Dale Fitch named director of MU School of Social Work

By Thomas Oide

Generated from MU News Bureau Release

COLUMBIA — Dale Fitch was named the director of the MU School of Social Work on Thursday.

Fitch had been serving as the interim director of the school since May 2016, according to the news release. His new position is effective immediately.

“I am excited to continue to serve the School of Social Work as its director,” Fitch said in the release. “The MU School of Social Work is committed to preparing students for professional excellence and leadership in social work practice, research and policy. I look forward to serving the students, faculty and staff of the University of Missouri in this role.”

Sandy Rikoon, interim dean of the College of Human Environmental Sciences, made the announcement.

"Dr. Fitch is uniquely qualified to lead the School of Social Work,” Rikoon said. “He has significant experience in the social work field and is guided by a positive philosophy based on consensus building and leadership. We are fortunate to have him at Mizzou.”

Fitch joined the social work faculty in 2009. Some of Fitch’s responsibilities as director will include managing the school's budget and development efforts while coordinating a vision for the school's future, according to the release.

Fitch's research topics focus on child welfare and organizational decision-making. He was part of the team that helped launch MU online master of social work program in 2015.

Fitch was not immediately available for comment Thursday.
UM backs bill to limit discrimination suits

Proposal would bar awarding punitive damages from public entities

By Rudi Keller
Columbia Daily Tribune

The University of Missouri supports a bill to limit discrimination lawsuits that became a flash point for controversy this week when a House committee chairman abruptly ended testimony by the president of the Missouri NAACP.

Just minutes before Rep. Bill Lant, R-Pineville, turned off Rod Chapel’s microphone, Marty Oetting, lobbyist for the university, told the House Special Committee on Litigation Reform that UM supports the bill, especially the part barring anyone winning a lawsuit from receiving punitive damages from public entities.

Oetting said he was working with the sponsor, Rep. Kevin Austin, R-Springfield, to make sure public higher education institutions were included in the exemption for state and local governments.

"Because of the nature of how we are established and governed, it is not always entirely clear, and there have been court decisions in the past that did award punitive damages in a couple of cases for the university," Oetting said.

Under the legislation, a plaintiff alleging discrimination would have to prove it was the motivating factor for adverse actions in employment, housing or public accommodations. Under current law, a plaintiff must prove only that it was a contributing factor.

The bar to recovering punitive damages against public entities also is new in the legislation.

"It basically will prevent most discrimination cases from moving forward," said Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, who opposes the bill. "I was really surprised to see them publicly support this bill in the manner that they did."

Supporters of the bill, which has been debated in various forms for several years, argue that it will bring Missouri law in line with federal standards for discrimination cases.

"Federal anti-discrimination laws that are enforced nationwide provide sufficient protection and would allow us to continue to strongly combat discrimination without exposing the University to unnecessary liability and defense costs," the UM System wrote in a statement sent via email by spokesman John Fougere.

In 2011, Zack Riley filed a lawsuit alleging discrimination was behind the decision to demote him in 2010. Riley, who is white, alleged that black and female employees were given preference at University Hospital, where he works as a lab technician.

The university’s position is puzzling because it can be difficult to get the school to take a public stand on bills that directly affect university operations, Kendrick said.

"I am pretty shocked that the university would weigh in on such a controversial bill," Kendrick said. "They tend to not speak out for or against legislation, so for them to take a position on this bill is surprising, to say the least."

rjeller@columbiatribune.com
573-815-1700
University-sponsored charter schools have mixed success

By Zia Kelly

Public charter schools have been an alternative for K-12 students in Kansas City and St. Louis since 2000, and as of a state policy change in 2012, the overwhelming majority of them are operated by higher-education institutions around the state — mostly by UM System schools.

Although charter schools were set up in Missouri to give students in struggling public schools access to higher-quality education, the results of charter schools, including those run by MU, have been mixed.

The MU Office of Charter School Operations currently sponsors six schools with a total of 10 locations in Kansas City and St. Louis. Gerry Kettenbach, the office’s director, said that because many students come to the university from these cities and then go work there after they graduate, the university has a stake in primary and secondary education in those areas.

“Public charters are probably one of the bigger pieces of the school choice movement,” Kettenbach said. “What the school choice movement says is that for your tax dollars, you ought to have more than just the local school to go to, so charters were born.”

Charter school sponsors like MU do not put any funding toward the school, since charter schools receive mostly public funds, such as local tax levies, and can also conduct additional fundraising efforts. Charter schools, like public schools, receive a portion of their state funding based on the number of students who attend the school. So when a student transfers from a public school to a charter school, they take some state funding with them. When the state routes funding to a charter school, a percentage goes to the sponsors of the schools to cover operational costs.

Having an outside entity like a university oversee the performance of a school is what distinguishes a charter school from a traditional public school — and also what many critics of charter schools say is their fundamental flaw. Unlike typical public schools, charter schools are not accredited by the state, which means they are not held accountable if they are not meeting state performance standards.

“They’re using public money, but they’re not as accountable for that public money,” said Brent Ghan, the deputy executive director of the Missouri School Boards’ Association.

School accreditation in Missouri is largely determined by an annual Academic Performance Report score, which is calculated by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary
Education. APR scores are based on factors such as test scores, attendance and graduation rates, among other things. If a public school does not receive at least 70 percent of the possible points on the report, it is considered unaccredited or provisionally accredited.

Of the charter schools that MU sponsors, only four of the six would be considered fully accredited by public school standards, according to their 2016 APR scores.

One, Ewing Marion Kauffman School, is among the highest-performing secondary schools in Kansas City and scored 100 percent of the possible points on the 2016 APR. But the five Confluence Academy campuses collectively received just above 50 percent of the possible points, which would deem them only provisionally accredited if they were held to public school standards. The average for St. Louis public schools and charters was 74.6 percent.

Another MU charter in St. Louis, Carondelet Leadership Academy, also received an APR score that would deem it provisionally accredited.

The Office of Charter School Operations closed two schools after the 2015-2016 school year because of suboptimal performance: Jamaa Learning Center received 43.6 percent, and Better Learning Communities Academy received 28 percent.

Another criticism charter schools often draw is that they divert students — and the funding they bring — from local public schools.

Kettenbach said that though the public school no longer receives those funds, it no longer bears the costs associated with educating the student who has transferred out.

However, Ghan said it isn’t that simple.

“You still have your teachers to pay, you still have your facilities to operate, so it is not as simple as saying, ‘Well, when a child leaves, and the money follows that child, therefore you don’t have as much cost to educate kids,’” he said. “Really, the cost doesn’t change that much if some kids leave. You basically retain the same operating costs.”

Public schools in St. Louis have seen this happen since the rise of charter schools began 17 years ago. Sarah Potter, communications coordinator for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, said there has been a distinct fall in enrollment in St. Louis public schools from 1994 to 2016 — part of this, however, could be families moving away from the school districts.

If a public school has been deemed either unaccredited or provisionally accredited, students who attended that school are allowed to transfer to a charter school that has been established in the area.

As the state law stands, charter schools can only be established in urban areas, or, if they are in a non-urban school district, they must be sponsored by local school boards. Currently, no school
district outside of St. Louis or Kansas City has done so. Conservatives in the state legislature have worked to expand school choice beyond that.

Although past legislation to expand charter schools in the state was stopped by former Gov. Jay Nixon, Gov. Eric Greitens has signaled support for the school choice movement, and lawmakers have responded.

Rep. Rebecca Roeber, R-Lee’s Summit, is championing a bill that would allow charter schools to be established by entities like universities or other potential sponsors outside of unaccredited or struggling school districts. This would mean that students would be eligible to transfer from public schools that are not deemed unaccredited.

Roeber declined to comment because the bill isn’t out of committee.

The Missouri School Boards’ Association has testified against the bill. Ghan said that expanding charter schools could divert resources away from public schools, and smaller school districts will not likely have the student populations to justify the creation of a charter school regardless.

“Charter schools are not a magic bullet, and there doesn’t seem to be a good rationale to us to expand charter schools when their performance has been mixed at best,” he said.

MU Craft Studio reopens with new partnership, renewed purpose

By Lily Mills

COLUMBIA — The Craft Studio for MU students has reopened in 11B Gentry Hall with a new mission.

The studio has partnered with MU’s Architectural Studies Department to offer arts and crafts, furniture-building and other skills. Students can no longer drop in the open studio space to work on projects during the school day.

The studio's first official event will be an open house from 1 to 5 p.m Friday with snacks, crafts and a DJ from KCOU.

Amy Hay, the MU Craft Studio adviser, and Lyria Bartlett, an assistant teaching professor in the Architectural Studies Department, will be available to answer questions about the new partnership. A schedule for studio events will be released during Friday's open house.
A number of key changes to the studio have already been established for this semester:

- Craft Studio events will be scheduled on evenings and weekends because the space is used during the day for architectural studies.
- Woodworking, film photography and ceramics classes will not be offered this semester.
- Clay for MU sculpture classes is the only product available for sale.

This semester also marks the first time students are fully in charge of the studio. They manage the studio like a small business, which makes them responsible for creating the class schedule, finding instructors and supplies for classes, advertising the classes around campus and keeping the studio clean.

Hay is available in the studio's office from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the school week.

In August Hay said she received the news that the studio would close in mid-December. The previous space in Memorial Student Union needed repairs, and the studio would not be able to return afterward.

The fate of the studio rested in the hands of the Missouri Students Association, which has jurisdiction over the student-run operation. MSA President Sean Earl was responsible for deciding whether MSA would continue to fund the studio or close it permanently.

Earl said he decided the studio would not return to Memorial Union because of the added expense of bringing in hot water.

As a response, several faculty members proposed creating the partnership between the craft studio and the Architectural Studies Department. That would furnish the needed space on campus and save MSA $20,000 per year by cutting a graduate position, Earl said.

One of the students affected by the MSA’s decision is freshman Nick Corder. He took a photography class offered by the Craft Studio last fall, discovered a passion for photography and met others with similar interests.

“Every day presented a unique opportunity for laughter and camaraderie,” Corder said.

He and other concerned MU students attended MSA meetings during the semester to show their support for the studio. That persuaded MSA to continue to provide a creative space on campus.

“A lot of students came to my office and expressed their concerns about the Craft Studio, and that helped guide our decision to keep it open,” Earl said. “Our role is to serve the students, so we knew we had to find a way to make it happen.”

The studio wants to change its image from a place solely for arts and crafts to one that offers a variety of building skills. There are plans to share a building technology lab, a laser cutter and perhaps a 3D printer in the future.
Having access to new equipment will allow students to work on projects that involve fabrication of materials, Hay said.

“We see this as a partnership that will grow over the years and include more programs,” she said.

The Craft Studio has been part of MU campus life for 75 years. In the past, a number of specialized projects were offered, such as leather-belt making, glasswork and metalwork.

Brady Commons was home to the studio for 30 years until 2005 when the current MU Student Center began its renovation. The studio later moved to Memorial Student Union.

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Here's What This Tragic Case of Teen Suicide Could Mean for Bullying in America

By Danielle DeCourcey February 17, 2017

Missouri high school student Kenny Suttner was only 17 years old when he shot and killed himself outside his family's house on Dec. 21.

Prosecutors have charged his former manager at Dairy Queen in connection with this death because of the alleged bullying she inflicted on him. Harley Branham, 21, was charged with second degree involuntary manslaughter on Feb. 2, according to ABC News.

The charges resulted from an unusual public inquiry into Suttner's suicide by the Howard County Coroner's office, that aimed to reveal the potential dire consequences of bullying.

"In this case, it was obvious that he'd suffered a great deal of bullying [that] had pushed him to this point," Howard County Coroner Frank Flaspohler told CNN. "A big part of the [inquiry] is that, OK, we need to make this public so schools all over the place pay more attention to bullying." Witnesses in the inquiry testified that Branham allegedly made Suttner lie on his stomach and clean the floor by hand, and she threw a cheeseburger at him when he made it incorrectly.
While some people on social media were disgusted by the bullying accusations, some questioned if an involuntary manslaughter charge was appropriate.

**There are two important aspects to convicting someone of involuntary manslaughter in Missouri, Ben Trachtenberg, a University of Missouri associate law professor, told ATTN:**
The accused person had to show a gross deviation from the standard of care, like recklessness or criminal negligence, and the prosecution has to prove that the person's actions caused the death of someone, according to Trachtenberg.

Because there's testimony that Suttner was bullied at school and at the Dairy Queen, proving Branham's behavior caused Suttner's death may be difficult, Trachtenberg added.

"Can it really be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that's why Kenneth Suttner killed himself?" he said. "That's the kind of question they'll be asking during the trial."

If Branham is convicted, it could lead to similar charges in similar cases, according to Trachtenberg. "If a conviction is obtained, it wouldn't change the law, but other prosecutors might think they can do this too," he explained.

Gary Namie, PhD, a social psychologist and director of the Workplace Bullying Institute, told ATTN: that although Suttner was allegedly bullied at school and work, the accusations fit into a case of workplace bullying.

"Though the manager was barely out of adolescence herself at 21, this case was a workplace, not school, case," he said. "The demeaning, humiliating misconduct was typical of what bullies can do." He added that other countries like Sweden and Canada have better laws than the U.S. for protecting employees from bullying.

"We as a society have become so immune to the word bullying even adults who are being harassed and bullied at work," Sue Scheff, author of an upcoming book about bullying titled, "Shame Nation" told ATTN: "We're a culture that lacks empathy for each other." She explained that it's difficult to hear that the bullies in this type of situation may also need help.

"When bullying happens everyone is the victim," she said. "The person that's doing the bullying needs help, and the person that is getting bullied needs help. You're bullying someone because you're hurting deep down inside yourself."

**Online Education Costs More, Not Less**
Study challenges the myth that digital instruction costs less -- both for students and for the colleges producing the courses.

NO MENTION

By Carl Straumsheim, February 17, 2017

The myth that online education courses cost less to produce and therefore save students money on tuition doesn’t hold up to scrutiny, a survey of distance education providers found.

The survey, conducted by the WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), found that most colleges charge students the same or more to study online. And when additional fees are included, more than half of distance education students pay more than do those in brick-and-mortar classrooms.

The higher prices -- what students pay -- are connected to higher production costs, the survey found. Researchers asked respondents to think about 21 components of an online course, such as faculty development, instructional design and student assessment, and how the cost of those components compares to a similar face-to-face course. The respondents -- administrators in charge of distance education at 197 colleges -- said nine of the components cost more in an online course than in a face-to-face course, while 12 cost about the same. In other words, virtually every administrator surveyed said online courses are more expensive to produce.

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Colleges -- particularly public institutions -- generally have more control over the fees they charge than over tuition rates. More than twice as many respondents said the state Legislature is involved in the approval process for setting tuition rates (17 percent) than fee rates (8.1 percent).

The University of Florida, which is referenced in the report, is one example. State legislators in 2013 mandated that the university could charge online students no more than 75 percent of on-campus tuition rates. In-state online students at UF pay $17.26 in fees per credit hour (including a financial aid fee, technology fee and capital improvement fee). Out-of-state students are charged an additional $35.36 non-Florida resident financial aid fee per credit hour. Story continues.
No MU Mention

By Kelly Field February 16, 2017

Last week’s confirmation of Betsy DeVos as secretary of education has raised alarms among many academics, who worry that the billionaire philanthropist might do harm to higher education.

During her bruising confirmation battle, many people raised questions about the new secretary’s grasp of education policy and her commitment to public education. Her opponents also raised fears that she could ease up on the Obama administration’s crackdown on for-profit colleges, or its strict enforcement of the gender-equity law known as Title IX.

But beyond rolling back many of her predecessors’ signature enforcement efforts, how much power does Ms. DeVos really wield over higher education? If history is any guide, her influence may end up being more limited than her critics fear. Most education secretaries, after all, have left a limited mark on higher education. Here’s why:

1. Education secretaries don’t set the higher-ed agenda.

At least, not usually. One notable exception is Secretary Margaret Spellings, who created a commission aimed at remaking higher education during President George W. Bush’s second term. Another is William J. Bennett, President Ronald Reagan’s second education secretary. While probably best remembered for the "Bennett hypothesis" — the controversial idea that federal student aid drives up tuition — Mr. Bennett also pushed through the first rules tying federal aid to student loan default rates.

For the most part, though, education secretaries are just carrying out campaign promises of the presidents who selected them. If the president had a robust higher-education platform, then his secretary is likely to be viewed as active on higher education.

If a president shows little interest in higher education, as Mr. Trump has, then his secretary is likely to follow suit. Even Sen. Lamar Alexander, who was president of the University of Tennessee when President George H.W. Bush tapped him to be secretary of education, is best remembered for his efforts to reform elementary and secondary schools. Story continues.

Tarlton completes renovation of MU Engineering's Lafferre Hall
Tarlton Corp. has completed a $31 million renovation project on Lafferre Hall, home of the University of Missouri’s College of Engineering.

Lafferre Hall comprises several free-standing buildings dating to 1892. Multiple additions to the main building were built over the years to accommodate growing student enrollment.

The project involved demolishing and renovating the 1935 and 1944 additions to update teaching facilities and improve building flow. The renovation created 40,000 square feet on the first floor for experiential teaching and learning laboratories, computer labs, a student machine shop, student team areas, conference rooms, study spaces and a coffee shop, plus 29,000 square feet for research. Movable laboratory equipment and partitions maximize space and potential. A two-story glass lobby and clerestory windows provide natural lighting and conserve energy.

Lempka Edson Architects was the project architect.

Pedestrian Hit by Car at University and College at Fault

Watch the story: http://mms.tveys.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=6721bab1-84ba-4871-85e2-6c0b29dd31bf