Getting acquainted

President Choi gets a nice start

Mun Choi is taking a tour of his new realm as incoming president of the University of Missouri System. So far, his subjects seem quite pleased.

Soon after he sets up shop at University Hall, he will choose a permanent chancellor for the Columbia campus. I hope he names the current interim holder of the office, Hank Foley.

Besides having a first name that itself should qualify him, Hank has performed initial duties with skill and good nature. When Foley took over, the moment called for candor and action leavened with caution. One might say a chancellor always should exhibit those assets, and one would be right, but in my opinion Foley showed his stuff very well at a time when the campus needed his leadership.

Foley makes a good impression. He deals with everyone with friendly openness. He is candid, some say almost to a fault. For my money, officials in his position hardly can be too candid, providing, of course, they display an intelligent understanding of the job ahead. If the more we see, the more we like, then we have the person for the job.

Choi himself will want to keep corrective momentum going. Continuing with Foley is a major step in that direction. Moreover, Foley and Choi share a common interest in engineering. A major goal for the university is to expand research capabilities and resources. Why would the president choose anyone else when he has Hank in waiting?
BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
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Yellow and blue balloons and a giant kangaroo mascot welcomed University of Missouri System President-designate Mun Choi Friday morning for his first visit to Kansas City.

Choi, a provost at the University of Connecticut who was named UM System president last month, addressed an audience of University of Missouri-Kansas City faculty, students, and civic leaders in a packed conference room on the Kansas City campus.

Choi praised UMKC, drawing roaring applause and cheers when he described the school as “a world class university, in a world class city.”

He challenged the university community and its civic and business partners to “pursue excellence each and every day.” He reminded them too that “it is very difficult to achieve,” and even more difficult to sustain.

Choi pledged to work with all factions within the university system to promote economic development and innovation; support student access, diversity and inclusion; improve retention and graduation rates, and expand research at all four campuses in the system.

“The campus does not serve the system,” Choi said. “The system serves the campus.”

At the center of it all are the students, he said.

“We can’t lose sight of that,” Choi said. “The success of students is our success.”

UMKC Chancellor Leo Morton said that in meeting this week with Choi his takeaway was that Choi “is a great listener and he has a mind toward helping.”

Morton said he believes Choi will make “fact-based decisions. He will give us a chance to put the facts on the table and that will lead to a great way to make decisions about how to get more funding for the system,” Morton said.

Choi later said he intends to make getting state funding to support construction of the proposed UMKC Downtown Arts Campus a priority. UMKC already has raised $48 million in private dollars for the campus. It now is waiting for the state to equally match those raised funds as part its 50-50 matching program for public-private partnerships to pay for capital projects at public colleges and universities in Missouri.
Pamela Henrickson, chair of the University of Missouri board of curators, said Choi, “is known for his ability to set the direction for change and innovation.”

UMKC alumni, students and faculty showered Choi with gifts baskets full of mementos, including everything from a Bobby Watson jazz CD and books by UMKC faculty, to samplings of Kansas City barbecue sauces and a UMKC Roo Jersey.

Choi held longest to a framed photo of President Harry S. Truman speaking from the steps of Scofield Hall on the UMKC campus in 1945. Embalzoned across the photo are the words Truman spoke on that day.

“This American nation of ours is great because of its diversity. Because it is of the people drawn from many lands and many cultures bound together by the ideals of human brotherhood.”

Choi, the first system president of Asian-American heritage, was selected after a nine-month national search. He officially begins his duties on March 1, 2017.

He has served as UConn provost, overseeing academic affairs, since December 2012. He started there as dean of engineering and a professor of mechanical engineering in 2008. Choi is known for having more than 20 years of experience in developing nationally competitive innovative research programs.

In the last four years at UConn, Choi has overseen a budget of $700 million while working with 1,500 full-time faculty, 31,000 students and 2,000 staff across 12 schools and colleges, including schools of medicine, dental medicine and law. Under his leadership, UConn developed several innovative new programs that have resulted in enrollment growth.

At the UM System Choi replaces Tim Wolfe, who resigned last November under a national spotlight following student protests, a student hunger strike and claims that he had failed to take action against multiple displays of racism at MU, the system’s flagship campus in Columbia.

Creating inclusive, collegial and respectful environments on each of the system campuses, Choi said, is among the core values he believes in.

Rakeem Golden, a former UMKC student, now a senior at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, was on the search committee that helped find Choi.

After hearing the new president speak Friday, Golden said, “He is a strong visionary. Now he has to start working. Now it’s time for our administration to stand beside him and let’s see what he can do.”
University of Missouri president stresses safety, diversity

By MARGARET STAFFORD Associated Press, Dec 2, 2016

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The incoming president of the University of Missouri system said Friday he will work to ensure that the system's four campuses provide safe, diverse and inclusive environments to allow all students and faculty to achieve their full potential.

Mun Choi, a University of Connecticut provost, received a rousing welcome Friday at the University of Missouri-Kansas City campus, which was the last visit he made this week to the system's four campuses. He told the audience, which included state lawmakers and Kansas City area civic leaders, that he will promote the universities' education and research while also improving their impact on the state and national economy.

Choi will officially become president on March 1, replacing Tim Wolfe, who resigned after protests at the Columbia campus last November by students upset with the administration's handling of racial and other issues. He said those issues were not unique to the University of Missouri or the Columbia campus.

"I think it's really incumbent upon all of us, that's administrators, students, faculty and staff, to ask within ourselves, 'What are we contributing toward promoting a more inclusive, respectful and collegial environment?'" Choi said.
Missouri officials are already developing programs to improve diversity efforts, which he hoped would reverse an enrollment decline that some attribute to last year's unrest. Another top priority is providing safe campuses, Choi said.

In response to a question about safety and security on college campuses across the country after reports of racial conflicts and sexual assaults, Choi said creating safe environments will be another top priority.

"After touring all the campuses I get a sense that we have ... created an environment that is safe and nurturing for our students," Choi said. "A university should be places where students feel safe, where they have an opportunity to learn without hindrance. That's going to be a key goal for us."

Last year's disruptions did not affect Choi's decision to accept the job, he said, because he believes the University of Missouri system "is one of the best university systems in the country" that is well-known for its research, student programs, high graduation rates and providing students and faculty with opportunities to make important contributions. He said sharing that message with residents in Missouri and other states will help enrollment rebound.

The protests also strained relationships with the state Legislature but two state lawmakers who represent Kansas City-area districts said Friday they were impressed with Choi and believe the relationship will improve.

"This is a new beginning," said Rep. Jack Bondon, R-Belton. "We are optimistic that some of the hardships of the past year will be overcome."

And Rep. Bill Kidd, a Republican from Independence, said lawmakers want the university system to succeed. He said last year's tension might have been an "overreaction" fueled by a small number of legislators and he expects it will be greatly improved during the upcoming session.
Phillip Snowden, of Kansas City, a member of the Missouri Board of Curators, said Choi stood out from several quality candidates because of his education background, experience and proven ability to work with lawmakers, business and civic leaders in Connecticut. Choi, the first system president of Asian-American heritage, was selected after a nine-month search.

"He seems to have an understanding of all facets of a major university system," Snowden said, adding curators were "just looking for the best candidate, regardless of background. I think we got him."

**Why Older Investors Often Take Too Much—or Too Little—Risk**

*Michael Finke is the chief academic officer at the American College of Financial Services.*

With age comes wisdom. But also worry, especially among workers approaching retirement. And worry can lead to unwise investment decisions.

Most younger workers don’t give that much thought to what’s going on in their retirement portfolio. As we get closer to retirement, we start paying more attention. Usually, paying attention to something as important as retirement investments is a good idea. That may not be the case if a worker’s appetite for taking risk changes over time.

**In research conducted by myself and co-authors David Blanchett at Morningstar Inc. and Michael Guillemette at the University of Missouri, we found that older workers are more likely than younger investors to experience what we call variable risk preference bias.** That is, their willingness to take investment risk varies depending on recent stock-market performance.

Risk-tolerance assessment tests are used commonly by advisers to recommend an optimal percentage of risky assets in a portfolio. The test we looked at was given to thousands of employees before, during, and after the recent global financial crisis. We looked at whether risk tolerance scores were stable, or whether workers’ preference for risk varied over time. A rational investor (think Mr. Spock) wouldn’t change their risk preference in bull and bear markets. More human investors tend to freak out when markets start crashing.
When risk tolerance was measured in a bull market, for example during the spring of 2007, older workers tend to appear relatively risk tolerant (they prefer a riskier portfolio). But when they took the same risk-tolerance test in the spring of 2009 after a steep fall in stock prices, older workers were much more risk averse (they preferred a safer portfolio). Risk tolerance measured among younger workers wasn’t nearly as affected by recent market performance.

Financial advisers who use a risk-tolerance test to determine the right allocation of stocks and bonds in an investor’s retirement portfolio would have recommended a stock-heavy portfolio in early 2007 and a bond-heavy portfolio in early 2009 to the same client who exhibited a variable risk preference bias. This would have resulted in allocating more of the portfolio to stocks when their prices were high and to bonds when stock prices were low. This isn’t a great investment strategy.

It appears that as we get closer to retirement, we get more anxious about the size of our nest egg. We only have so much time in the day, so we’ll pay attention to the things that matter the most. When we’re younger, we tend to think less about our retirement savings. That changes as we reach our 50s and 60s.

This may occur if age increases the connection we have with our future retired selves. For example, a team of researchers found in a 2011 study published in the Journal of Marketing Research that subjects shown a digitally aged photo of themselves increased their willingness to save for the future. Unfortunately, increased attention to the future is good for saving but bad for investing, as more frequent traders underperform less-active investors.

What can a near-retiree do about variable risk preference bias?

First, evaluate your ability to accept investment risk with your nest egg. Can you handle a 20% loss in your portfolio a few years before retirement? Stock prices fall by 20% every five years or so. Rebalance your retirement portfolio into a higher allocation of bonds to avoid panic selling when the market drops. Or, hand control of your retirement investments to someone else either through a conservative life-cycle (or target date) fund or through a professional adviser who will rebalance in the right direction when markets rise or fall.
From JFK to Trump, technology helps shape image

Generated from News Bureau press release: President John F. Kennedy and the Masculine Mystique

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=371d6dff-12ba-47b7-8441-4a93b33ccf12


Kennedy and his advisers did not let Americans forget this age difference.

The “New Frontier” bearing of what became the Kennedy administration depended on “vigor,” a word he used frequently in speeches. The young president palled around with Frank Sinatra, rubbed shoulders with astronauts, engaged in rough-and-tumble touch football games with his large family.

And he had a smile and manner that fit perfectly with the burgeoning medium of the time, television.

“Kennedy is so good at this image cultivation that he really is sort of the first celebrity president,” Dr. Steven Watts, historian at the University of Missouri, said.

Kennedy, elected in 1960, would not be the last president to engage changing media to build an image.
Ronald Reagan had a leadership background but also a Hollywood resume and consultants to finesse his media presence. Barack Obama became a trailblazer in using social media as a means of organizing supporters and raising campaign funds.

Draw the image-cultivation line, then, from JFK to Donald Trump, elected last month. Trump, who had his own reality show, proved at ease in front of a camera. His “Make America Great Again” mantra owed much to Reagan’s “Morning in America.”

And his employment of Twitter, for good or ill, showed an embrace of new technology that spread the message of his candidacy.

Dr. James Carviou, an assistant professor of journalism at Missouri Western State University, said that particular medium set the tone for the 2016 campaign.

“The 2008 election was the YouTube election. Video was everything,” he said. “This election had less video. It was really Twitter.”

His colleague in the Department of Communications and Journalism, Dr. John Tapia, viewed this in much the same way.

“I kind of wonder,” Tapia said, “was the tweet the debate?”

Knowing the media

Alf Landon, the Depression-era Kansas governor and Republican presidential candidate in 1936, became an elder statesman for his state and his party. In 1980, Tapia got a chance to chat with Landon.

“Interestingly, he said what ruined political communication, in his opinion, was the teleprompter,” the Western professor said. “You’re not interacting with a live audience.”
Times change, as does technology. Landon, in running for president, had none of his speeches televised. He could not imagine sending his 140-character thoughts around the world — instantly — to smartphones.

Dr. David T. McMahan, professor of communications at Missouri Western, believes Trump took advantage of the media’s fascination with his use of Twitter.

“I think it was a happy coincidence, at first,” the professor said. “Then, he said, ‘Wait a second, I’m getting all sorts of free publicity.’”

In his classes, McMahan used research that showed Trump, during one week in September, sending out 31 tweets. That same week, Democrat Hillary Clinton sent out 100 tweets.

Despite her activity, Clinton’s tweets got about 30 percent of the number of retweets as Trump’s, and roughly 23 percent of the number of likes.

In short, said Dr. Robert G. Nulph, Western associate professor of journalism, the Republican candidate knew where and how he could generate attention for his campaign.

“He knows the media is watching his Twitter feed, and that will create a story,” Nulph said. “It’s almost like a drug in your veins. You have to maintain a certain blood level. Well, he maintains a certain news level just by sending out tweets because he knows the press is going to pick that up.”

Carviou added, “There are news stories on CNN where they spend an hour talking about one tweet. The process of discussing the tweet is more contextual that what he tweeted in the first place.”
With this, Trump managed to shape his own image, that of an outsider with deliberate provocations. He resisted the teleprompter, knocking one over, to great headline effect, during a North Carolina campaign appearance.

“Even his campaign, he kind of established them as the establishment. He would go against his campaign, and people loved that,” Nulph said. “The guy is a brilliant marketer.”

Masculine image

Watts, who specializes in cultural and intellectual history, has written biographies about the likes of Walt Disney, Henry Ford and Hugh Hefner. But his colleagues raised an eyebrow when he mentioned an examination of the Kennedy years.

So much has been written, they said. What more could be added?

But the University of Missouri professor wanted to reconcile Kennedy’s enormous popularity with his political achievements, which he saw as good but not extraordinary.

“Originally, I attributed all of this to the assassination and the kind of golden view of Kennedy after his terrible death,” Watts said. “Actually, even before his assassination he was terrifically popular.”

The historian found that the cultural image had become the source of much of the popularity. In addition, he discovered that the masculine image portrayed by Kennedy stood as part of the appeal.

This mattered a lot at the time of his election, Watts said.

“In the ’50s there are just lots of complaints throughout the culture that American men are becoming wimpy. They seem to be a pale reflection of the heroic men of an earlier period,” the professor said, noting the perception that suburban lives and bureaucratic jobs had softened males of the time.
Watts’ book on the subject, “JFK and the Masculine Mystique: Sex and Power on the New Frontier,” has just been published. It is available at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) and through other booksellers.

Kennedy’s creation of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness, his devotion to male-centric writers like Norman Mailer and Ian Fleming and even his womanizing (whispered about in those days, confirmed in later years) contributed to the image.

Part of the image maintenance became suppressing news of Kennedy’s own health problems, including chronic back woes and Addison’s disease.

“He really did want to keep that from the public because it would undercut the kind of vigorous male figure that he wished to appear in the public limelight,” Watts said.

This image protection appears at odds with the Trump election, the candidate seeming his own worst enemy at times.

“While I would not say that there is a parallel with Donald Trump and John Kennedy, I think Kennedy really created that kind of atmosphere that Trump clearly took advantage of,” Watts said.

**MISSOURIAN**

**Despite 'good faith efforts', MU grad students wary of administration's promises**

RUTH SERVEN, Dec 2, 2016

COLUMBIA — Graduate students are still positive about MU, but have low confidence in university leadership and promises, according to a survey released by the Coalition of Graduate Workers.
About 10 percent of the university's graduate student population participated in the survey, conducted by the coalition between Sept. 26 and Oct. 4. In April, graduate students voted for the coalition to represent them in collective bargaining, although the university does not currently recognize the coalition as a union.

The survey found:

- A majority of respondents indicated that their wages were inadequate to meet household budgets, and outside work or loans were required to meet expenses.

- Of those who had health care expenses in the past year, a majority indicated that the Aetna health plan provided by the university was inadequate.

- Of those referred to off-campus mental health providers, a majority indicated their health insurance was inadequate to cover costs.

- A majority of graduate employees are "strongly positive" about the university as an institution, but do not believe the administration will prioritize their well-being, indicating that graduate employees do not trust the administration to comprehensively address graduate employee concerns.

"Our goal with the survey was to try and demonstrate that these are the problems folks are facing," said Connor Lewis, co-chair of the coalition.

Until recently, Lewis worked three jobs to make ends meet.

"It's tough on you, tough on your spouse, tough on your family, and it really adds a layer of stress that doesn't need to be there," he said.

At this time of year, Lewis said, tight finances make him and his wife worry about if they can go to California or New York to visit their families, and stress about buying Christmas presents for relatives.
"Like a lot of low-income families, you want to be able to enjoy and spend time with your family, but it's a real struggle to do so," he said.

Zachary Dowdle, a third-year doctoral student in the Department of History, said his original stipend at the history department was $13,000 per year. If his wife wasn't working and that stipend had been their sole income, Dowdle said he might not have been able to pay his rent.

"And the thing that's really an issue, is the stipends are only distributed over 10 months," he said. "The summer is the roughest."

He takes another job in the summer, which he doesn't mind too much — last year he worked at Ellis Library — but the real hit is on his long-term research, he said. Financial pressures mean he cannot take the summer to work on his dissertation or take essential research trips.

Sarah McCune, who is on the coalition's coordinating committee, said low pay has forced graduate students to make hard decisions about covering basic needs.

When she first came to MU six years ago, graduate students passed around a box to help cover the medical expenses of a student with cancer who had maxed out their health care. She's had to delay car repairs and buying a new washer and dryer. She'll have to pay for her upcoming dental appointment out of pocket.

"If we didn't have access to student loans, I don't know what we would do," McCune said. "And that's terrible, but it's true."

Each student, and the survey, said they thought the problems were solvable, but didn't have much faith in current leadership to offer solutions.

"There are some good faith efforts being made, but for some reason, it's just not working," Lewis said. "Of course, I think the only way to solve that is to give employees a voice in the process and form a union."
Problems pointed out in the survey are not new; nearly a year ago, the Task Force on the Graduate Student Experience laid out three recommendations for the university: improve support structures for graduate students, compensation and workload of graduate assistants and the graduate education culture.

Soon afterwards, Interim Chancellor Hank Foley announced he would raise the minimum stipend of graduate students to $15,000, and again to $18,000 in July 2017.

In an email sent Thursday, Foley reminded faculty and staff of progress made on graduate student stipends, and pushed back against the idea that the administration has been inactive.

"The general tenor of the document to President Choi is that they do not believe we have their best interests in mind," Foley wrote. "Despite all that, they are, however, very positive about the University of Missouri, which is somewhat cheering, albeit seemingly inconsistent with the rest of the paper."

In the email, Foley said he did not expect graduate student demands to stop, "because even as we meet their most pressing needs, the (Coalition of Graduate Workers) is seeking to establish a graduate student union as a bargaining unit."

Lewis and Dowdle said that they haven't had the chance to meet the new University of Missouri System President, Mun Choi, but are hopeful that Choi's time at the University of Connecticut, which has a graduate student union, will make him willing to recognize the coalition as a union.

As for graduate students who are new to campus and don't know the backstory of last year, Dowdle said, "Even if it's in writing, you don't know what's going to happen. Contracts that we sign look nice, but it doesn't always mean a ton."
MU study predicts reduction in crashes with new technology

COLUMBIA, Mo. - A recent University of Missouri study predicted a reduction in crashes with the introduction of collision avoidance technology.

In a special report last week, ABC 17 News looked into what government officials are doing to reduce deadly crashes in Missouri. Now, ABC 17 News is digging into what is being done in the private sector.

Researches in the MU Industrial Manufacturing Systems Engineering College studied the driving behavior of 20 students with different types of warning systems as well as a group of drivers that work for a transportation service.

The findings released in November showed three out of four people studied showed improved driving behavior during the study.

Dr. Jung Kim in the IMSE department led the study at MU.

"I strongly believe that that is the way that we can reduce the accident rate, especially on the highway," Kim said.

Researchers studied student drivers using four different types of crash avoidance systems that can be installed into vehicles without the new technology.

The systems track things like lane departure and warned drivers when getting to close to other vehicles.

The researchers compared how driving behavior improved with each system and how much effort it required.

Drivers trusted the cheaper systems less as they put out more false warnings.

"If the driver is consistently exposed to that kind of the false warning, then they lose the trust about that sensor and then they do not follow the-they do not pay attention at all to that warning," Kim said.
The more costly systems in the $1,400 to $1,900 range provided drivers with a visual display along with a warning signal.

But systems than ran in the $300 to $500 range came without a visual display and left drivers guessing what they did wrong, increasing their stress levels.

"Having to spend that extra time remembering which noise is for which signal takes that extra time," assistant researcher Jackson Smith said.

"In a driving situation, on a highway 80 miles per hour, one single second can decide critical death or minor damage," Kim said.

When studying the professional drivers, researchers found driving behaviors improved dramatically once they knew the systems were on.

In the special report, ABC 17 News reported distracted driving is the number one cause of deadly crashes in Missouri.

The MU study concluded these systems should be designed to avoid any visual distractions and minimize false alarms.

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**Former Mizzou tutor promises exclusive interview with 'major network'**

By Dave Matter St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 8 hrs ago

COLUMBIA, MO. • Yolanda Kumar, the former University of Missouri athletics tutor-turned-whistle blower, has not yet talked to the NCAA about her allegations of academic fraud involving Mizzou athletes but has promised an exclusive interview with a major TV network, she told the Post-Dispatch.
Kumar declined an interview request Sunday but said in a series of text messages that an executive producer from a major network flew to Columbia last Wednesday to meet her and see her “wealth of documentation.”

Kumar, who recently posted an account on GoFundMe.com seeking donations to assist with “legal and living expenses,” said she is not being paid for the interview with the major network. She would not say which network. “The treasure is in the truth,” she said via text.

Kumar said the NCAA has called her twice about the allegations she first shared in a Facebook post two weeks ago. Asked if she plans to talk to the NCAA about her allegations, Kumar texted, “Eventually.”

Two weeks ago Kumar told the Post-Dispatch that she was groomed by her superiors in the Mizzou athletics academic department to participate in what she called “academic dishonesty.” She said she completed entire courses for athletes, helped with online tests and took entrance exams for athletes.

Kumar addressed her allegations with a series of tweets Sunday posted on her account, @Muslimgirl1973. (Kumar confirmed to the Post-Dispatch that this is indeed her account).

Last month, Mizzou announced that it launched an internal review of the allegations and contacted the NCAA about the matter. Other than a few statements by some of Mizzou’s head coaches, the athletics department has not commented publicly on Kumar’s allegations since issuing its initial statement Nov. 22.

On Thursday, Kumar posted an account on GoFundMe.com titled “Whistleblower Legal & Expense Fund” that was seeking $35,000 to cover her legal and living expenses. Kumar, a 43-year-old single mother, began working as a tutor at Mizzou in 2010 but resigned last month. The GoFundMe account shows that it raised $340 but Kumar has since deactivated the account.
Kumar’s efforts to raise money for expenses could raise suspicions considering her background. According to online court records, Kumar was convicted for passing bad checks three times in 2009 and 2010 and given a suspended sentence of 30 days in jail that was reduced to two years probation. Online court records show Kumar as the defendant in several rent and possession cases filed by property management companies. She’s scheduled to appear in circuit court Monday for the latest eviction case. She also filed for bankruptcy in Cole County in 2005 and in Boone County in 2012.

Kumar doesn’t deny her criminal past or financial problems. She told the Kansas City Star she wrote the bad checks to cover expenses after her abusive husband left her. Kumar and Santha Kumar divorced in 2011.

Online fundraising for MU tutor no longer active

COLUMBIA, Mo. - The woman who claims to be the tutor involved in alleged academic cheating among University of Missouri student-athletes started a GoFundMe page Thursday to help pay for her legal fees.

Yoland Kumar posted to her private Facebook page on Nov. 22, explaining her academic fraud in the athletic department at the University of Missouri.

An excerpt from the online fundraising account reads, "Prior to the post I had notified a consulting legal firm that I could not afford to retain their legal services. I’m setting up this GoFundMe to assist with my legal and living cost as I navigated through this foreign territory of"
being a "whistle-blower". I am a single mother and sole provider of an amazingly strong 14 year old young man. Your kindness and generosity is greatly appreciated."

The account was listed as no longer active Friday evening.

On Nov. 23, Kumar told ABC 17 News that she was groomed to help athletes in revenue sports, which sometimes included completing their assignments and taking tests for them.

Kumar would not disclose which MU teams were involved in the academic dishonesty or if other tutors were involved.

Online court records show Kumar was charged three times for passing bad checks of less than $500, a class A misdemeanor. She pleaded guilty in Cole County and Boone County Courts in 2010. She completed two years of unsupervised probation in April 2012.

Kumar responded to comments on the fundraising page about her past charges, which have since been deleted.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Washington University leader lands among top earners of private colleges nationally

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 9 hrs ago

Almost $3 million in retirement pay pushed Washington University’s chancellor to one of the top earners among private college leaders nationally.

The Chronicle of Higher Education opened its annual private college executive pay database Sunday, showing that Washington University’s Mark Wrighton earned almost $4.2 million during the 2014-15 school year.

Wrighton was the second highest earner, behind Jack Varsalona, president of Wilmington University in Delaware, who received $5.4 million during the same year. As with Wrighton, more than 75 percent of the top earner’s pay came from other sources, such as retirement pay.
Wrighton’s base salary is $943,583. Of the almost $3 million in investment pay, a university official said nearly half went toward paying taxes owed on the vesting, with the rest going to his retirement plan.

This $3 million is only about half of the total funds allocated to his retirement plan in recent years. The amounts and dates of payout were decided by the university’s board in 2004 “after a review of the chancellor’s performance,” according to a spokesperson.

If ranked by Wrighton’s base pay alone, he’d fall on the list among the leaders of Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

This year’s ranking is a little difficult to compare with 2013’s, as the Chronicle of Higher Education used averages for the 2014-15 school year versus median amounts for 2013-14.

The average pay among presidents and chancellors during 2014-15 who held the job the entire year was $512,987. Those who held the job for only part of the year averaged $489,927.

Even though this new ranking focuses on private colleges, the average amounts help illustrate market trends for higher education leader pay. The University of Missouri System recently hired Mun Choi as its new top leader, with a contract salary that starts at $530,000 — not including his $50,000 annual deferred compensation — which falls near that average.

Also highlighted on the list was Beth Stroble, president at Webster University, who brought in just more than $501,000, with more than half of that in base pay. She ranked No. 163 of 510.

Mark Lombardi, president of Maryville University, ranked at 182, bringing in just more than $473,000, about 80 percent of it in base pay.

Lindenwood University and St. Louis University had changes in leadership during 2014.

In Southern Illinois, McKendree University President James M. Dennis was paid $453,568, ranking him at 200.
A total of 39 leaders of private colleges earned more than $1 million during the 2014 calendar year. The number of leaders with compensation above $1 million was up from 32 the year before. The average pay of private-college leaders, including those who served partial years, was $489,927 in 2014. Among presidents who served the whole year, average pay was $512,987. Leaders who served full years in both 2013 and 2014 saw a pay increase of 8.6 percent.

The Chronicle analysis is based on the latest available federal tax filings, known as Form 990s, of the 500 private, nonprofit colleges with the largest endowments. The data include compensation figures for 516 presidents who served at 499 institutions for all or part of the 2014 calendar year. The year-over-year calculation includes 377 presidents. (Because this year’s analysis used averages rather than medians, 2014 figures may not be comparable with previously published figures.)

Jack P. Varsalona, president of Wilmington University, in Delaware, led the field in 2014 with a total compensation package of more than $5.4 million. Mark S. Wrighton, of Washington University in St. Louis, and R. Gerald Turner, of Southern Methodist University, were the next-highest earners.

Mr. Varsalona’s one-year pay package is the second largest, after adjusting for inflation, in The Chronicle’s interactive database of private-college leaders’
compensation, which includes figures since 2008. Only Shirley Ann Jackson, president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, has earned more. She was paid $7.1 million in 2012.

University board chairs and college officials defended how much they pay their leaders, arguing that industry pressures and the unique demands on their specific chief executives necessitated significant compensation. Several chairmen echoed the same point: High-level compensation reflected high-level performance.

Nonetheless, seven-figure pay packages still raise concerns, especially as the cost of college continues to rise.

Richard K. Vedder, an emeritus professor of economics at Ohio University and director of the Center for College Affordability and Productivity, said there would continue to be "an increasing public disdain and contempt of universities for using taxpayer monies and more to pad their own pockets." When tax-exempt colleges behave like for-profit companies, he adds, questions are bound to arise about whether colleges deserve those tax privileges. Mr. Vedder said institutions should take those critiques seriously.

"The last election showed that the conventional wisdom of what the establishment thinks or what the intellectual, cultural, political, and economic elites think may not resonate as much as you think with the broader population," Mr. Vedder said, "and at some point that can come home to haunt you."

Among the highest-paid leaders, deferred-compensation plans made up a significant portion of earnings in 2014. More than $4.6 million of Mr. Varsalona’s total pay, for example, came from a deferred-compensation payout. Mr. Varsalona, who has led Wilmington University since 2005, has announced that he will retire at the end of June 2017.

Deferred-compensation plans are used commonly in higher education as a retention tool for top administrators. They work like this: A university sets aside money, tax-free, each year in a prescribed fund for the college leader, who may not withdraw any money from that fund until an agreed-upon date. Those earnings are typically forfeited if the employee resigns before the specified date. These arrangements usually complement a standard retirement plan, such as a 401(k).
Mr. Varsalona’s deferred-compensation package ranked second-highest in the history of The Chronicle’s executive-compensation analysis, exceeded only by the one paid out to Ms. Jackson, who in 2012 received nearly $5.9 million as deferred compensation.

Mr. Varsalona’s deferred-compensation arrangement called for him to be paid in full when he turned 65, barring termination or separation from the university. Joseph J. Farnan Jr., the chairman of Wilmington’s board, said the board was prepared to hold back deferred compensation, or even eliminate the deferred-compensation plan, if the institution experienced a budget deficit in any year or endured prolonged financial problems.

Neither of those situations occurred during Mr. Varsalona’s tenure, Mr. Farnan said. And, in fact, the university’s student population and endowment both grew significantly under Mr. Varsalona’s direction, the chairman added, with student and faculty satisfaction remaining high.

In defending his chief executive’s compensation, Mr. Farnan invited comparison to pay rates for college basketball coaches. A president’s job is more complicated and wide-ranging than a coach’s, he said, and, thus, a president deserves to be paid more.

"I joke with Dr. Varsalona and say, We ought to start a Division I basketball program, because we could pay you $6 million and no one would blink an eye," Mr. Farnan says, "and you would only be managing 15 students."

Deferred compensation also made up most of the pay earned in 2014 by Mr. Wrighton, of Washington University in St. Louis, and Mr. Turner, of Southern Methodist University. Of Mr. Wrighton’s nearly $4.2 million in total compensation, nearly $3 million was the result of a deferred-compensation payment plan spanning 10 years. In a statement, Washington University said the deferred-compensation arrangement was put in place in 2004 after a recommendation from the compensation committee of the university’s Board of Trustees. The university said the committee settled on that arrangement after a review of the chancellor’s performance.

Meanwhile, of the nearly $3.4 million in total paid out to Mr. Turner, at least $2.2 million came in the form of deferred compensation that had been set aside in previous years. Michael M. Boone, chairman of Southern Methodist’s Board of Trustees, said the university had chosen to use a deferred-compensation arrangement to help retain Mr. Turner during the period in which the college was executing a strategic plan. The plan, Mr. Boone said, "prospered during Dr. Turner’s two decades of extraordinary service, and we look forward to many more highly successful years under Dr. Turner’s leadership."
Deferred-compensation packages weren’t the only means to a high presidential payout in this year’s analysis. Amy Gutmann, president of the University of Pennsylvania, earned a bonus of close to $1.5 million, bringing her total pay to almost $3 million in 2014. Ms. Gutmann earned the fourth-largest total compensation package in 2014. Ms. Gutmann’s bonus is the second-largest ever awarded to a public or private college president since The Chronicle has been tracking executive compensation. She was also the recipient of the largest bonus, again nearly $1.5 million, earned in 2013.

"The bonus compensation that Dr. Gutmann received is attributable to the successful completion of her performance goals and her leadership of the university’s very successful capital campaign, which exceeded its goal by $800 million," said David L. Cohen, chairman of Penn’s Board of Trustees. "As I have said in the past, the trustees feel strongly that we have the best university president in the country in Amy Gutmann, and we believe her compensation should reflect that reality."

Some private institutions, including Brigham Young University’s campuses in Utah, Idaho, and Hawaii, cite a religious exemption from filing Form 990 and are therefore not included in The Chronicle’s analysis.

The Chronicle surveys the pay of public-college leaders separately, publishing new data and analysis each spring. The figures for public colleges are not directly comparable to data reported for private colleges because they reflect slightly different categories of pay and different periods of time.

The most-recent analysis of public-college leaders who served the full year found their average pay to be $467,533 in the 2015 fiscal year. That was a 6.1-percent increase from the year before for leaders who served for both full fiscal years.
Mizzou students raise money for dining hall employee, who then donates the cash
By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Dec 2, 2016

ST. LOUIS • The power of kindness was on full display Thursday when hundreds rallied around a University of Missouri-Columbia employee.

It took an hour, if that, for a crowdfunding website set up by a few Mizzou fraternity members to reach its $500 goal.

By then, the story was taking on a life of its own on social media, and the fundraising amount continued to climb to more than $5,000.

The students wanted to raise some money for Sandy Cunningham, a Mizzou dining hall employee. A write-up accompanying the fundraising page states that the students asked Cunningham what she would want for Christmas. She told them gift cards to buy gifts for her grandchildren.

Max Keeter, a sophomore and president of Mizzou’s Phi Delta Theta, said some of the newly reorganized fraternity set the page up Thursday on their own.

“We were definitely not expecting that much,” he said. “Everyone just wants to help others out and I think campus climate could use more of this.”

When the Phi Delta Theta members contacted Cunningham Thursday night to tell her about the viral fundraiser, she was floored, Keeter said. Happy might be an understatement, but overwhelmed wouldn’t be.
Cunningham decided to donate the proceeds to MizzouThon, a dance marathon fundraiser hosted by students. The organization donates money to the Women’s and Children’s Hospital in Columbia.

**Mumps Outbreaks Hit Colleges**

*In the past month, 128 cases of mumps were reported at the University of Missouri on the Columbia campus -- one of a handful of U.S. colleges facing outbreaks during the worst year for mumps in the past decade.*

As of Nov. 5, 2,879 people were infected by mumps in 45 states, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That’s more than double the reported mumps infections in 2015.

Mizzou has seen the greatest number of mumps cases since the outbreaks began, and as a result, the university has asked student groups to cancel nonmandatory social events as the semester winds down. The State University of New York at New Paltz has also seen many cases of mumps, with 32 infections confirmed after the first outbreak in October. Students at Yale University received an email in late November about two suspected cases of mumps on campus.

Mumps infections have also been spreading in the Boston area. Nine cases were confirmed on the Medford campus of Tufts University. At least four infections were diagnosed at Harvard University, months after an outbreak of 66 mumps cases in the spring. Also earlier this year, 65 people were diagnosed with mumps in Indiana, most of them at universities.

Mumps is a highly contagious respiratory virus. It causes swollen salivary glands, fever and muscle aches, and symptoms generally last for two to three weeks. It is easily spread through coughing, sneezing, talking or sharing objects, according to the CDC.
Therapy horses, bubble-wrap rooms aim to relieve college students' end-of-semester stress

Leonor Vivanco Contact Reporter Chicago Tribune

Sephanie Delgado can feel the stress of her to-do list as she works to finish the semester at Roosevelt University: three essays, a presentation and exams.

To escape the pressure, the 20-year-old college junior, who also works as a restaurant cashier to help pay for school, sculpted a chunk of blue Play-Doh into Popplio, a Pokemon character. She was at a table next to other students who colored and decorated cookies before two miniature therapy horses wearing sneakers trotted into the room Wednesday for the university's De-Stress Fest.

"I know I still have to do all that work, but coming here I'm able to take some time off to hang out with friends, have fun and empty my mind for a little bit," said Delgado, who lives on the Southwest Side. "It's like a refresh. My mind is nice and clear so when I go to start my homework, I'm well focused."

As the semester nears its end — and students pull all-nighters to cram for exams, type papers and finish projects that weigh heavily on final grades — colleges in the Chicago area are taking steps to help students manage stress. It's part of a broader approach to focus on students' mental health and expand proactive outreach efforts instead of waiting for students to seek help. Local schools this week are offering activities ranging from animal visits at Roosevelt to a bubble-wrapped room at the University of Illinois at Chicago to the long-standing tradition of a stress-busting primal scream at Northwestern University.

"The ultimate goal, I think, is to decrease stress in order to enhance academic success and overall performance," said Ann Diamond, outreach coordinator at Roosevelt University's
counseling center. "Also, it's to remind students about the community of support available to all of them here at the university."

Without these types of resources, students would have to deal with stress on their own, and some might not find a way to cope at all, she said.

'I came back. I hated myself.' How mustangs are helping vets heal

Nearly 32 percent of students reported stress and 23 percent said anxiety affected their academic performance, according to a spring 2016 survey by the American College Health Association of more than 95,000 students at institutions nationwide. Those figures are up from five years earlier, when 27.5 percent of respondents felt stress and 19 percent said anxiety affected their performance.

The 2016 survey also showed 85 percent of students said they felt overwhelmed by all they had to do within the past 12 months. In the past year, 17 percent of students were diagnosed with or treated for anxiety, nearly 14 percent for depression and 8 percent for panic attacks. In the 2011 survey, 12 percent were diagnosed with or treated for anxiety, nearly 11 percent for depression and 5 percent for panic attacks.

At Northwestern, "because of the hectic academic pace that exists here, it is stressful and very pressure-packed," university spokesman Alan Cubbage said.

Students can blow off steam with a visit from miniature horses Friday and release their frustration through a campuswide scream, in which students let out a collective yell at 9 p.m. Sunday before finals week. Next week, a number of activities such as Lego building, board games, midnight coffee breaks and late-night breakfast are planned for exam relief.

"It's just a way of making sure our students have the opportunity to take a break from what is honestly a pretty intense week," Cubbage said.

But one critic questioned whether such stress-busting activities are effective in helping students.

Clay Routledge, psychology professor at North Dakota State University, believes universities should be promoting psychological strength and resilience, not coddling students.
"I'm not ignorant to the fact there are vulnerable students that need services," he said. "I'm not against that at all. My criticism is: Are we promoting more broadly a culture of sensitivity and victimhood than we need to do?"

Many colleges and universities are becoming more than educational institutions and overreaching by not letting students figure things out on their own, he said.

"We need to promote toughness and strength, and we know from decades of research that humans are extremely resilient," Routledge said. "You have to have real stressors in life. You have to fail. You have to be embarrassed and you have to face situations where you're wrong and you're challenged — and you'll be strong as a result."

Roosevelt University history student Sophie Brosnan visits with a therapy horse named Lunar on Nov. 30, 2016 at an event on the Chicago campus meant to help students, faculty and staff reduce their stress levels around exam time.

But teaching college students healthful stress-management skills is important so they can take care of themselves later in life, said S. Craig Rooney, director of behavioral health services at the University of Missouri Student Health Center and chairman of the mental health section of the American College Health Association.

"If we didn't offer students opportunities to learn self-care, we would be missing a critical part of their education: namely, how to negotiate the stresses of adult contemporary life in ways that are not self-destructive," Rooney said in an email.

Loyola University Chicago offers ongoing counseling groups to help students better manage anxiety and depression, relieve stress and focus on self-care. Similarly, UIC has workshops throughout the year to teach students coping strategies.

"The goal is to support students, to promote a sense of well-being," said David deBoer, associate director of Loyola's Wellness Center. "Our hope would be as a secondary benefit it's going to help them do better academically because they're in a better physical and emotional place of higher well-being."
The series of events UIC hosts during finals week helps junior Liz Huss manage stress in a healthful way.

Students got a visit from comfort dogs Wednesday and are invited next week to pop bubble wrap at the student center, get chair massages, do candlelight yoga and leave notes of encouragement for fellow students.

"I like to take 10, 15, 20 minutes to rejuvenate, reflect and relax, and these events really help with that," said Huss, an accounting major.

For Andersonville resident Rob Chesler, a junior at Roosevelt, stress can motivate him to get his work done. But he also welcomed the distraction of the De-Stress Fest, during which he took a selfie with Lunar, the oldest miniature horse from the Barrington-based nonprofit Mane in Heaven.

"If you're living in this world of hard work every second of every hour of your life, then you're not going to be happy and you're just going to be all about work," he said. "If you have little horses every now and then, you have moments where you can just breathe and enjoy life."