against voluntary cooperation with federal immigration authorities including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Patrol, Harvard’s status as a sanctuary campus would also involve the university’s refusal to cooperate with any registration system that seeks to surveil and identify Muslim community members. We reject the notion that the desired label carries no substantive value and uphold our belief in the power of words to influence our community’s culture and collective identity.”

“Many of the students recognize that the administration is making an effort to meet some of the students’ demands without embracing the label, and we question the reasons behind that reluctance,” said Miguel Garcia, a senior at Harvard and one of the authors of the Crimson letter. He added, “We understand that the reasons are financial and political.”
“I believe their approach is to say, ‘Let’s provide these protections, let’s not make a big ruckus,’” Garcia continued, “when the reality is that many students are afraid, and we don’t have room or time for the richest university in the world to be afraid.”