



MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

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New Grant Promotes Undergraduate STEM Education

By ELENA RIVERA · 4 HOURS AGO

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The American Association of Universities (AAU) awarded a small grant to an interdisciplinary faculty team at the University of Missouri to develop undergraduate STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education.

The grant proposal was written by Johannes Schul and Sarah Bush, both from the Division of Biological Sciences. They are a part of a team of nine faculty from eight different departments.

The \$20,000 grant over the next two years will help the team redesign STEM curriculum and train faculty.

The AAU awards small grants like this to encourage systemic change at universities and develop new ways to foster students' interest in STEM fields.

“I think the main challenge for many faculty, or probably all faculty, is that we are not trained as educators,” said Schul.

He said most faculty are trained to be researchers, but do not know as much about educational pedagogy.

Bush said she is hopeful that the reform will help to retain STEM majors at the university.

“This is certainly an issue nationwide, where many students enter college intending to major in a STEM discipline, but after their first year transfer out of the major,” said Bush. “This is particularly of concern for students from underrepresented groups who have a higher rate of transitioning out of STEM courses after their freshman year.”

Along with increasing retention, Schul said he wants to grow a community of STEM educators on campus to help develop new educational models and improve classroom experiences for all students.

Mizzou is one of 12 campuses chosen for this grant. The 12 schools include Cornell University, Iowa State and University of Kansas, among others.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

FEBRUARY 22, 2017 6:16 PM

[Missouri lawmaker scolds UM System for backing bill changing discrimination standards](#)

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

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A top Missouri lawmaker is demanding the University of Missouri System back off its support of legislation that she says “seeks to gut civil rights protections” in the state.

In a letter sent late Monday afternoon to interim university system President Mike Middleton, House Minority Leader Gail McCann Beatty wrote that “given the protests (in 2015) that focused national attention on the university’s spotty history on racial issues, the choice to support measures to cripple legal protections against discrimination is both puzzling and disheartening.”

On Wednesday, the university in a statement said it provides individuals who believe they have been discriminated against “access to robust due process.”

Beatty, a Democrat from Kansas City, was referring to testimony on Feb. 13 by UM System lobbyist Marty Oetting to the House Special Committee on Litigation Reform. Oetting was addressing university support for three pieces of legislation that change the standards that determine whether a person has been discriminated against in employment, housing or public accommodation.

The legislation also would grant state governments, including public colleges and universities, protection against punitive damage awards in discrimination lawsuits.

“All three would make it more difficult to bring suit for discrimination under the Missouri Human Rights Act,” said Marc Powers, Beatty’s chief of staff.

Beatty’s letter said that “Oetting’s testimony didn’t so much call in question the university system’s commitment to equal treatment for all as loudly declare that no such commitment exists.”

She also said she respectfully requests that the university system “not only retract its support for the bills in question but state its opposition to them.”

Powers said Wednesday afternoon that Beatty’s office had not yet received a response to the letter.

But in a statement sent to The Star on Wednesday afternoon, Middleton said the university “specifically and narrowly testified recently in favor of the punitive damages portion of the legislation.”

Middleton’s statement said the university favors the portion of the legislation that would exempt the state and its political subdivisions from punitive damages in discrimination lawsuits.

“We are merely seeking to clarify that public higher education institutions also will be included in this exemption,” Middleton said.

Oetting’s testimony last week preceded an attempt by Missouri NAACP President Nimrod Chapel to speak during the same public hearing, in opposition to the proposed legislation.

Chapel said he had spoken only 109 seconds before being silenced by the committee chairman, Rep. Bill Lant, a Pineville Republican. When Chapel continued to speak against changes to the legislation, calling it an example of “Jim Crow,” his mic was shut off.

On Wednesday, Chapel praised Beatty after learning about her letter to the university.

“She represents the kind of leadership that we need,” Chapel said.

Like Beatty, Chapel referred to the unrest on the MU campus in Columbia in November 2015 when the predominately black student group Concerned Student 1950 led protests against racial discrimination and oppression on the campus.

He said university support of the legislation “reduces what it is required to do to respond to those same students who complained. It endorses discriminatory practice in the state of Missouri.”

Middleton defended the way the university responds to complaints of discrimination.

“I am proud of the effective policies having to do with unlawful discriminatory practices that we have put in place at the University of Missouri System. Many of these policies go beyond the protections currently afforded by state law.”



Hospital trustee candidates support MU Health collaboration

By Brittany Ruess

Candidates vying for seats on the Boone Hospital Center Board of Trustees want to see the hospital collaborate in some way with University of Missouri Health Care, but their ideas vary on what that collaboration might look like.

Four candidates campaigning for two seats on the hospital board in the April election expressed their interest in a partnership during a forum Tuesday hosted by the Columbia Rotary Club at the Country Club of Missouri. The forum was the first for the candidates this election season.

Randy Morrow, former vice president and chief operating officer of Boone Hospital, and Gordon Christensen, who was a physician at Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital and University Hospital, are competing for a five-year term currently filled by Bob Wagner. Wagner, Taylor Burks and Richard Shanker are seeking a one-year, unexpired term left open by the resignation of Fred Parry, who was elected Southern District Boone County commissioner in November.

Wagner and Burks, a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy Reserve and an employee with the University of Missouri System, attended the forum. Shanker, 65, an electrical contractor, was away for business.

The board of trustees is considering management options for the hospital because its lease agreement with BJC Health Care ends in 2020. The parties must notify each other by 2018 whether they plan to continue, modify or end the lease. Wagner said the idea of Boone Hospital

collaborating with MU Health is not new, but he sees opportunities for the two to work together in the near future.

“There are issues, there are areas of health care in Columbia right now that are not serviced well,” he said in an interview after the forum. “I think one of the easiest things would be to collaborate on some of those areas, like mental health. Everybody talks about it, but it’s not served well.”

The closed-door discussions about the hospital management options could affect details of any sort of partnership between Boone Hospital and MU Health, Morrow said in an interview. If a collaboration does occur, he said, he wants to see the hospitals remain separate so residents have more choice. Joint efforts, he said, could help the area receive extra dollars for medical advancements.

“If we could bring in additional specialists or more grant money or research money by having the two institutions work together, that’s going to help everybody,” Morrow said.

The hospitals already are partnering in some areas, such as a collaboration between MU Health’s Women’s Health Center and Boone Hospital’s OB/GYN team, Burks said in an interview.

“Women can continue to get deliveries at their preferred hospital, but if we’re collaborating in that service line to leverage both patient preference and what provides the best patient care, then I think that’s exactly what a collaboration looks like,” he said. “What does it look like in other service lines? Every service line is probably unique, but I think that that is a good model for that.”

Christensen said in an interview that the hospitals can do better at playing on each other’s strengths and weaknesses. Boone Hospital surpasses MU Health in cancer care and cardiovascular surgery, he said, and MU Health has better tele-medicine and infectious disease care services.

“MU wants to have strong programs, and some of the strongest programs locally are at Boone Hospital,” Christensen said. “It would be nice if Boone Hospital could team up with them, rather than try and duplicate services and split patient population.”

He said the hospitals should maintain friendly competition in orthopedic surgery, in which both have strong programs and a large patient base.

Though Shanker wasn’t present, he sent a statement that was read aloud. Shanker said in the statement that he is running to represent Boone Countians who believe the Boone Hospital lease should be held by citizens and not a hospital organization. He also said he would like to see Boone Hospital establish a medical insurance cooperative.



Researchers: social media can connect extremists, radicals

Watch story: <http://www.abc17news.com/news/top-stories/researchers-social-media-can-connect-extremists-radicals/352789980>

By Jordana Marie

Generated from News Bureau expert pitch

COLUMBIA, Mo. - A Columbia man is accused of attempting to help ISIS carry out a terror attack in Missouri. Investigators started talking to Robert Lorenzo Hester, Jr. through social media under the guise of someone involved in the terror group.

According to University of Missouri associate professor of communication Brian Houston, social media is a common way for people to connect and, potentially plan terror plots.

"In the most recent case of the man from Columbia, federal authorities used social media," Houston said. "They presented the opportunity to get involved through connections on social media as a way to capture him and identify him as a radical."

Houston said the agents were tapping into some of the same tendencies that occur across social media platforms when groups may be trying to recruit individuals.

"It's reassuring that the federal government is engaged in this type of work and active there, but it also shows the potential for these connections to be in place of bad actors getting together and deciding to do horrible things," said Houston.

According to the attorney general's office, the FBI started monitoring Hester's social media accounts after posts he allegedly made expressing hate toward the United States. Hester also had multiple accounts, two of which had photos of the Black Flag of Tawhid.

The undercover agent initiated conversation with Hester through social media. Houston said social media can be compared to an echo chamber, where we follow and are friends with people who share similar ideas and values as our own.

"When we think about violent extremism then, if you are a potential radical or extremist and you are getting connected with other potential radical or extremists, and the echo chamber is that chamber of extremism, then that's a problematic situation," said Houston.

Terror groups, including ISIS, are commonly known to recruit online, creating a "homegrown terrorist" situation similar to Hester's. Hester was born in Missouri and was briefly enlisted in the Army. It's not clear when or why Hester allegedly started having thoughts about attacking the U.S.

"After these connections are made, those interactions and information can make individuals or contribute to individuals becoming more polarized, more radicalized, more likely to do things," said Houston.

He went on to say some people may have one idea and become more radicalized once they begin interacting with like-minded people.

"Not only do they find potentially actionable ways to do things, they become more serious and become firmer believers as a result," Houston said. "So social media spans some potential in this domain that we wouldn't see otherwise if social media didn't exist."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Struggling Confluence charter schools are renewed for five more years

By Kristen Taketa St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 20 hrs ago

St. Louis' largest charter school network got a five-year renewal Tuesday even though it has not met state performance expectations in its almost 14 years of operation.

Confluence Academy, a nearly 100 percent minority and low-income charter school network founded in 2003, educates about a quarter of all St. Louis charter school students. Charter schools are independently run, publicly funded schools that require a sponsor — usually a university — to operate.

According to state standards, only two other current St. Louis charter schools performed worse than Confluence last year: Preclarus Mastery Academy, which is in danger of closing after losing its sponsor

last month, and Carondelet Leadership Academy. Confluence has more than six times as many students at its four campuses as Carondelet, and more than 18 times as many students as Preclarus.

Only 17 percent of Confluence students who took state math tests scored proficient or advanced last year, while 32 percent did so for English. The schools' worst score is in science. Only 6 percent of students scored proficient or advanced.

In 2016, the state gave Confluence a school score of 48.3 percent, without factoring in that state tests were changed last year. Confluence has improved its score from 2013, when it got 28.3 percent. But that also means Confluence has always performed as poorly as an unaccredited school district.

Confluence's sponsor, University of Missouri-Columbia, bore almost an hour of blows from the Missouri Board of Education at its meeting in Jefferson City Tuesday.

The board hammered Gerry Kettenbach, Mizzou's director of charter schools, for failing to hold Confluence to a higher standard and acknowledge when it's time to close schools that board members say have been failing students for more than a decade. State law gives sponsors, not the state board, the power to close charter schools.

“You'd be an unaccredited district today,” said state board member Peter Herschend at the meeting. “Yet here we are debating about, well, maybe we should let this unaccredited district roll forward for another five years. I don't find that to be a satisfactory position at all.”

Kettenbach argued Tuesday that closing Confluence would be too traumatic for its 2,800 children. If Confluence closed, those students might have to attend district neighborhood schools nearby that are even worse than Confluence.

“School closures are always the last option,” Kettenbach told the board Tuesday. “It's a moral issue. And it's a public responsibility issue.”

Kettenbach also said he believes that Confluence's new CEO, Candice Carter-Oliver, will be an agent of change for Confluence. Carter-Oliver is a month and a half into her new job and was previously an assistant superintendent at Normandy schools, a similarly majority-minority, low-income district that has showed improvements in the past two years.

The state board voted unanimously to grant Kettenbach's application to renew Confluence's charter, since the application and sponsor satisfied state requirements.



Alpha Chi Omega to admit transgender women

Watch the story: <http://www.komu.com/news/alpha-chi-omega-to-admit-transgender-women>

COLUMBIA - The national college sorority Alpha Chi Omega will now admit transgender women.

The sorority posted a Facebook video Friday by its national president, Angela Costley Harris.

She said Alpha Chi Omega is committed to being a woman's organization, but needs to stay relevant.

"Alpha Chi must be inclusive of all who live and identify as women regardless of their gender assigned at birth," Harris said.

The announcement was made in response to chapter inquiries across the nation on the status of LGBTQ individuals as members.

The changes will not include transgender men and the sorority website states "Alpha Chi Omega is committed to protecting the right of Alpha Chi Omega chapters to be single-sex organizations."

Taylor Dailing, University of Missouri chapter president, said the change is positive.

"I thought it was awesome. We're all very excited about it," she said.

She said the announcement won't change anything about recruitment over the summer and it's more of an affirmation of what the local chapter has already been doing.

While comments on the Facebook post were mostly positive, some people raised concerns about allowing men in the chapter houses after hours.

Kerry Ann Gilmour wrote, "I wholeheartedly disagree with this decision. Will you be allowing these men to live in the alpha chi houses and at the same time not allowing other men to visit at late hours?"

Mary Jane Thomas Stuart said, "I am very disappointed and am withdrawing all support including recruiting."

Alex Hancher, a sophomore member at Alpha Chi Omega, said she thinks the move is a positive step for all of Greek life.

"This just makes it seem like we're one step closer to all of Greek life being that much more inclusive for anyone who wants to join and to me that's huge."

Gabrielle Gresge, the MU Panhellenic Association President, said similar changes could be on the way at the organizational level.

"This is a burgeoning movement throughout a lot of Greek systems and I know that we as PHA are actually going through a by-law audit right now,"

Representatives from MU's LGBTQ Resource Center were not available to comment.

The Center Project, a Columbia LGBTQ community center and non-profit organization, sent the following statement:

"The Center Project supports the progress that Alpha Chi Omega has made. By accepting trans women into their organization, Alpha Chi Omega has furthered LGBTQ values and enriched the lives of trans women. These women can now feel comfortable and know they matter at Alpha Chi Omega."



Mountain Of Debt Delays Some Graduates From A Dream: Farming

By Kristofor Husted

Liz Graznak runs an organic farm near Jamestown, Missouri, which she calls Happy Hollow Farm. She sells her vegetables to local restaurants, in CSA boxes and at the farmer's market. But eight years ago, after falling in love with the idea of growing her own local produce, the farm she runs today looked like a near-impossible dream.

While on track to earn a PhD in plant breeding, Graznak bought her first box of produce from a nearby farmer. Soon after, she decided then that instead of studying plants, she wanted to grow them. Easier said than done, though.

“The mortgage aside, it costs a hell of a lot of money to start a farm, and to build the infrastructure, and to buy drip tape and row cover and hoops...I mean just everything you could imagine,” she says.

First steps for entrepreneurs: go to a bank, take out a loan and buy some property. Not for Graznak, though, who at that point was making just a small amount as a working graduate student.

“No bank was going to give me a loan at making \$8 an hour. No way. And owing some \$30,000 odd dollars in student loans,” she says. “So that's why I got a job.”

Graznak isn't alone. Student loans in the U.S. have run American graduates into a \$1 trillion hole of debt. Indeed, after college many entrepreneurial graduates are postponing their dream careers to pay off some of their loans. For many young people, like Graznak, trying to start their own farm, student debt can put their dreams on hold.

After graduating with a masters degree, Graznak ended up deferring her student loan payments, interning on several farms and then working full time at a garden center so she could save up enough money to launch her dream farm. And she did -- 6 years later.

The average age of American farmers – 58 in 2012 -- keeps ticking upward. Many in the Midwest fear there aren't enough new or young farmers entering the evolving field. The nature of modern farming has made it tough for a new generation to get started.

“I think it really is an increasing concern just because farms continue to get larger and more capital intensive,” says Kevin Moore, an associate professor of agricultural and applied economics at the University of Missouri Columbia.

Moore teaches a class for students called Returning To The Farm. As part of the class the students crunch the numbers to figure out a business plan and the economic reality of what it will take to farm successfully.

“The capital requirement of agriculture has continued to increase which makes it more difficult for a young person to get in and to get to the adequate size that's kind of required to be efficient and competitive,” he says.

The numbers don't always add up, Moore says, and some students can't go into farming right away as planned. That's not only okay, he says, it's a smart choice if it's not financially feasible. The last thing young people need is more debt.

The USDA's Farm Service Agency helps by offering loans geared toward beginning farmers at lower interest rates.

“Our mission, as established by Congress, is to make loans and fill the credit gap when conventional lenders are unwilling or unable to provide credit,” says Jim Radintz, deputy administrator for farm loan programs. Last year, the agency gave out about 40,000 loans worth more than \$6 billion.

Lindsey Lusher Shute, the executive director and cofounder of the National Young Farmers Coalition, says FSA has been very helpful in supporting new farmers and ranchers, but ultimately the agency is limited by how much funding Congress allocates. And no one knows how the new administration will treat loan guarantee programs.

Shute's group has another idea: forgive loans for full time farmers. It has been turned into a bill in the U.S. House called the “Young Farmers Success Act.”

By adding full-time farmers to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, which typically includes less-profitable, public service jobs like teaching and local government, young people with school debt who commit to farming for a decade are eligible to make monthly income-based payments for 10 years, after which they qualify for loan forgiveness.

“We also want this as a way to recruit young people into the field of agriculture, to say as a nation thank you for being out in the field and pursuing this really noble career,” Shute says.

Turning the bill into law might be a long shot, but Shute says she's hopeful it will get a serious look by Congress this session.

It's not all gloom and doom, though, for a young person to work before starting a farm. Take organic farmer Liz Graznak. She has paid off her student loans and she says even though she had to work for a few years to start her farm, she did more than just save money. She learned construction, plumbing, electricity, and soil science, all skills needed to launch a successful farm.

"Somehow, people have to learn those skills," she says, "and if you don't have the opportunity to grow up learning those skills, then how are you going to learn them?"

MISSOURIAN

[Man questioned in relation to campus assault released with warning](#)

MISSOURIAN STAFF, 14 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — A man questioned by police in relation to an assault that occurred near the Virginia Avenue housing complex Sunday afternoon was released with a trespass warning, according to campus police.

The man had followed a woman, who was an MU student, then hugged her, kissed her on the neck and attempted to kiss her on the lips, according to campus police. The woman escaped unharmed.

Campus police sent out alerts Monday asking for the public's help in finding the suspect.

Police saw the man, who was not affiliated with MU in any way, walking on campus Monday, according to a department news release.

Police said the same man approached three different women near the Virginia Avenue Garage in the past few weeks. He talked to them, asked to walk with them and asked for a hug. Those are not considered crimes, campus police said.

Two of the incidents happened Sunday. The third happened on Feb. 7 near Hamilton Way and Hitt Street.

MUPD Maj. Brian Weimer said Wednesday that the man was not from Columbia and was released with a warning for trespassing.

**SCIENTIFIC
AMERICAN**

The Essential Role of Storytelling in the Search for Truth

By Lise Saffran

The work of public health is based on scientific evidence. We have real data on risks from gun violence to antibiotic resistance to addiction. However, even as the data accumulates, public trust in experts is on the decline. The research of Yale professor Dan Kahan suggests that our understanding of basic facts about politicized science issues depends on whether or not we trust the person conveying them. And in the decision to trust a source, objective expertise appears to matter less than the determination that this person shares our beliefs, assumptions and suspicions, that they are, in a sense, a member of our tribe. Scientific cherry-picking is not the exclusive domain of the rural, the non-college educated, or the religious. Kahan found that highly educated people with advanced reasoning skills were the most adept at filtering out evidence that contradicted their cultural predispositions.

I teach storytelling in public health at the University of Missouri. While many of my colleagues in journalism meet the fake news challenge by doubling down on objectivity, I urge my students to get more subjective with the stories they tell. As trust in experts declines, authenticity and personal connection matter more. And where does authenticity come from, anyway?

Human beings are primed to tell stories but also to listen for the person behind a story being told. Storytelling, whether it's reporting the news or writing a memoir, involves the active selection and ordering of some information and the omission of other information. Principles of selection inform what questions we ask and which answers we might receive. This directing, ordering and selecting reflects a human consciousness at work, a person with beliefs, assumptions and suspicions.

Being in the presence of that consciousness is one of the great pleasures of reading literature. Years ago at the Iowa Writers' Workshop, Frank Conroy used to tell his students that the reason

we love stories is that we long to be accompanied. When readers are told that the perspective of the person telling the story doesn't matter because the story consists of objective facts, they increasingly suspect they are being lied to. This suspicion is often disarmed when they believe they are being spoken to by a real human being. My friend's sister, for example, discounts NPR news in its entirety but is addicted to *This American Life*.

So, when one of my students wanted to research how immigrant children become "language brokers" for their parents, such as a child who was pulled out of history class to go to the hospital and explain to her father that he'd had a heart attack, I asked her to explore both why we should care as a society but also, why *she* cared. Her finished piece included both statistics about immigration trends, and translation services, but also some honest reflection about her own point of view. An Argentinian who came to the U.S. for graduate school, she wondered how her childhood might have been different if she had immigrated with her family. In her research she found that language brokering could undermine parental authority; might that have happened to the parents she had been raised to respect?

If we are willing to entertain the idea that both sides of the equation—the journalists or academics presenting their findings and the public that increasingly doesn't trust or believe them—belong to groups with often differing beliefs, assumptions and suspicions, then telling stories about science and people and events, in short the world we live in, becomes an exercise in cross-cultural communication.

The demands of that exercise can't get much more high stakes than in the case of young American soldiers deployed to Afghanistan. In their research into cultural sense making, Louise Rasmussen, Winston Sieck and Joyce Oslund used a specific scenario—a Mullah who is working with Americans to distribute relief supplies and is discovered to have set aside a truck load of those supplies—to investigate how soldiers put facts together into a story and the implications for conflict.

They were able to categorize soldiers by the kind of questions they asked about the scenario. The least prepared were those who concluded quickly a crime had been committed and whose questions were aimed at determining its severity. They asked, for example, how much material the Mullah set aside. The second category accepted that their usual "perspective, viewpoint or framework," did not apply in this situation. Their questions focused on meaning and interpretation, rather than facts. They asked, for example, how the Mullah made the decision to set material aside in the first place. Facts are stubborn things, it is true, but the meaning of any given set of facts is subject to interpretation. So while the data may have been generated in your lab, the task of science communication is to convey the significance of those data to the people outside of your lab—an audience that may and often does have an entirely different frame for interpreting the material you present.

In the search for truth, the investigation that an ethical memoirist undertakes—examining both verifiable facts as well as potentially distorted memories and assumptions based on perspective—may often yield better results than an examination of the record alone. By better I mean both truer *and* more credible. In addition to revealing a person behind the facts reported—

and thus the possibility for connection—the focus on transparency and framing leads to questions of the self-reflective kind.

This is important because not being believed is not the only danger that exists for a storyteller who denies that her own values, perceptions and culture are powerful influences on the story being told. The story itself is at risk. In the midst of interpretation, the teller needs to ask herself: what might I be missing here, because of who I am and what I see, that more data is not likely to reveal? As society further segments itself into political and cultural groups, it is worth remembering that academics and journalists are not immune. As our politics becomes increasingly tribal, the acknowledgement that one is first and foremost a human being may be radical indeed.

Lise Saffran is the Director of the Master of Public Health Program at the University of Missouri, where she teaches Storytelling in Public Health and Policy. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop in fiction, she is the author of the novel JUNO'S DAUGHTERS, and publishes in both academic and trade publications on health humanities, public health ethics and global health.