UM System moves forward in search for new chancellor


By Emily McCarter

COLUMBIA- The University of Missouri System is looking for a chancellor with "a collaborative and transparent leadership style" who is interested in "the development and success of students of all backgrounds," according to an email sent Monday.

UM System Interim President Michael Middleton outlined a new profile of the qualifications and expectations for the next MU chancellor.

"The University of Missouri System seeks a Chancellor with the vision, strength, and diligence to lead the institution with vital research and scholarship, effective teaching, and dedicated service," the profile says.

It also lists what the system wants in the MU chancellor, saying they should:

- Demonstrate an ability to craft a compelling vision for public higher education resonant with a diverse set of constituents
- Deepen MU’s sense and understanding of community and strengthen its commitment to diversity and inclusion
- A record of supporting excellence in leading-edge, interdisciplinary, impactful research and the pursuit of academic excellence
- Cultivate key political, civic, and business relationships essential to leading a public university in a time of increasing funding constraints
- Multi-cultural competence and a demonstrated awareness of and sensitivity to all people and the ability to foster and create a supportive climate and internal systems to evidence the same
- Develop, sustain, and safeguard the financial and human resources required to fully meet the current needs and future aspirations of the MU campus
The MU Chancellor's webpage has the profile and a link to nominate candidates.

In his email, Middleton thanked students, faculty and staff for their contributions to the search.

"We are committed to creating a robust candidate pool so the best individual is selected for MU’s next leader," he said. "We welcome your nominations of individuals you believe fit the profile."

It's been more than a year since former MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin resigned, and many other events have led up to this development in the search for a new MU chancellor. Here is a brief timeline of some of the important events.

- September 12, 2015: The discussion of racial climate on MU's campus is raised when Payton Head, Missouri Students Association president, posted on Facebook that someone repeatedly yelled the "n-word" at him.
- October 10, 2015: Concerned Student 1950 members protest by blocking UM System President Tim Wolfe's car during MU's Homecoming Parade.
- October 21, 2015: Concerned Student 1950 releases a statement with several demands, including a formal apology from Wolfe and his immediate removal as president of the UM System.
- November 2, 2015: Jonathan Butler says he will go on a hunger strike until Wolfe leaves office.
- November 7, 2015: MU Football players tweet saying they won't participate in any football related activities until Wolfe resigns or is removed from office.
- November 9, 2015: Tim Wolfe resigns as UM System president. Later that day, R. Bowen Loftin also resigns as MU chancellor.

The national executive search firm "Isaacson, Miller" will assist in the search for a new chancellor. The profile said all nominations and applications should be directed to the firm.

The 22-member search committee is co-chaired by University of Missouri-Kansas City Chancellor Leo Morton and MU College of Engineering Dean Elizabeth Loboaa.
University of Missouri seeking participants for autism study

This story was generated from an MU News Bureau press release: University of Missouri Thompson Center Recruiting Children, Adults with Autism for Landmark Genetic Study

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=36225d72-fdf6-4ae6-a416-cb2426eebc84

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A University of Missouri research facility is looking for people affected by autism or their biological family members to take part in the nation’s largest autism study.

The university’s Thompson Center is partnering with the Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research for Knowledge (SPARK) project

The Columbia Daily Tribune reports the SPARK project will involve DNA analysis of people with autism and their family members. The goal is for researchers to identify genetic differences related to autism.

The participants will be sent a saliva kit to return to researchers.

The Thompson Center and 22 other clinical sites are recruiting study participants. The center has two more years to recruit as many families as possible.
House leader scolds UM for lobbyist's testimony

Democrat questions university's commitment to equal treatment

By Rudi Keller
Columbia Daily Tribune

JEFFERSON CITY — The leader of Missouri House Democrats wants the University of Missouri to withdraw its support of a bill making it more difficult to win discrimination claims in state courts.

The university's support undermines its credibility when it tries to show it cares about diversity and inclusion, House Minority Leader Gail McCann Beatty, D-Kansas City, wrote in a letter addressed to Interim UM System President Mike Middleton.

On Feb. 13, UM System lobbyist Marty Oetting testified to the House Special Committee on Litigation Reform that the university supports legislation that would change the standard for determining whether someone was the victim of discrimination in employment, housing or public accommodation. The bill also would provide state and local governments, including public higher education institutions, protection against punitive damage awards.

In his testimony, Oetting said theUM supports the bill and then cited particular reasons why the university wants protection from punitive damages.

"Mr. Oetting's testimony didn't so much call in question the UM System's commitment to equal treatment for all as loudly declare that no such commitment exists," McCann Beatty wrote to Middleton.

Certain Columbia Tribune clips are posted in print before being published online. This is the print version of the story.

Beatty also wrote that she was surprised at the testimony because the university is usually reluctant to testify on bills, instead preferring to make its views known privately to lawmakers.

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.

Supporters argue that it would make Missouri law mirror federal discrimination law, but opponents view it as weakening legal protections.

The university has strong protections against discrimination built into its rules, "many of which go beyond the protections offered by our state laws," Middleton wrote.

"I believe our testimony on this particular legislation solely targeting the punitive damages issue adequately reflects the University's position.

State Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, said the university's position at the hearing was confusing because Oetting announced when he began his testimony that UM supports the entire bill. Since then, the university has tried to clarify its stance, Kendrick said.

"They are adamant that they were speaking in favor of the punitive damages ban rather than speaking more broadly on the House committee substitute as offered," Kendrick said.

Middleton will be interim president until March 1, when Mun Choi assumes office as permanent president. McCann Beatty said she has met with Choi and hopes he will reconsider the university's position.

"It was not my intent to put Dr. Middleton on the spot, but I do have great concerns that the university would take such a stance on this particular bill," she said.
Gas leak closes part of College Avenue

A gas leak detected a little before noon shut down part of a major Columbia street for more than an hour Tuesday.

Construction workers working on a sewer line project ruptured a natural gas line, the Columbia Fire Department said in a news release. The leak led firefighters to shut down College between University Avenue and Rollins Street for a little more than an hour, the department said.

Firefighters were called to another leak while they were still at the College Avenue scene. The second leak, on Seventh Street outside the University of Missouri's Heinkel Building, was caused by Campus Facilities workers hitting a gas line while preparing to reroute a steam line, said MU spokesman Christian Basi. The building was temporarily evacuated and Seventh Street was shut down briefly.

Former MU student leader Payton Head cites civic engagement as key to activism success

ALLISON COLBURN, 20 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — During his sophomore year at MU, Payton Head heard a story he thought would never happen to him.

He was at a diversity dinner when he saw Michael Middleton, who was then MU's deputy chancellor, give a speech in which he recalled an awful experience he’d had on campus while he was a student.
Middleton was walking, and some men on the back of a pickup truck shouted, "Go home" and used a racial slur.

“I remember thinking, ‘That’s horrible — I’m so glad Mizzou has advanced past that,’” Head said.

But in fall 2015, when Head was president of the Missouri Students Association, he experienced the same thing — and it wasn’t the first time he’d been called the racial slur.

His Sept. 12, 2015, Facebook post, written to call attention to an incident in which a passenger in a pickup truck yelled slurs at him near campus, went viral. It was a starting point for semester-long protests about race relations on campus.

Head read a portion of that post Monday night to a packed audience in Leadership Auditorium in the MU Student Center. He was invited for Black History Month by the Department of Black Studies to speak about campus leadership. It was one of several stops for Head in a series of speaking events at colleges across the country.

Since graduating from MU last spring after majoring in political science and black studies, Head has worked as a policy fellow for the National Campus Leadership Council and a speaker and campus diversity and inclusion consultant for Keppler Speakers, which connects companies and organizations with speakers and celebrities. Notable speakers with the company include former President Jimmy Carter, astronaut Buzz Aldrin, science guy Bill Nye, journalist Anderson Cooper and former MU defensive end Michael Sam.

It has been more than a year since Head took part in the MU protests, and his main message Monday was to encourage engagement in the local and campus community. He also reminded people that any substantial social change is built on the work of giants who come before.

He said the 2015 protests taught him that speaking from a position of power is crucial to making social change. The reason people paid attention to him when he spoke out against racism, he said, is that he had the influence that came with being an MSA leader.
“What makes the football team different?” Head said, referring to the Nov. 7, 2015 announcement by Missouri football players that they would boycott all football-related activities until then-UM System President Tim Wolfe resigned. “What makes me different?”

The difference was that the players had platforms from which to command public attention. He called it a privilege to speak from a position that would cause people to listen.

When he first arrived at the university, Head said, he didn’t see "one Mizzou," a phrase used in a former diversity initiative. Rather, he saw a university in which students were segmented into racial and other groups.

“You can love this university to death, but you can also want to change it,” he said.

He decided to get involved in every facet of student life he could. He spent years with MSA, worked as a summer welcome leader, got involved with the Alumni Association Student Board and went to Asian-American Association events, among other involvement.

“Whatever I could do to help promote the brand of Mizzou, I did it,” he said. “I was invested in our future, and I still am.”

He named interim UM System President Middleton as one of many people who influenced him during college. Middleton was among several administrators at the event, including MU Provost Garnett Stokes, Dean of Education Kathryn Chval and Kevin McDonald, the UM System’s first chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer.

As part of the event, Stephanie Shonekan, an associate professor in the School of Music and the chair of the Department of Black Studies, thanked Middleton for his work with the university. He stepped in as interim UM president when Wolfe resigned in response to weeks of protests at MU. Mun Choi assumes the permanent role March 1.

“Middleton is the reason we have black studies,” Shonekan said.
When Head heard Middleton speak candidly about race during that diversity dinner years ago, he realized that overt racism, not just systemic, was ingrained in the campus culture.

“It was one of the most powerful speeches that I had ever heard,” Head recalled. “I felt like if we continued to glaze over that part of our history we’d never be able to address it.”

He told the gathering that while they might not reap the benefits of their activist work with the university, it will open doors for other students, as Middleton did for him.

"Although your role as a student is temporary, the work you do to make a better community lives on,” Head said.

In an interview after his presentation, Head said that despite the many challenges and the backlash he experienced from students who did not agree with the protests, his activism at MU was a good experience overall.

“Our protest and our activism was not perfect, not perfect at all,” he said. “But at the end of the day, it was students who came together of all different backgrounds who were empowered to fight hate with radical love.”

If he could go back to August 2015 and give himself one piece of advice, it would be, "Keep faith."

He said there were many moments during the year when he felt powerless, weak and that the world was against him. Sometimes he hated himself.

“It’s hard, but it was temporary,” he said. “And everything that I learned from that movement empowered me to be the person I am today.”
MU police identify man in suspicious kissing incident; no arrest made

By Alan Burdziak

University of Missouri police on Monday identified a man suspected of trying to kiss a woman against her will on campus Sunday afternoon, but he will not be prosecuted, MU Police Department Capt. Brian Weimer said.

The man, 20, was not arrested, but Weimer said an officer found him Monday afternoon near the Virginia Avenue Housing Complex and took him in for questioning. Four similar incidents had been reported near the complex this month. The officer told the man that what he was doing was inappropriate and someone picked him up and took him away from campus, Weimer said. Weimer said MU police don’t expect the man to return to campus.

A woman called MU police Sunday afternoon and told them she was approached by the man, who engaged her with small talk, followed her and then hugged and kissed her neck before trying to kiss her on the lips. He gave up and left when the woman resisted.

Weimer said police did not arrest the man because the victim said she wanted him to know that what he was doing was wrong and for him to be removed from campus.

MU police released information about the incident and surveillance photos of the man and more calls came in reporting similar activity. Two other incidents happened near the Virginia Avenue parking garage on Sunday afternoon, when the man approached women, talked to them and asked them for hugs. The women were not assaulted. The other incident was on Feb. 7, when the man approached a woman and asked to walk her home. Weimer said the man gave up in each incident after the women declined his offer.

Weimer said he hopes people will report strange activity to police instead of waiting to hear a report of a similar occurrence.

“We always encourage people from the community to call us and let us know what’s going on so we can take action,” Weimer said.

The man has no affiliation with MU and was in the area because a family member was seeking treatment at University Hospital, Weimer said.
Local Jewish community reacts to threats across nation


By Caileigh Peterson

COLUMBIA — A Missouri city is the latest to see attacks and threats against the Jewish Community.

Dozens of headstones at a University City cemetery were vandalized Monday.

Mizzou Hillel's executive director said the political and online rhetoric going around lets people think it is okay to make threatening comments.

"Both politically and online there's so many places where people can say things and it has real effects and results," Jeanne Snodgrass said. "I don't want to say that antisemitism is rising, but in the very least people that feel this way a really feeling emboldened that they can say something without consequences or with limited consequences. I think that it is really scary,"

Snodgrass said only about two percent of Mizzou students are Jewish. She said a number of her students are from places where threats have been made, making them more concerned. Snodgrass said she is not aware of any threats in mid-Missouri.

"I was thankful to see that Governor Greitens made a statement about what happened at the St. Louis cemetery. It's really important to be clear about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in terms of speech or threats against any particular group," Snodgrass said.

The Jewish Community Center Association said 11 Jewish Community Centers received threatening calls Monday. The FBI said it is investigating the situation and police have not said if they are considering the vandalism a hate crime.
Since the beginning of 2017, there have been at least 67 incidents at 56 Jewish Community Centers in 27 states and one Canadian Province.

Missouri senator pushes Greitens priority of term limits for statewide officers

By Austin Huguelet St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 20 hrs ago

JEFFERSON CITY • Missouri senators began work on one of Gov. Eric Greitens' signature campaign promises on ethics Tuesday.

Sen. Will Kraus, R-Lee's Summit, presented a resolution to the Senate rules committee that would extend the two-term, eight-year term limits placed on the governor and treasurer to the four other statewide officeholders.

"Gov. Greitens ran on wanting to extend term limits to all statewides and this takes care of that," Kraus said. "I just think everyone elected to statewide offices should be on the same playing field."

Many states have term limits on their statewide officeholders, but most confine their limits to governors and lieutenant governors.

Kraus's resolution would make Missouri one of seven states with limits on its secretary of state, attorney general, treasurer and top financial investigator.

The issue is one of several ethics reform initiatives the new Republican governor championed on the campaign trail.
He's also pushed restrictions on lobbyist gifts to legislators and limits on how quickly lawmakers can become lobbyists when their terms end.

The House overwhelmingly passed a gift limits proposal earlier this month, but it hasn't moved past a first hearing in the Senate.

Legislation that would extend the time period lawmakers must wait before becoming lobbyists from the current six months to as many as five years have gained less support.

Greitens may have better luck with the term limits, which have historically been very popular with Missouri voters.

An amendment adding term limits for the governor passed in 1965 with 72 percent of the vote, according to the University of Missouri Institute for Public Policy.

Voters reached an even higher margin in 1992, when they voted to restrict state legislators from spending more than 8 years in the House or Senate. They also supported term limiting members of Congress, despite the state's lack of jurisdiction over the federal government.

The hearing also raised long-simmering questions about whether those term limits actually make the capitol more responsive to the public or instead force perennial newbies to rely lobbyists and special interests to learn the ropes.

Sen. Bob Dixon, R-Springfield, and Sen. Jason Holsman, D-Kansas City, both asked Kraus if he thought the term limits drained the legislature of its institutional knowledge.

But Kraus said those concerns went beyond the scope of his initiative and would need to be addressed in a different bill.


If passed, Missourians would vote on whether to add the changes to the state constitution in November 2018.
Incidents Roil Campuses

Racist video at Old Dominion, blackface controversy at Spring Arbor and anti-immigrant posters at the University of Texas.

NO MU MENTION

By Scott Jaschik, February 22, 2017

In the weeks after the election of President Trump, many campuses experienced racial and anti-immigrant incidents. While the incidents quieted at the end of last semester and the beginning of this one, a new flurry is hitting campuses now.

Numerous colleges -- including Hebrew Union College, the University of Florida, and the University of Minnesota -- have seen incidents involving swastikas in recent weeks. A neo-Nazi website has also been hacking into printers at prominent universities and printing out anti-Semitic fliers.

This week, Old Dominion University has been shaken by a video (designed to appear to be made by someone affiliated with the university) full of racist comments. Spring Arbor University is debating whether campus administrators should be revealing how they punished a woman who posed in blackface with racially offensive captions. And the University of Texas at Austin is planning a meeting after anti-immigrant posters appeared on campus.

When Inside Higher Ed reports on such incidents, some comments suggest that the incidents are "fake news." While some facts are indeed unclear about these incidents, they are all situations in which the universities have verified the basic facts, and many students have felt hurt or unwelcome because of what happened. In one case, a student has been found responsible. In another, a hate group has claimed responsibility.

Story continues.