COLUMBIA — For Homayoon Rafatijo, the messages from MU administrators and faculty offering support to international students simply aren’t strong enough.

“They’re trying to be warm, they’re trying to be friendly, but the necessary steps have not been taken yet,” he said.

An Iranian student who came to MU in 2013 to get his doctorate in chemistry, Rafatijo would like MU to react defiantly to President Donald Trump’s recent executive order that bars entry to the United States for citizens of seven majority-Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

The order bars citizens of those seven countries from entering the U.S. for the next 90 days, suspends the admission of all refugees for 120 days and bans Syrian refugees indefinitely.

Rafatijo said he is already feeling the effects of the ban. His wife, who has a multiple entry visa, recently returned from a visit with her family in Iran. But with the order in place, he doesn’t expect her to be able to do that again.

Rafatijo was among the roughly 80 international students who met with MU officials Tuesday afternoon in Memorial Union to discuss the effects of the ban. Members of the MU International Center offered details about services MU can offer.

“It was encouraging, sentimental mostly, but I need to know what’s going on with the action,” Rafatijo said.
The students were told in the meeting to avoid any travel for the foreseeable future. Rafatijo’s main concerns are what legal representation is available to affected students and what information MU will disclose to the federal government. He said he hopes MU follows the same course as the University of Michigan, which recently announced that it would withhold its students’ immigration status information from the federal government.

“We as Iranian students believe that this will escalate to major and broader, further problems, not limited to the entrance of Iranian or Muslims students but also the deportation of students,” he said.

The meeting was closed to news media, but students leaving the meeting as well as MU spokesman Christian Basi told the Missourian what happened. According to Basi, MU officials told the international students that MU will follow federal law — meaning they will give the government information about students’ immigration status if requested.

Basi said a lawyer who specializes in immigration regulations spoke to students at the meeting, offering them assurances that their status as students would not change.

Ahmed Abdaljabbar, an Iraqi working on his doctorate in civil engineering, said he felt reassured by the meeting, which Basi said included deans from multiple departments. Interim Chancellor Hank Foley and Provost Garnett Stokes also were present.

“We feel welcomed and we feel the support,” Abdaljabbar said, "and we will keep doing what we’re doing right now.”

Abdaljabbar said that he has appreciated the people of Columbia showing solidarity with the international community — a Sunday protest drew hundreds to Peace Park, and dozens of yellow flowers and signs of support were placed at the nearby Islamic Center of Central Missouri — but that he hasn’t felt that unity on campus.

“I have seen the administrative stuff, but I want to see support from Mizzou students,” he said. “We are a part of Mizzou.”
Although the ban doesn’t directly affect most international students, Faranz Fallahi, who attended the meeting, believes the emotional toll of the order will be intolerable.

“My family really needs my support,” Fallahi said, referring to a promise she made to visit her family this summer. “If this executive order remains, I would have to go back to my country and not complete my education. I can’t tolerate this situation.”

Behnam Jahangiri, who came from Iran to study civil engineering at MU, voiced similar concerns about the ban’s effect on his academics.

“It would definitely negatively affect my performance if I don’t see my family, I don’t see my relatives,” Jahangiri said.

Several students noted the emails sent over the weekend by administrative figures have been supportive. With the uncertainty surrounding the executive order, Jahangiri said that he hopes the community is prepared for future challenges.

“We will be positive in order to cancel this law and make it again possible to go to Iran and other countries,” he said. “It would be appreciated if we could have some meeting like this again.”

About 140 students across campus, as well as 15 post-doctoral scholars, come from the seven countries named in the order. It’s unclear how many have dependents or other family members unaffiliated with MU.

The meeting was closed to news media because it did not fit the requirements of a public body as outlined by the state’s Sunshine Law, Basi said.

“Additionally, this program is for the exchange of information for our students,” he said. “We should not force these students, who are dealing with a challenging situation with potentially profound personal implications, to discuss their circumstances in front of the media in order to receive and share important information.”
MU officials meet with international students about travel ban


By: Max Cotton

COLUMBIA – MU officials met Tuesday with students, faculty and staff from the seven countries affected by President Donald Trump's executive order restricting immigration. The goal of the meeting was to show support to members of MU’s community who may feel less secure in wake of Trump's order.

Amongst the resources available at the meeting were representatives from MU student affairs, international studies and a lawyer who specializes in immigration-related cases. Others in attendance included representatives from the chancellor and provost's office, as well as several deans from multiple MU schools and colleges.

"We are a public university, and we will abide by all federal and state laws and regulations. But we also want to make sure that our students, international or domestic, understand that there’s many resources and support and areas that will support them while they're here on campus," MU Spokesperson Christian Basi said.

Trump issued the executive order, which suspends travel to the United States on immigrant or non-immigrant visas for three months for people from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Somalia, Sudan, Libya and Yemen on Jan. 27. A federal judge has put an injunction in place to stop the order from fully going into effect while its constitutionality is being challenged in federal court, but the White House said 109 people were detained last weekend in compliance with the order.

One Iranian student who attended the meeting is afraid of how Trump's executive order will affect him.
"I think it will affect our educational performance when we have the sense we are stuck here," MU doctoral student Hamed Majidfard said. He said he is scheduled to go back to Iran to visit his family in the future but does not believe he will be able to in wake of the order. Though he said he is glad to see the many protests of Trump's executive order, he is still upset that the order exists.

"We are not dangerous, we are people, we are not the government," Majidfard said.

MU leaders meet with students affected by temporary travel ban


by Ashley Zavala

COLUMBIA — University of Missouri leaders held a question and answer session Tuesday for students affected by President Donald Trump's temporary travel ban.

Administrators closed the meeting to the media citing privacy concerns of the students who attended.

The meeting in Jesse Wrench auditorium in Memorial Union on the MU campus lasted a little more than an hour. Representatives from MU's international center, counseling center, the deans of the various colleges, an attorney who specializes in immigration law and interim Chancellor Hank Foley attended the session.

Milad Darzi, a Ph.D student who slipped out of the session early for an appointment, told KRCG13 the meeting went well, but some questions went unanswered.

"One of them asked about finding a job. Is there any chance [of getting one] after graduation? We have to apply for OPT (Optional Practical Training extension) and then for a job. They didn't provide any straight answers for that, because in the ban, it doesn't mention anything about this issue," said Darzi.
"Nobody can provide very precise answers to these questions because some part of this ban is not well understood," Darzi said.

"This is bad for us," said Faten Alzubaidi, who is expected to graduate with a Ph.D in Mechanical Engineering in 2018.

Alzubaidi noted students from the countries on the banned list cannot go to academic conferences outside of the United States for fear they would not be able to get back into the country.

"I hope this all expires soon," Alzubaidi said.

Swipes pilot program allows MU students to transfer meals to other students

A pilot program allows University of Missouri students to transfer meals to other students who need them.

The new swipes program lets MU students transfer up to 10 meals from their meal plan to help others through the Tiger Pantry, a food pantry that serves MU students and employees.

Julaine Kiehn, MU campus dining services director, said she thinks students who live off campus and do not have a meal plan will benefit from the program. The pilot program began this week, and Kiehn said this semester will help determine if there is enough need to continue the program.

“We’ll have to see,” she said. “We’ll find out in the coming semester.”

Rachel Volmert, an MU senior from Columbia and director of the Tiger Pantry, said she knows some students do not know the source of their next meal.

“College is very expensive,” Volmert said, “and sometimes students are faced with choices between buying food and other expenses.”

Volmert said the success of the program will depend on the number of students donating meals and the number of students who sign up to receive meals.
“It’s also important that students transfer meals throughout the semester and not wait until the end of the semester,” Volmert said.

The pilot program was developed after Wendy Sims, a professor in the School of Music and parent of an MU student, asked College of Arts and Science Associate Dean Ted Tarkow what could be done with her child’s leftover meals, which were set to expire at the end of the semester.

Tarkow contacted Kiehn, Volmert and others to work on the issue, resulting in the pilot program.

Those who want to transfer meals can click on the swipes program tab on the Tiger Pantry website and, after providing account information, select the number of meals to transfer.

Student clients of Tiger Pantry will fill out forms if they want to receive the donated meals. The transferred meals then will be loaded onto a student account to be used at any MU student dining location.

Students using the program will be able to hand their IDs to cashiers, who will swipe the card to pay for the meal, without anyone knowing it comes from the swipes program.

University of Missouri Launches Program to Help Students Get More Food

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=efe41874-39f2-46cc-b5b0-848c2a1d4754
Legislator wants to hand a pink slip to guaranteed job security at Missouri colleges

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

Tenure, that time-honored college professor’s privilege affording what some deem lifetime guaranteed employment, is threatened with termination.

In January, a Missouri lawmaker proposed eliminating tenure for professors at all the state’s two- and four-year public colleges and universities.

Rep. Rick Brattin, the Harrisonville Republican who authored the legislation, says he wants to get rid of what educators have set as the gold standard of achievement for college professors.

Achieving tenure is a long, rigorous effort, and it can be fiercely competitive. It’s a status granted through a peer-review process following a probationary period of up to seven years. During that time, an associate professor must produce myriad published articles on his or her topic of research, and show a history of successful teaching experience. Student and faculty surveys are involved.

Brattin, a military veteran who graduated from Lee’s Summit High School and now owns his family’s Cass County construction company, said scraping tenure would save public money, give schools more flexibility and put higher education employment more in line with other industries around the state.

And at a time when the cost of higher education continues to climb and universities are hunting for savings, Missouri legislators, he says, have his back on this one.

The Missouri bill would have schools cease tenure-track hiring in 2018, but unlike a similar bill proposed last month in Iowa, it would not pry tenure away from those who already have it.

The bill would also “require public colleges to publish estimated costs of degrees, employment opportunities expected for graduates, average salaries of previous graduates, and a summary of the job market” for that degree.
Faculty are pushing back on the tenure issue, saying such a law would spur a mass exodus from Missouri campuses, with the best professors leading the charge. Stopping tenure, some say, would put the state’s schools at a grave competitive disadvantage when it comes to recruiting talent to fill their lecture halls and research labs.

No such bill, for example, is pending in Kansas.

“Should this ill-conceived bill become law in Missouri, it will immediately become extremely difficult to attract talented faculty members and to retain good faculty,” said Gary Ebersole, a tenured professor of history at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

**The fallout expected is basic economics, said Ben Trachtenberg, an associate professor of law at the University of Missouri where he chairs the Columbia campus’s Faculty Council on University Policy.**

“I think an economist would suggest that if there are two jobs that pay the same, and one has much more job security, that’s the one that’s going to be more exciting to prospective employees,” Trachtenberg said. “The bill is not a good idea.”

Both arguments are ones Brattin said he has heard before. But “tenure, I think, is outdated and needless,” he said. “We have employment discrimination laws, and whistleblower laws to protect people from being removed unjustly.”

Furthermore, Brattin said, ending tenure could save money, because college administrators would be free to get rid of low-enrollment academic programs and eliminate high-paid professors continuing to teach courses students aren’t interested in. Tenure also means professors can’t be forced to retire.

No other profession — except judges — guarantees employment for life like academia, Brattin said. “The American higher education system is the only place in the world that does this. We need to ensure people are worth the salt they are being paid.”

Tenure became policy at nearly every college and university in the country by the late 1950s and early 1960s, said Hans-Joerg Tiede, a senior program officer in the Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure and Governance for the American Association of University Professors. It was established he said, to protect academic freedom and defend open research and the freedom of open class discussion.

Tenure, Tiede said, allows faculty to pursue truth and knowledge regardless of how controversial the subject matter, without fear of termination or retribution.
And many would argue the growing opposition to tenure has political footing in Republican-majority states.

Missouri is not the only state where legislation threatens to strip tenure from colleges and universities. Sen. Brad Zaun, a Republican from Iowa, this year also proposed a bill that would eliminate the tenure system at public institutions in his state.

While, for the most part, tenure elimination has been more strongly supported by state conservatives, it’s more widely opposed by Democrats and a growing number of moderate Republicans.

That could bode well for Brattin, since Republicans in Missouri hold a majority in both the state’s Senate and the House.

College and university leaders in Iowa have spoken publicly and written letters to lawmakers opposing the measure.

Tiede said that while he does not believe tenure will be completely eliminated, he does believe it is in crisis. “What we are seeing right now is a full-on assault on a system that has been undermined for some time now,” Tiede said.

The National Education Association agrees that the tenure system is under bombardment. But on its website, the NEA points out the battle to kill tenure may be rooted in misinformation.

NEA officials say the idea that tenure is a lifetime job guarantee is a myth. In reality, tenure presents professors with the right to due process — preventing a college or university from firing a tenured professor without presenting evidence that he or she is incompetent or behaved unprofessionally.

The idea that tenure allows professors to do and say as they please without question is just not true, the NEA says.

“Faculty members remain accountable after achieving tenure,” the teachers group explains on its website. “Tenured faculty at most colleges and universities are evaluated periodically.”

Professors with tenure, “just like anyone else, need to be held accountable for their performance,” the NEA says. “But when a faculty member does the kind of work that’s controversial, or just hard to explain to anyone outside a narrow circle of experts, he or she deserves to be protected from endless self-justification and working in a perpetual state of anxiety.”
Last summer, the State College of Florida scrapped tenure for incoming faculty. Its new policy says new professors will be hired on annual contracts, which the school can decline to renew at any time.

And a new policy at the University of Wisconsin last spring weakened that school’s tenure protections, making it easier for college administrators to lay off tenured faculty for educational or financial reasons.

Tiede said the move cost the school a lot of money because it had to increase pay for many professors to keep them from looking elsewhere for a job.

On the other side is a sentiment that the elimination of tenure might increase turnover and thereby increase opportunities for new, in many cases younger, faculty.

Still, some worry that such a fierce attack on tenure under the current Trump administration is particularly disturbing.

“I have recently seen the Trump administration talking about — and, in some cases, moving to — defund particular forms of research,” said Ebersole. “There is grave concern that research on global warming, for instance, might be cut or totally defunded. The same with environmental-impact studies that some officials see as anti-business measures.”

Ebersole said that he wonders, “without tenure, will faculty in the UMKC or UMSL (University of Missouri-St. Louis) criminology and criminal justice programs be able to conduct studies in the future on racial bias, police brutality, hate crimes, etc.?”

The list of academic disciplines he and other faculty are concerned about “is very long,” Ebersole said.

**Future MU Education graduates face higher GPA requirements for certification**

By Olivia Garrett

Beginning Aug. 1, Missouri education students will have to meet a higher GPA requirement to earn their teaching certification. College of Education graduates will now have to achieve a 2.75
total GPA as well as a 3.0 in their content area and College of Education courses, according to new requirements from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

This policy will not affect seniors who graduate before August. The current GPA standards are a 2.5 overall GPA and a 2.75 in students’ content areas.

“They are trying to set high standards, trying to have excellent teachers in the classroom,” said John Lannin, associate dean for academic affairs in the College of Education. “That’s the same goal we have.”

Students must complete a certain number of credit hours for their content area outside of the college, and some take additional upper-level courses as electives. However, Lannin worries that the new state requirements may inhibit students’ development in their content area.

“Now the question becomes, as a teacher, if my GPA is close to 3.0 [and] I’d like to take this additional course because it would enhance my knowledge,” Lannin said, “but if I do and it drops my GPA down, now I can’t get certified. Now [the policy] is doing just the opposite of what you’d like to have it do. You’d like to have it build someone’s knowledge up, but it could be discouraging some people from taking additional courses, which is not the design of it.”

If a student earns above a C-minus in a course and that grade lowers their GPA below the 2.75 or 3.0 requirements, they will not have the option of replacing the grade.

“Some students at another institution can retake a class multiple times until they get an A to raise their GPA,” Director of Teacher Education Laurie Kingsley said. “[At MU,] you can replace a grade only once, that’s the first thing, and you can’t do it if you have above a C-minus.”

Grades vary between institutions and even between courses taught by different instructors at the same university, Kingsley said.

“You need to have a strong understanding of your content knowledge, no doubt about that, but again, often we’ve had students who have had very high performances on state content assessments,” Lannin said. “But our students have had lower GPAs than people at other institutions in the state. There’s not a direct correlation between content knowledge and GPA by institution.”

To enter the College of Education’s Phase II program, which students typically apply for before their junior year, students must have a minimum GPA of 2.75.

“Our folks already graduate with pretty high GPAs,” Lannin said. “I’m concerned with those people who end up as borderline cases and they aren’t able to get certified because of one strange thing that happened in one semester.”

An unintended consequence of this policy is that it might disadvantage first-generation college students who might struggle navigating courses or students who don’t have the financial resources to retake classes, Lannin said.
“We know that just because they may have gotten an abysmal GPA their freshman or sophomore year, this doesn’t mean that they wouldn’t possibly be a fantastic teacher,” Kingsley said. “Life sometimes happens.”

Missouri accepts teacher certification from other states, even though standards and requirements for certifications vary. The minimum GPA requirement for non-Missouri graduates is currently a 2.5, according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website.

“We could be disadvantaging our local students, our native students to the state,” Lannin said. “And we fill this pipeline, because of shortages, we hire people from other states in these certification areas. So, that’s another unintended consequence that could occur with this [policy].”

For the 2016-17 school year, Missouri schools face teacher shortages in disciplines such as foreign languages, sciences and special education, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

“We’re turning people away who want to be teachers and who are hopeful to be teachers,” Kingsley said. “We’re turning them away because they got a 2.9 in their science content. And now we’re taking people who aren’t really content experts and hoping they can fill these spots with provisional teaching licenses. It could become a real nightmare if it continues in this way in terms of who’s going to teach these classes.”

The College of Education has communicated with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education about specific scenarios and challenges associated with the new policy, Lannin said.

“Typically, the people who work in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, they bring these situations to the State School Board,” Lannin said. “My sense is that they’re going to try and deal with this sometime this spring.”

Lannin did not list any specific response the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has given, but said that they listen to the College of Education’s concerns.

“We’re just trying to get feedback about how we deal with certain situations and they’re pretty understanding,” Lannin said. “They collaborate with us. They work with us. They understand the situation that we’re in.”
Trump executive order gives IRS wide latitude on health law

Generated from News Bureau Expert Comment: Popular Provisions of Affordable Care Act in Danger if ‘Fundamental Bargain’ is Broken, MU Expert Says

(The Hill is a #38 top news site)

By Kat Lucero – 01/31/17 5:40 AM ET

President Trump’s first executive order may be vague in its call to ease the rules of ObamaCare, but it could chip away at tax enforcement tied to the healthcare law.

Trump unveiled a directive calling on agencies to “ease the burden” of the health law hours after he took his oath of office. Policymakers and experts say the move was in part symbolic, but they also say it could enable regulators to chisel away at the health law as Republicans work on their replacement plan in Congress.

“That would require no effort because all the departments could say is ‘stop,’ ” said Douglas Holtz-Eakin, president of the conservative-leaning American Action Forum and former director of the Congressional Budget Office.

The president’s order sets “enforcement priorities” within the affected departments that administer the law. And outside of the Medicaid expansion, nearly every provision is implemented through the IRS. The tax agency could stop enforcing the individual and employer mandates — among the law’s key features that Republicans despise and want to immediately repeal through legislation.
Such a move may be drastic without a feasible replacement health plan, however, and could be political suicide for Republicans if it sent the insurance market into a tailspin.

Trump’s first-day move sends an important message to Congress, according to House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Kevin Brady (R-Texas).

“To repeal and replace effectively, thoughtfully, in a way that lowers healthcare costs for Americans, both the administration and Congress will have to work closely together,” Brady said Jan. 24.

While only Congress has the power to make changes in the tax code, the IRS can stop pouring resources into processing the tax-related provisions tied to ObamaCare.

The IRS has been resource-strapped for several years so officials can make the case that limiting time, funding and human resources on the health law would provide cost-savings for the federal government, according to Holtz-Eakin.

Some interest groups and industry experts have so far said they are not too worried that the executive order will disrupt the marketplace, noting it would take time to implement the high-impact changes.

In addition, leaders of key agencies, such as the Health and Human Services Department, have not yet been installed. The HHS holds much of the discretionary authority under the health law that can be reserved under the president's directive.

But once those officials are in place, there are a few areas where they could take action, according to Sam Halabi, a law professor at the University of Missouri.

Employer reporting.

Insurance providers have been overwhelmed by what many have described as the employer mandate’s complicated IRS requirements to report and calculate health coverage of their employees or insurees.

In response, the tax agency has a few times pushed back the reporting deadline for employers, marketplace providers and other insurers. For example, in November, the IRS granted certain insurance providers an additional 30 days to deliver forms that report their coverage obligations under the health law for this year’s tax filing season.

And since this reporting requirement has no “revenue impact,” the Trump administration could continue to delay the deadline for next year’s tax filing season, according to Garrett Fenton of Miller & Chevalier.
That action, however, depends on whether the new health law has taken effect.

For now, some attorneys are advising their clients to sit tight during this year’s tax filing season, which just began. *Story continues.*

Op Ed: Why Trump's SCOTUS pick Gorsuch should have a quiet confirmation

By Erin Morrow Hawley,

Americans are bracing for a big political fight now that President Trump has nominated Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Neil Gorsuch to replace the late Justice Antonin Scalia on the Supreme Court. But the nomination of a Supreme Court Justice has not always been an occasion for handwringing.

President George Washington’s six nominees were confirmed by a voice vote just two days after their nomination.

Nor have the confirmation hearings held for Supreme Court nominees always involved high theatre. Indeed, confirmation hearings did not use to exist at all. The first hearing occurred upon Justice Harlan Stone’s request in 1925. And hearings did not become commonplace until 1955.

Today is different, however, and Americans will certainly be hearing a lot about the qualifications and background of President Trump’s pick. But it’s worth taking a moment to consider how we got here, what the Supreme Court actually does, and how Congress should go about confirming its justices.

Alexander Hamilton famously described the Supreme Court as the “least dangerous branch.” This description seems quaint now as the Court routinely weighs in on the most pressing legal, political, and social issues of our time. But it’s important to remember that under the Constitution, the Supreme Court’s role is supposed to be interpreting the law, rather than making it. Thus, a nominee’s personal policy preferences should be irrelevant. The question is whether he or she will faithfully interpret the laws of the United States.
Since 1993, Supreme Court nominees have by and large adhered to what is known as the “Ginsburg Rule.” As then Senate Judiciary Chairmen Joe Biden put it, a nominee should not comment “about how he will decide any specific case that may come before h(im).”

This rule is derived from Canon 5 of the Model Code of Judicial Conduct which prohibits a potential judge from commenting regarding potential cases. It preserves judicial independency by requiring a nominee to refrain from making “pledges, promises or commitments” regarding cases, controversies, or issues likely to come before the judge that are inconsistent with impartial performance of a judge’s duty.

Justice Ginsburg invoked the rule in her introductory statement:

“A judge sworn to decide impartially can offer no forecast, no hints, for that would show not only disregard for the specifics of the particular case, it would display disdain for the entire judicial process.”

And she made good on that promise. Justice Ginsburg declined to address approximately 30 questions, involving everything from the First Amendment, to the death penalty, to antitrust law. She said that asking for a signal on a potential case “is something you must never ask a judge to do.” And she stuck to her guns, stating that she could not answer a question regarding sexual orientation classification without “violating what (she) had said to be (her) rule about no hints, no forecasts, no previews.”

So, what is up for grabs? While questions about particular cases are rightly out-of-bounds, the people can and should be interested in the judicial philosophy of a nominee.

Is a nominee someone who feels bound by the text of a statute? Will the nominee look to the original meaning of the words written by the Founders? If not, then what sources will he or she consult? And is the judge a believer in a living, breathing constitution that is subject to alteration?

These distinctions matter. Unlike the common law judges of yesteryear England, the Founders never gave federal judges the power to “make law.” Rather, the authority of the federal courts is limited to deciding cases and controversies — to interpreting the law that made by the elected branches. To be sure, difficult questions of interpretation sometimes exist.

But when courts stray beyond the text and original meaning of a law, they short-circuit the democratic process, taking from the people the right of self-governance. As the late Justice Scalia put it: “the practice of constitutional revision by nine unelected judges robs the People of the most important liberty they asserted in the Declaration of Independence and won in the Revolution of 1776: the freedom to govern themselves.”

It is particularly fitting in this case that Judge Gorsuch shares the same judicial philosophy as the late Justice Scalia. As the new nominee stated in a memorial tribute:
“Judges should instead strive (if humanly and so imperfectly) to apply the law as it is . . ., not to decide cases based on their own moral convictions or the policy consequences they believe might serve society best.”

The confirmation hearings have yet to begin. But the Court of public opinion is already in full session.

The forthcoming confirmation hearings are good reasons to reexamine our view of the Supreme Court and its powers and prerogatives. For those who believe in democracy — meaning governance by elected representatives — there should be widespread agreement on the Supreme Court’s limited role.

And this means that the confirmation hearings should be about how the nominee approaches judging, not about how he might rule in any particular case.

Erin Morrow Hawley is an Associate Professor of Law at the University of Missouri and a senior legal fellow at the Independent Women’s Forum. Professor Hawley is a former clerk to Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. of the Supreme Court of the United States and Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Professor Hawley has litigated extensively before the Supreme Court of the United States as well as numerous federal courts of appeals and state courts of last resort.

Cerner (CERN): What's in the Cards this Earnings Season?

North Kansas City, MO-based Cerner Corporation CERN, a leading global provider of healthcare information technology solutions (“HCIT”), is set to report fourth-quarter 2016 results, after the closing bell on Feb 9.

In the third quarter, the company posted earnings of 55 cents per share, which missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate by a penny. However, earnings improved 10% on a year-over-year basis.

Notably, despite a miss in the last reported quarter, the company’s earnings topped the Zacks Consensus Estimate in the last four trailing quarters, with an average beat of 1.9%.
Let’s see how things are shaping up prior to this quarter.

Stock Performance

A glimpse at the stock price performance over the past three months reveals a negative return of roughly 7.7%, wider than the Zacks Medical Information Systems industry’s decline of 2.3%.

Furthermore, the stock’s current return also compares unfavorably with the S&P 500’s 8.3% over the same time.

Meanwhile, the current year projected sales growth for Cerner is pegged at 9.74%, way below the industry’s 16.3%, signaling trouble down the road.

Factors at Play

We believe that Cerner’s strong product portfolio will help it to boost its customer base. The frequent contract wins reflect growing traction. Furthermore, the company has strong growth opportunities in the revenue cycle management (RCM) and ambulatory space.

The company forecasts revenues between $1.225 billion and $1.300 billion for fourth-quarter 2016. The mid-point of the guided range reflects 7% year-over-year growth. Cerner expects booking revenues in the band of $1.425 billion to $1.575 billion and the midpoint reflects 11% growth. Adjusted earnings are projected in the band of 60 cents to 62 cents for the fourth quarter, flat on a year-over-year basis at mid-point.

Of the major developments in the quarter, Cerner’s extended partnership with the University of Missouri is notable. The duo extended their existing HealtheIntent population health management platform across the Health Network of Missouri (HNM). Notably, HNM is a joint venture of six independent health care organizations that use different electronic health record (EHR) systems (read more: Cerner Extends HNM Partnership with University of Missouri).

Of the negatives, the HCIT market is highly competitive which exerts considerable pressure on both pricing and margins. Cerner, a major player in this space, has been facing cut-throat competition from reputed names such as Allscripts Healthcare Solutions, Epic Systems, GE Healthcare Technologies, McKesson Corp, Quality Systems among others. This has impacted the company’s pricing and margins to a great extent. Stringent hospital budgets exert further pressure on pricing.

Estimate Revision Trend

Cerner’s estimate revision trend for the current year has been mixed with one estimate moving north and one in the opposite direction over the last two months.

Coming to the current quarter estimate revisions, one estimate moved upward with no movement in the opposite direction over the same time frame.
COLUMBIA — More than 2,180 students had reported getting the recommended third measles, mumps and rubella vaccine as of Friday, MU Student Health Center's strategic communications associate Pam Roe said.

That's about 6.8 percent of the total number of undergraduate and graduate students — 32,000 — enrolled at MU in the fall, according to figures from MU News Bureau.

After the mumps outbreak at MU at the end of last year, the campus Student Health Center advised all students to obtain a third MMR vaccine. The additional MMR vaccination is recommended by the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Student Health Center began recommending the third vaccination to students in December, just before the winter break began. As of now, the vaccine is not a requirement and whether that changes or not will depend on how the outbreak continues, Roe said.

Because mumps has not been common in the United States since the vaccine was developed, it is uncertain whether the third vaccination will have any extra benefits, Student Health Center director of medical services Scott Henderson said.

“At this time, there are limited studies that look at the outcomes of what the third MMR does for people that get it,” Henderson said. “The CDC is interested in collecting data to form guidelines in the future.”

Henderson said the mumps portion of the vaccination’s viability decreases quicker than that of measles and rubella.
The MMR vaccine is offered at the Student Health Center for $86. While this is not covered by student health fees, Student Health Center employees will help with any insurance details.

The Student Health Center is still advising students to wash their hands frequently and avoid saliva contact by means of drinking and eating utensils. Mumps spreads through saliva and mucus of the mouth, nose and throat, according to the CDC website.

“The best thing, even if you get the third vaccination, [is] you still need to practice preventative measures,” Roe said.

Henderson said even with the third vaccine, people are not 100 percent protected from the mumps virus. The Student Health Center has seen a few cases of students who received the third dosage but still contracted mumps, he said.

Since the outbreak began in August 2016, there have been 351 cases in Columbia with 315 of those reported at MU, according to the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services' website.

Although the number of cases did decline over the winter break, new mumps cases are once again being reported with students back on campus, Roe said. MU can't say it's completely mumps-free until 50 days have passed without a new case, she said.

If students have any concerns about whether or not they should receive the third MMR vaccine, they are encouraged to reach out to nursing supervisor Megan Huddleston at huddlestonm@missouri.edu or 884-9937.

Updates on the outbreak are available on the Student Health Center's website every Wednesday.
Seeing a silver lining

By Henry J. Waters III

Most Missouri fans might not see the Tigers’ loss to the South Carolina Gamecocks on Saturday in a positive light, but I thought there was a lot to admire. Missouri’s outmanned basketball team showed some “innards,” to use the engaging term often spoken by the Tigers’ women’s coach, Robin Pingeton.

By all accounts the game should not have been close. SEC basketball is getting better at the same time Missouri’s fortunes have been on the wane. South Carolina is one of the best among a covey of SEC teams that has improved its stock compared with other leagues. The Gamecocks are blessed with one of the best players in the nation, Sindarius Thornwell. If the Tigers were to be competitive Saturday, it would have to come from something other than superior skill.

What’s left after the attributes of skill and physical prowess are assigned to the other side? Effort and heart, and I thought the Tigers showed a lot of both.

MU players worked their tails off on defense, holding South Carolina to 35 percent shooting. We outscored the Gamecocks 36-12 in the paint where the big boys play, but where a finer touch was required the Tigers couldn’t hold up, going only 1 of 17 from 3-point range. Missouri was only behind by four at the half. South Carolina maintained a seven- to 10-point lead the rest of the way. It could have been much worse. Our team never gave up.

In this predictable loss, our players showed growth in areas other than raw talent, areas that bode well for the future of the program.

Somehow the Missouri basketball team has kept its dauber up. Clearly its members like playing for Coach Kim Anderson, and he likes them. He has said often his players are “coachable,” meaning they listen and pay attention and try their hardest. When on the court, they hustle as hard as other teams. They allowed too many turnovers, but South Carolina is the best in the nation in a statistic called “adjusted defensive efficiency,” a term beyond the ken of amateur fans like me but surely highly indicative of defensive skill. If the Tigers had not lost the ball a season-high 21 times, what might the outcome have been?
As you can see, I’m not fixated on Saturday’s final score or the team’s 0-8 SEC record or its near-record losing streak. This team and Coach Anderson were not destined to achieve success this year on the tally sheets. They were mired in the most depressing of all situations in sports: a lack of potential for circumstances beyond their control that continually threatens their morale.

If Anderson is allowed to keep building the program, when more success finally comes today’s group of unsung heroes will deserve more appreciation than they are likely to receive. They will deserve appreciation for their “innards” if not their 3-point shooting ability. They want to win. They are trying their hardest. They have the worst record in the SEC but are part of a program with integrity and heart. They hit the floor for the loose ball with the best of them. We fans might not get excited, but we are not embarrassed.

Students at virtual universities may be able to access state scholarship funds

ISABELLA ALVES, 13 hrs ago

JEFFERSON CITY — Proposed Senate legislation would allow students attending virtual higher education institutions in Missouri would be able to receive financial aid from the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program.

The Senate Committee on Education met Tuesday afternoon to hear the proposal by state Sen. Brian Munzlinger, R-Williamstown.

Last fiscal year, millions of dollars were left in the financial program that went unused by students, Munzlinger said.

Leroy Wade, the deputy commissioner of higher education, said the money left in the fund was a carry-over from a release of funds from former Gov. Jay Nixon last fiscal year.
"There was really no way to spend that responsibly in that current year, and so what we've done is try and spread that funding over a couple of years, so we don't see a huge spike in terms of the award amount and then a huge reduction," Wade said.

Several who testified in favor of the bill emphasized the importance of increasing education opportunities for students in Missouri. Munzlinger said the flexibility of attending an online university when students have to work a job or take care of a family is important to increase the number of people with college degrees.

The bill also sets parameters for the virtual education institutions. They must be a non-profit, have proper accreditation, have a campus or operating location in Missouri, have a governing body in Missouri, have 25 full-time Missouri employees and have at least 1,000 Missouri residents as students.

Angie Besendorfer, chancellor of Western Governors University, which operates in Missouri, said most of the students who attend the school are first-generation college students and are classified as underserved students, meaning they had to overcome various obstacles. She also said that the majority of Missouri students graduate within two years and four months, making it easier to get a degree.

Before Besendorfer started working at the university, she worked in Missouri to help underprivileged kids to try and improve their lives through education. She said she changed her approach to focus on their parents when she started working at the university.

Besendorfer said she realized that by educating a child's parents, "in three years we can change a whole family." She added that opening up the Access Missouri funds would make "a difference for moms and dads and their student debt loads and how they pay for their college."

Sen. Andrew Koenig, R-St. Louis, said he supports measures that bring down the cost of education.
Virtual education is important for non-traditional students who might not be able to attend a traditional university, such as Sarah Davis, 34. Davis said she tried to attend a traditional university after having three children, but the cost proved too much. Now she attends Western Governors University.

"I'm not missing my family, I'm not missing my job, and that's great," Davis said.

The Chronicle
of Higher Education

An ‘America First’ Presidency Clashes With
Higher Ed’s World View

No MU Mention

By Karin Fischer February 01, 2017

The American campus today is global. Colleges send their students abroad and welcome the best and brightest from around the world, some one million last year, to their classrooms. Research is international, and universities work with partners around the world to create new programs, degrees, and even institutions. More than half of all colleges include internationalization among their top strategic priorities.

But those globalist attitudes put higher education at odds with the nationalist policies of the new Trump administration. Colleges that have prided themselves on working across borders of country and culture now find themselves dealing with a president who campaigned on a pledge to build a wall to keep out foreigners. As higher education was looking outward, President Trump and his supporters embraced a mantra of "America first."

Colleges that have prided themselves on working across borders now confront a president who has pledged to build a wall. Last Friday brought the clearest example of that divide when, just a week into his presidency, Mr. Trump signed an executive order imposing a travel ban on all visitors, including students and those with valid visas, from seven largely Muslim countries. The hastily imposed order stranded travelers and led colleges to advise the 15,000 students from the
affected nations — Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen — as well as thousands more faculty and staff not to go abroad during the 90-day ban.

For colleges, the last week has been a mad rush, as they have sought to intervene on behalf of those stuck overseas and to reassure students that, despite the executive order, they would be able to continue their studies uninterrupted. But the president’s action, and the broader political direction it signals, carries potential longer-term implications. It could hamper recruitment of international students and scholars, complicate, or even quash, overseas partnerships, and diminish U.S. higher education’s standing in the world.

For colleges, the challenges are twofold: They must make the case for global education to a country where many citizens doubt its value. And they must convince a shaken and skeptical international audience that they still believe in it, too. Story continues.

Falwell Says He Will Lead Presidential Commission

No MU Mention

By Paul Fain, February 1, 2017

Jerry Falwell Jr. announced Tuesday that he will lead a presidential task force on higher education, a Liberty University spokesman said, confirming news reports.

Falwell, Liberty's president and an early Trump supporter, said at the inauguration that he would work with the president in an "official capacity," with a focus on limiting micromanagement of colleges and accreditors by the U.S. Department of Education. The task force apparently will seek to address those issues, although Falwell said the details are still being determined.

President Trump is scheduled to meet with him Wednesday to discuss the task force, Falwell said.