All departments at MU set to take a budget cut before June

COLUMBIA - In the next couple weeks, Interim Chancellor Hank Foley will work with Vice Chancellors of different departments on campus to decide how much money will be cut from their budgets.

Earlier this year, Gov. Eric Greitens announced that $20 million would be cut from this fiscal year's budget.

The fiscal year ends on June 30, 2017, but different departments on campus are going to have to decide what they want to cut in their budgets.

In July of 2016, the university was told it would be given $229 million from the state over the fiscal year.

The university then made a budget of how this money would be allocated, but it is now going to have to cut funding with just a couple of months left in the fiscal year.

All departments will be affected by the budget cuts, including auxiliary departments such as the athletic department and residential life.

MU spokesperson Christian Basi said there have been meetings going on all week, and they will continue until decisions are made.

Foley and his committee are currently working together to decide what specific number will be cut from the departments' budgets.

"Very soon those numbers will be given to division leaders, and then it will be up to those division leaders to determine where that money will come from," Basi said.

The MU budget shows how money is allocated each year and where specific money goes.
Greitens’ 2018 budget also proposed a $20 million cut for the next fiscal year. The budget for the next fiscal year has not yet been finalized, but Basi said they are planning ahead for next year and the years to come.

(Editor’s Note: A previous version of this story stated that the auxiliary departments would not be affected by the budget cuts. That was incorrect. All departments will be affected by the budget cuts, including auxiliaries.)

Reserve funds, allocations to make up for $20 million MU shortfall


By Lucas Geisler

COLUMBIA, Mo. - Departments across the University of Missouri campus will dip into reserve funds and general revenue allocations to make up for a $20 million budget shortfall.

Interim Chancellor Hank Foley's office announced this week that the shortfall created by Gov. Eric Greitens' January budget withholding would be "backfilled using cash on hand." That money will come from each college and division, including services that make their own money, like MU Health and Mizzou Athletics.

Greitens' withheld more than $30 million from the UM System due to lagging state revenues for the current fiscal year, running through June. That amounted to $20 million less to the Columbia campus in that time. Expected cuts to state revenue next fiscal year for higher education will cause further cuts to the budget.

The current plan will require each department to either defer or cut projects it may have been saving for, school spokesman Christian Basi said. Administrators developed a formula to weigh both reserve funds and general revenue allocations to decide how much each school will be responsible for in the shortfall.
"Leaders will have to take a look and determine of those projects, those large purchases, how do they want to delay it or is this something that has to be completely taken off the table," Basi told ABC 17 News.

MU Health will undergo a different process. Health care industry standards require that hospitals keep certain amounts of cash on hand, Basi said, and the administration would meet with leaders there to decide how to handle its portion of the cuts. Other auxiliary programs, like athletics, Residential Life and campus facilities, will be expected to participate in the cuts, as well.

Foley told ABC 17 News in a special report last week that further cuts would likely be coming for the next budget year, starting July 1. He said campus leaders were ready for tough cuts, but expected them to be "data-driven." Foley said talks about next year's budget are in progress.

"The people of Missouri need to know that we cannot do all the things we did before with the kinds of revenue that we have now," Foley said.

Opinion: University is in the midst of perilous times

By Bob Roper

Not long ago I spent an enjoyable two hours visiting a junior- and senior-level economics class at the University of Missouri. The students were bright, engaged and well prepared. The professor was also well prepared and knowledgeable about the subject. This was academic rigor at its finest. I can’t prove it, but I suspect this class is typical of what goes on in a lot of MU classrooms every day. This is surely the case, too, with respect to MU researchers. All of which makes the university’s multiple problems so dispiriting.

What are those problems?

• Slow revenue growth. Missouri’s economy grew at an average annual rate of 1 percent from 1997 through 2015, which ranked 48th out of 50 states. Early in his term, Gov. Eric Greitens withheld $31.4 million from the university system’s current budget and then proposed cutting $40.4 million from the fiscal 2018 budget, which will begin July 1. MU gets roughly half of the system appropriation and thus will likely endure roughly half of the cuts. This is overall a cut of over 9 percent and a big problem.
• Diminished legislative clout. Kurt Schaefer is no longer our state senator. For six years he was the chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. In that post he was able to bring to MU consistent revenue increases; important capital project appropriations — the refurbished engineering building and the new Missouri Historical Society building; and the underappreciated power and willingness to stop bad cuts and anti-university legislation. Our new state senator, Caleb Rowden, was assigned to neither Appropriations Committee nor the Higher Education Committee. In the House, more of the same: Only one local legislator was assigned to the Budget Committee or Higher Education Committee. Democrat Kip Kendrick, who serves on the Budget Committee, works hard for the university, but he is a member of the minority party and has limited influence.

• Medicaid costs. Even though Missouri chose not to accept federal Medicaid expansion, that certainly does not mean its costs are under control. Increases in pharmaceutical costs and an increase of 103,000 enrollees between 2010 and 2016 have driven sizable budget increases. Medicaid and K-12 funding are the sacred cows of the operating budget; higher education and social services spending, not so much. Guess where that leaves MU at budget time.

• The fall 2015 protest hangover. It is amazing how quickly a quality brand name, forged over many years of hard work, can be damaged. When I travel to outstate Missouri, I play a little test game by wearing Mizzou insignia apparel. As soon as someone determines I hail from Columbia, the usual question is “What is wrong with Mizzou?” I bet these folks vote and also pass their feelings on to their local representatives.

• Blue MU is out of step with red Missouri. Donald Trump won Missouri by almost 20 points. In Columbia, he lost by almost 20 points. In a perfect world this would not matter, but in the real world it probably does. MU has a perfect right to invite Angela Davis, a well-known communist, to speak here before a packed house, but it probably does not play well in red Missouri. And there is the free speech issue — remember Melissa Click? An organization of university professors committed to free speech on campus, Heterodox Academy, ranked 150 schools on their commitment to viewpoint diversity on campus. MU ranked dead last. How any of this would lead red-state Missouri to support MU is a mystery.

• Football and men's basketball are not doing well. It might not be fair, but it is true. When one or both programs are successful, MU greatly benefits. More high school students want to attend, and more alums and donors want to give money.

• The highly critical UM System audit. A few days ago state Auditor Nicole Galloway released a review of management operations of the UM System. The audit covers the period from July 1, 2014, to well into the current fiscal year. The findings are terrible and came at the worst possible time — as a beleaguered MU is in the middle of a difficult legislative funding effort. The audit found $2.3 million in inappropriate incentive payments; luxury vehicle payments; relocation payments; housing allowances; and retention payments. Incentive payments, or bonuses, account for $1.2 million. None of the payments was listed on the official published salary and benefit roster, and the auditors found no defined criteria or process that governed the incentive program.
Meanwhile, as a consequence of budget constraints, some university employees lost their jobs or had their salaries frozen; staff members were told other staff cuts are coming; and the university is actively pursuing a waiver to increase tuition above the statutory maximum. Note also that the 2015-2016 salaries of these upper-level leaders jumped $4 million. The governor is unhappy about this, and surely the same sentiment exists in the legislature. The most telling comment is from Auditor Galloway: “These actions show a complete lack of awareness from a group of administrators who have forgotten who they serve.”

One thing is surely true: The “same old, same old” approach will not work anymore. Mizzou’s leadership should collectively figure out who its customers are, what they want and need, and how to deliver it. The leadership must also be willing to be flexible and to change. A great deal of courage will be necessary.

UM President Mun Choi, off to a good start, impressed the legislators who met with him in his first days in office. He apparently plans to spend as much as he can of his first 100 days touring our state and listening to his customers and stakeholders, including the taxpayers. We wish him the very best as he pursues excellence in all things at ‘Ol Mizzou.

Bob Roper is a retired bank executive and an observer of local and national politics.

Bob Roper, CEO of Central Trust and Investment Company in Columbia. hand out photo March 2007/Biz/Roper, Bob
The performance incentive payment program was a target of an audit report released by Missouri State Auditor Nicole Galloway’s office, which said the $1.2 million in payments to top system executives appeared to have violated the state constitution.

Choi’s decision applies not only to current senior officers of the university system, but also to future system senior executives.

Hours after his morning announcement, Choi discussed his decision and answered reporters’ questions about tuition hikes, academic program cuts and possible layoffs. He also talked about shrinking enrollment and about building trust between the administration and faculty, staff and students and between the university and citizens of the state.

“As the state’s premier public university, we owe it to the state’s taxpayers and our stakeholders to be transparent with respect to what we are trying to accomplish as we move the university forward,” Choi said during his first media availability event since officially assuming his job March 1.

In a statement earlier, he said that going forward, the university system “will explore options for making our executive performance practices more effective, with any changes fully vetted with the board of curators.”

But Choi admitted that system campuses will have to find revenue to offer competitive salaries to keep and bring in quality executives.

“We are a flagship institution that competes with other top universities for talent,” Choi said. “We are going to have to pay market value ... so that we are competitive.”

He said the university will review what competing universities pay their executives and set market competitive benchmarks that would be made public. He promised a review of all existing compensation packages for top UM System executives and promised future transparency about what’s being paid to university leaders.

“There is nothing to hide at this University of Missouri System,” Choi said.

Galloway said she is “pleased” that university leaders “accepted responsibility and committed to ending bonus payments uncovered in my audit.”

She also promised to watch the system’s progress and said her team will return later in the year to determine whether it has followed through on the commitment Choi made.

The questioned payments were made in 2015, 2016 and 2017 and approved by either the curators or Missouri’s system president.
Galloway’s audit report said the “incentive payments were made without a formalized and clearly defined process of how the additional compensation was to be earned, giving the appearance of year-end bonuses, which are a violation of the Missouri Constitution.”

At the University of Missouri-Kansas City, Chancellor Leo Morton from 2015 to 2017 received a total of $79,377 in incentive payments. He also received another $28,118, from 2015 through 2016 in vehicle allowance payments, according to the audit.

Hank Foley, the current interim chancellor on the Columbia campus, received incentive payments over the three years totaling $106,258.

Tim Wolfe, who resigned as UM System president in November 2015, received $118,750 in incentive payments from 2015 through 2016, the audit said.

Most of the payments, plus roughly $60,000 in retention bonuses, were paid to administrators “without formal Board of Curators’ approval of the individual amounts,” the audit report said.

When asked about raising tuition, Choi said the university would be seeking a state waiver to a tuition-cap law that prohibits Missouri public institutions from raising tuition above inflation.

He said that with the system expecting a $57 million state funding cut to its budget, it would take a 15 to 17 percent increase in tuition to fill the revenue hole.

“But we are not going to do that,” Choi said, adding that he is having discussions with campus leaders about what a workable tuition increase might look like.

MU, UMKC and Missouri University of Science and Technology have averaged tuition and fee increases of 1.1 percent annually for the past five years. The increase at the University of Missouri-St. Louis averages 2.2 percent, with a student-approved Health and Wellness Center fee during this period.

Choi said he already has talked with department heads on the system’s campuses about needing to eliminate some programs that no longer meet the university mission goals.

On top of that, Choi said that with 80 percent of the university budget going to pay salaries, to reduce spending will likely mean a loss of jobs in the future.

“It’s time for us to make tough decisions,” Choi said. “The primary goal for all of us is to support the faculty, students staff and citizens of Missouri. ... Not to kick the can down the road, as they say.”
Editorial: Missouri should rein in sweetheart deals for high-ranking state employees

That didn’t take long.

On Friday, the president of the University of Missouri System, Mun Choi, ended incentive payments to more than a dozen top officials at the system’s schools. The decision came just a few days after Missouri Auditor Nicole Galloway found $1.2 million in apparently improper payments to school administrators over a three-year period.

The payments were made without a clearly defined process, Galloway said, making them look like unconstitutional bonus payments. She also found $800,000 over two years in housing, retention and relocation payments to administrators.

The spending angered taxpayers and politicians alike. Choi’s decision on the incentives is commendable, but there is more work to do.

More than $400,000 was spent on car allowances over a two-year period, money that also went to top administrators. The payments, Galloway said, “appear excessive.”

Nope, the system said. Car allowances are “market driven.”

There’s more.

R. Bowen Loftin quit under fire as the Columbia campus chancellor in November 2015 but continued to receive the chancellor’s salary for six months. When that ran out, the university found a job for Loftin as director of national security research development — at 75 percent of the chancellor’s pay, “significantly higher than other research administrators,” the audit found.

He also got a travel allowance, a car allowance and a stipend, with “no clear objectives or deliverables required during this time.”

In any circumstance, all of these payments seem questionable. During a time of budget cuts and plans for tuition hikes, they’re ridiculous.

But there’s more.

Last week, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that Robert Ziehmer, the former director of the Missouri Department of Conservation, is still collecting a state paycheck more than seven months after leaving the post. He has already picked up $87,000.
The payments appear to be part of a contract settlement agreement between Ziehmer and the Missouri Conservation Commission and may include unused sick leave.

Taken as a whole, these arrangements reflect a disregard for the appearance of favoritism and sweetheart deals with high-ranking state employees. State lawmakers who opposed minimum wage increases last week should spend a little time reining in luxury car allowances for college administrators, or yearlong separation agreements with top employees.

The voice of state taxpayers should be clear.

Let’s have no more of that.

University of Missouri abandons incentive pay program for execs

By Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Mar 10, 2017

ST. LOUIS • A few days after a state audit of the University of Missouri System revealed transparency concerns about an incentive pay program for executives, the new system president scrapped the program.

Mun Choi, who joined as system president 10 days ago, announced his decision to terminate the program Friday morning.

The system was given a rating of “fair,” the second-lowest rating on a four-tiered scale, in part because of concerns about the incentive program, which doled out $359,000 in incentive payments and $60,000 in retention bonuses to various administrators during fiscal years 2015 and 2016.

According to the audit, the performance measures varied and the rules were, at times, arbitrary. Missouri Auditor Nicole Galloway said the bonus process relies on broad goals which, “in most cases are based on subjective information to determine if the outcomes have been achieved.”

She also criticized the system for not including those bonuses in the public salary data.
“As the state’s premier public university, we owe it to the state’s taxpayers and our stakeholders to be transparent with respect to what we are trying to accomplish as we move the university forward,” Choi said in a statement. “To that end, I will explore options for making our executive performance practices more effective, with any changes fully vetted with the Board of Curators.”

Galloway called the decision "the start of a process to rebuild the trust of taxpayers, students, families and Missouri citizens.”

Choi’s decision comes with backing from the governing board. He also announced a review of compensation for all system executives.

Choi is expected to answer questions from news outlets Friday afternoon for the first time since he became system president.

Choi addresses proposed University of Missouri budget cuts

By Katie Kull

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — University of Missouri System President Mun Choi said Friday that the system has outlined a number of ways it would deal with possible budget cuts that would stem from a proposed 10 percent cut in state funding next fiscal year.

The first action came Friday when he eliminated a contentious performance bonus program for top administrators. It came under scrutiny this week after an audit revealed the system doled out about $1.2 million in performance incentives to 18 top university administrators over the last three years. The bonuses were given without direct approval from the Board of Curators and without clear performance criteria, the audit said.
Lawmakers criticized the program, saying the universities should be tightening their belts in anticipation of less state funding.

Missouri Auditor Nicole Galloway called for transparency, and praised Choi’s decision to stop the program.

"I'm pleased University of Missouri System leaders accepted responsibility and committed to ending bonus payments uncovered in my audit," Galloway said. "I will be watching their progress and my team will return later this year to determine whether they have followed through on their commitment."

In his news conference Friday, Choi also addressed concerns about tuition. Higher education leaders in Missouri say Republican Gov. Eric Greitens' cuts will make it difficult to continue a long-standing tradition of keeping in-state tuition at Missouri universities steady.

Choi said the UM System and other Missouri universities will likely apply for a waiver allowing them to raise tuition beyond a cap established in a 2007 law.

"At this point it is too early for me to comment on what that percentage increase will be, but our goal going forward is to always ensure affordability and access and excellence," Choi said.

When asked about employee layoffs, Choi didn't rule out the possibility that some cuts could be coming. Employee salaries and wages account for nearly 80 percent of the system's budget, he said.

"We will do whatever we can to ensure that we treat every one of our staff members as humanely and compassionately as possible," he said. "But we are facing some significant challenges at our system."

**University of Missouri System president ends executive incentive pay after critical audit**

The University of Missouri System's new president has terminated an incentive program for top-level administrators after a state audit criticized the payments and questioned their legality.
UM President Mun Choi said in a news release that he is terminating the program that had paid nearly $1.2 million to 18 top administrators between fiscal years 2015 and 2017. At a press conference Friday afternoon, his first as system president, Choi said he will not ask for anyone to return any of the cash.

The incentives, which have been highly criticized since the audit came out Monday are “something that happened in the past,” Choi said. “Going forward, it’s important to me to say we have a new day, especially in the fiscal environment that we face, for us to be good fiscal stewards.”

All compensation programs will be evaluated, Choi said at the press conference, pledging transparency at every level of the system and in its operations.

“There are lessons to be learned from the audit report and we are going to be using that to improve our operation, to become more transparent,” Choi said.

He said UM still plans to remain competitive in seeking talent by keeping in line with the market rate for salaries, though the system is facing steep budget cuts after a decline in enrollment at its flagship Columbia campus and $31.4 million in state funds restricted by Gov. Eric Greitens during the current fiscal year.

“We cannot have a university that focuses on excellence by only cost-cutting,” Choi said. “We have to be able to attract faculty, staff and administrators by paying the market rate to attract them to this university.”

Greitens has proposed cutting another $40.4 million from the system’s state allotment in fiscal year 2018, which begins July 1.

The payments, as well as another $1.2 million in vehicle and housing allowances and relocation payments, were the focus of a state audit of UM System finances. State Auditor Nicole Galloway's report questioned the legality of the incentive pay program and criticized payments made to former Columbia campus Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin after his resignation.

The incentive payments are suspect, Galloway wrote, because the criteria for awarding incentive pay are subjective and some employees do not know they are eligible until they receive their money. The Missouri Constitution bars the General Assembly from awarding extra pay to state employees or contractors for work already performed, and an attorney general’s opinion from 1955 said the prohibition applies to any “government agency deriving its power and authority from the constitution and laws of the state.”

Galloway said the payments amount to unconstitutional bonus pay because there were no clear guidelines or performance metrics. The lack of consistent documentation “gives the appearance the payments represent additional compensation for past performance,” Galloway wrote.
UM Board of Curators Chairman Marcy Graham said in the release that the board supports Choi's decision, saying his examination of the issue "underscores our commitment to be good stewards of public resources."

Choi's decision will apply to current university system executives and future hires, the release said. Choi said a review of all compensation for UM System executives will start immediately, and UM System spokesman John Fougere said that review will include the automobile and housing allowances and relocation payments highlighted in the audit.

Loftin, who served as MU chancellor from early 2014 until November 2015 and is currently the director of national security research development for MU, received more than $300,000 in incentive pay. Reached by phone Friday, Loftin said when then-system President Tim Wolfe offered him the job, the deal was in four parts instead of one or two, which is what his previous contacts for heading a campus had looked like. It was a little more complex than he thought it would be, but there was nothing wrong with it, he said.

"I assumed it was all public," Loftin said. "I had no inkling it would be a hard-kept secret."

There were a few things in the audit that Loftin said he took exception with, including the finding that stated he received his chancellor salary for six months without having a job title or official responsibilities. Loftin said he was working during that time.

"The main thing they made mistakes about was making statements like I had no job duties," he said.

No one from Galloway's office contacted Loftin, he said. He was out of town at the beginning of the week and first heard about the audit Wednesday night, two days after it had been released and appeared in media reports. He said he had no intention of keeping his compensation details hidden.

"I firmly believe that people's compensation should be publicly known if you're in a public institution like Missouri," Loftin said. "I'm just saddened that the auditors didn't come to see me."

Interim MU Chancellor Hank Foley, who received $100,000 in retention payments in the program, said in a statement issued via a university spokesman that he agreed with the move to terminate the program.

"I fully concur with Dr. Choi's decision," Foley said in the statement. "It's not obvious to me why it was done the way it was, so I welcome this change. Over the last 14 months, we have worked to make all financial information transparent; to do so is the first step to open book management. I'm glad the new President is moving the UM System in this same direction."

Local state lawmakers also applauded Choi’s choice to end the incentive program.
State Rep. Cheri Toalson Reisch, R-Hallsville, said Galloway’s report hopefully will stop similar actions from happening again, and commended Choi for quickly taking action.

“I think that shows his leadership and shows what type of president he will be by making that decision,” she said Friday.

Missouri Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, in a written statement praised Choi’s "swift and strong decision" to end the program.

"The actions of the previous administration, and its response to turmoil on campus, cannot be undone," Rowden wrote, referring to fall 2015 protests over race issues that led to Wolfe’s resignation. "The appointment of three new curators and the installation of President Choi are indicative of the positive, systemic changes already underway at the UM System."

State Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, said Choi made “the right move,” and it will help to regain the trust of those in the General Assembly.

“I think it’s a clear indication that president Choi plans to bring some transparency to the pay process and make sure the University of Missouri System is open about the pay of its executives,” Kendrick said.

Choi’s decision showed leadership, Rep. Chuck Basye, R-Rocheport, said.

“It sends a message to the public that he’s going to try and do the right thing, be transparent with tax money,” Basye said.

The University of Missouri Faculty Council approved a resolution Thursday calling the incentives "appalling." On Friday, Art Jago, a management professor who helped write the resolution, sent an email to other Faculty Council members urging them to tell Choi his statement was insufficient.

"He never mentioned that the payments to administrators were in any way improper," Jago wrote. "This is a continuation and a compounding of appalling, disgraceful behavior."
UPDATE: UM System ends executive incentive program, will not seek repayment

MISSOURIAN STAFF, Mar 10, 2017

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System's executive performance incentive program, which came under fire in a recent state audit, has been terminated.

UM President Mun Choi made the incentive program's termination public in a news release Friday morning. He said the decision is effective immediately.

At a press conference Friday afternoon, Choi announced that the UM System would not ask any administrators to return past incentive payments. Choi praised the work ethic of university leaders and emphasized the need to pay faculty and staff at market value in order to attract and retain talented individuals.

"As the state's premier public university, we owe it to the state's taxpayers and our stakeholders to be transparent with respect to what we are trying to accomplish as we move the university forward," Choi said in the news release. "To that end, I will explore options for making our executive performance practices more effective, with any changes fully vetted with the Board of Curators."

State Auditor Nicole Galloway on Monday released the results of an audit that found the UM System had paid about $2.3 million in "inappropriate bonus payments" to high-level administrators over the past three years. The payments, which the audit said "may violate the Missouri Constitution," included $1.2 million in "incentives to 18 executives and more than $1 million in luxury vehicle and travel allowances and other forms of compensation.

In a Friday afternoon news release, Galloway said she was "pleased" with the decision to end the incentive program.
"I will be watching their progress and my team will return later this year to determine whether they have followed through on their commitment," Galloway said in the release. "I will also review whether other concerns related to transparency in executive pay and luxury vehicle allowances have been fully addressed."

The incentive compensation program began in 2008 under former UM President Gary Forsee, system spokesman John Fougere said.

Missouri Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, praised Choi's decision in a news release Friday.

"Today's decisive actions are an important first step in Dr. Choi's tenure as UM System President and the articulation of a new narrative of excellence at Missouri's flagship university," Rowden said in the release.

Maurice Graham, chair of the UM Board of Curators, said in the UM news release that the board "strongly supports" Choi's decision to terminate the program.

Choi also has ordered an immediate and comprehensive review of "all elements of compensation" for system executives.

New UM president talks tuition hikes, program cuts at first news conference

ANDREW KESSEL, Mar 10, 2017

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System will have to cut programs, make layoffs, raise tuition or potentially all of the above if it’s going to keep up with funding cuts, new UM System President Mun Choi said Friday.
Choi held his first news conference since taking office March 1. The system’s fiscal crisis took center stage.

UM faces cuts that amount to about 11 percent of the system’s budget, Choi said. If the system were to offset that with tuition alone, he said, it would require a hike of nearly 17 percent — a rate the university is not considering.

But tuition is expected to go up.

Choi said he is working with system leaders to determine a price increase that “keeps our tuition affordable, but also provides the revenue that we need to ensure that we have enough faculty members to teach the courses that our students need.”

Potential layoffs could make that even more difficult. Eighty percent of the system’s budget goes to wages and salaries, Choi said, and every million in funding reductions equates to about 13 full-time employees.

“While we will do whatever we can to ensure that we treat all of our staff members as humanely as possible ... we are facing some significant challenges at our system,” Choi said.

In addition, various UM programs are expected to be on the chopping block.

“In order to grow programs of excellence, we have to be able to prune those programs that are no longer meeting the mission or the goals, the high goals that we have for excellence,” Choi said.

As for what programs stand to be eliminated, Choi said it was too early to say. In addition to MU, the system is made up of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, the University of Missouri-Kansas City and the Missouri University of Science and Technology.

No matter what steps the system decides to take, Choi said, transparency will be a priority.

“Parents and students working to put themselves through school want to know what they’re paying, so we want to be as transparent as possible,” he said.
One cost-cutting step the new president has taken is eliminating the executive performance incentive program that was the subject of a UM System audit released Monday. The audit found that the system paid about $2.3 million in what Missouri State Auditor Nicole Galloway called “inappropriate bonus payments” to administrators and executives over the past three years, including $1.2 million in incentives.

Choi announced that he was terminating the executive performance incentive program, effective immediately, in a release issued a couple of hours before the noon news conference.

"As the state's premier public university, we owe it to the state's taxpayers and our stakeholders to be transparent with respect to what we are trying to accomplish as we move the university forward," he said in the release.

Choi told reporters at the news conference that the UM System would not ask any administrators to return past incentive payments. He praised the work ethic of university leaders and emphasized the need to pay faculty and staff at market value to attract and retain talented individuals. In fact, many UM leaders are underpaid relative to the national median, Choi said.

**Other highlights**

Choi emphasized the need to partner with industry leaders to ensure investment in the university system and ensure students have quality jobs after graduation, and mentioned Microsoft’s move to open a new regional headquarters in St. Louis. Choi met with UMSL Chancellor Tom George to discuss the company's investment and hopes it can create opportunities for students across the system.

Choi said he is pleased with the ongoing search for a new chancellor for MU. He said he plans to be "very involved" and is asking the search committee for a list of four candidates.

The Coalition of Graduate Workers at MU has reached out to his office, Choi said, and he hopes to arrange a meeting soon. He called changes in graduate student health care and stipend increases meaningful steps that the Columbia campus has taken thus far.

“Graduate students, as all of us know, are the lifeblood of a research university,” Choi said. “And so it’s very important for us to work closely with our graduate students.”
New UM president talks budget cuts, tuition hikes

By Alan Burdziak

In his first press conference as University of Missouri System president, Mun Choi spoke a lot about how he plans to fix the budget problems the system is facing.

At the press conference Friday, Choi said he plans to convene with other officials from the system and all four campuses to discuss how to request a waiver to a law that caps tuition hikes at the growth of the previous year’s consumer price index.

Gov. Eric Greitens restricted $31.4 million from the state’s 2017 fiscal year budget, which ends June 30, and has pitched cutting state funding to UM by $40.4 million in fiscal year 2018. The move is part of hundreds of millions in cuts to departments statewide, including across the board in higher education.

Choi said the system expects to lose $57 million to its “permanent funding” because of state cuts. While he didn’t say there would be layoffs, he hinted that they may be inevitable, noting for every $1 million cut out of the budget, it represents 13 full-time employee positions.

“If you quickly do the math, you can see how much that represents,” he said. “Eighty percent of our budget, overall budget, is in salaries and wages. While we will do whatever we can to ensure that we treat all of our staff members as humanely and compassionately as possible, I want to share with you that we are facing significant challenges at our system.”

Aside from state cuts, the system also is dealing with an enrollment decline at the flagship Columbia campus. And, to make up for what amounts to a 10 percent to 11 percent decrease in state funding, the system would have to increase tuition by 15 percent to 17 percent, Choi said. Though he pledged to not increase tuition by that much, Choi added it was too early to tell how much an increase would be.

“What is very critical for us is access, affordability,” Choi said at the press conference at University Hall. “At the same time, we are dealing with a significant cut to our budget.”

Aside from the budget, Choi also spoke Friday about his plans to make the system a driver of economic growth for the state and to partner with private enterprise to create jobs.
State legislators from Boone County applauded Choi’s decision Friday to end an incentive program that doled out $2.4 million in previously public bonuses that were criticized in a recent state auditor’s report. Calling his actions in his first 10 days in office promising, local lawmakers so far have confidence in Choi.

State Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, said that Choi has to deal with a situation that was created because the state couldn’t live up to its promise when Greitens restricted funds this fiscal year. He said if the university can’t get an approval for a waiver from the Department of Higher Education, he would consider supporting legislation that changes or repeals the law capping tuition hikes, but it would have to wait until next year as the deadline for filing bills for the 2016 legislative session has passed.

“I understand the desire of higher education institutions around the state to want more flexibility when the state doesn’t hold their end of the bargain,” Kendrick said.

The idea of laying off personnel didn’t sit well with state Rep. Chuck Basye, R-Rocheport, who also said Friday that he’s been impressed with Choi so far.

“If they lay off people you know it’s not going to be people at the top … it’s going to be people lower on the pay structure who need a job and are” working to put food on the table, he said.

Reached by phone after he put out a statement praising Choi’s leadership on the audit, state Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, said he’s not surprised that UM will be asking for a tuition hike waiver.

“I would assume that every four-year institution is going to ask for a waiver if the budget doesn’t change,” Rowden said. “In a year like this, they’ve got to do what they can to function and provide an education.”

UM System ends executive incentive program

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri System's President Mun Choi announced Friday morning the termination of an incentive program for top-level administrators. The decision is effective immediately.

The news conference was in response to a state audit that criticized the payments and questioned their legality.

Choi announced in the meeting that the UM System would not ask any administrators to return past incentive payments.

"As the state's premier public university, we owe it to the state's taxpayers and our stakeholders to be transparent with respect to what we are trying to accomplish as we move the university forward," Choi said in a news release.

"To that end, I will explore options for making our executive performance practices more effective with any changes fully vetted with the Board of Curators."

Maurice Graham, chair of the UM Board of Curators, said in the news release that the board "strongly supports" President Choi's decision.

Choi said the state is facing some budget challenging and programs will have to be cut to deal with budget shortfalls.

He also emphasized the need to pay faculty and staff at market value in order to attract and retain talented individuals.

He added that the board will not raise tuition by 15-17 percent. He said the plan is to keep tuition very affordable.

"We are going to be very innovative and entrepreneurial," Choi said.

Choi mentioned it's important to regain the trust with faculty members and he will host an official meeting to meet with them on March 22.

"This will require active engagement, with our faculties, students and staff as well as our elected leaders, including Governor Greitens and the legislators that we have who best serve this state of Missouri," Choi said. "And most importantly, we need to work with Missourians throughout the state."
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**Having religious, spiritual encounters down to epilepsy?**

Story generated from MU News Bureau press release: [Researchers Find Neurological Link Between Religious Experiences and Epilepsy](#)

Washington D.C. [USA], Mar. 11 (ANI): A recent study may have uncovered a neurological relationship between religiosity, a disposition for spiritual experience and religious activity, and epilepsy.

This connection between epilepsy and heightened religious experiences has been recognized since at least the 19th century.

This University of Missouri finding sheds light on the connection between religion and neuropsychological processes within the human brain.

"Past research has indicated that humans might have a distinctive neurological tendency toward being spiritually oriented," said neuropsychologist Brick Johnstone. "This research supports the notion that the human propensity for religious or spiritual experiences may be neurologically based."

"The end goal of this research is to understand if some type of connection exists between the brain and spiritual experience," said co-author Daniel Cohen. "If a connection exists, what does it mean for humans and their relationship with religion?"

In their study, the researchers asked individuals with epilepsy to take two surveys. The first survey assessed behavior characteristics specifically associated with epilepsy. The second survey measured religious activities and spiritual orientations. The average participant was 39 years old, with the majority of participants of Caucasian descent; 32 percent identified as Protestant, 10 percent as Catholic, 5 percent as Buddhist, 5 percent as atheist, 38 percent as other, and 10 percent did not indicate any religious affiliation.

"We found a strong correlation between philosophical religious thoughts and epilepsy, but no correlation between emotional thinking and epilepsy," said co-author Greyson Holliday. "This study suggests that people may have natural neurological predispositions to think about religion but not in a way that is necessarily associated with emotion."
Based on the findings, future research from Johnstone, Holliday and Cohen will examine religious experiences before and after brain surgery to help determine the specific nature of religiously oriented neuropsychological processes.

The study is published in the journal Mental Health, Religion and Culture. (ANI)

#1 U.K. Newspaper; 55 million unique visitors per month

**Are spiritual encounters all in your head? Religious experiences may be down to EPILEPSY, claim scientists**

*Story generated from MU News Bureau press release: Researchers Find Neurological Link Between Religious Experiences and Epilepsy*

Having a religious or spiritual experience may be down to epilepsy, scientists have suggested.

A survey of people who suffer from the condition found a strong correlation between having religious or philosophical thoughts and epilepsy.

The study supports the idea that there could be a neurological link between suffering from epilepsy and having religious episodes, the researchers claim.

'Past research has indicated that humans might have a distinctive neurological tendency toward being spiritually oriented,' said Professor Brick Johnstone, a neuropsychologist at Missouri University.

'This research supports the notion that the human propensity for religious or spiritual experiences may be neurologically based.'

'The end goal of this research is to understand if some type of connection exists between the brain and spiritual experience,' said Daniel Cohen, co-author and assistant professor of religious studies. 'If a connection exists, what does it mean for humans and their relationship with religion?'

In their study, the researchers asked individuals with epilepsy to take two surveys. The first survey assessed behavior characteristics specifically associated with epilepsy. The second survey measured religious activities and spiritual orientations.
The average participant was 39 years old, with the majority of participants being of Caucasian descent. Out of the study participants, 32 per cent identified as Protestant, ten percent as Catholic, five percent as Buddhist, five percent as atheist, 38 percent as other, and 10 percent did not indicate any religious affiliation.

'We found a strong correlation between philosophical religious thoughts and epilepsy, but no correlation between emotional thinking and epilepsy,' said Greyson Holliday, an undergraduate student at Missouri University. 'This study suggests that people may have natural neurological predispositions to think about religion but not in a way that is necessarily associated with emotion.'

The researchers plan to examine religious experiences before and after brain surgery to help determine if epilepsy plays a role.

Their research comes less than a year after scientists at Hadassah Hebrew University reported a rare case in which they were treating a patient for a form of epilepsy when he had a religious experience in which he saw and conversed with God. Dr Shahar Arzy and Dr Roey Schurr were reportedly treating a 46-year-old man for temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE), carrying out a battery of tests including an online electro encephalogram (EEG) which measured his brain activity.

In the run up to the tests the patient, a Jewish man who had reportedly never been especially religious, had stopped taking anticonvulsant medication for seizures.

But during testing, the researchers report the man froze and stared at the ceiling for several minutes, saying he felt like 'God was approaching him', before exclaiming 'Adonai', the name of the Hebrew God.

The man then removed the wires from his head before taking off and marching around the hospital trying to recruit followers, saying 'God has sent me to you', convinced his creator had singled him out to bring redemption to fellow patients and medical staff.

Just before the incident, the doctors measured a spike in activity in the patient's left prefrontal cortex.

The prefrontal cortex is a region of the brain associated with a number of higher functions, including planning and perception, and has been previously linked to religious and mystical experiences.

The recent study was published in the journal Mental Health, Religion and Culture.
The Tribune's View

MU sports: Settling for mediocre?

The other day I heard a group of knowledgeable sports critics bemoaning that Missouri Nation had always settled for "good enough" without ever going for the gold. This is not a mysterious proposition, but I had never heard it before in such explicit terms.

They implied the University of Missouri's best eras had been a compromise. We had become complacent, willing to settle for the records piled up by basketball coach Norm Stewart and football coach Gary Pinkel without ever really contemplating something more.

I was vaguely disturbed to hear this call to arms. The proposition seems a risky pursuit of a dubious, elusive and even dangerous goal.

"How can that be?" a determined sports fanatic will ask, with visions of packed arenas, 50-game winning streaks and No. 1 rankings swirling in mind. To dream this dream is to believe MU should enter the race to hire multi-multimillion-dollar coaches like John Calipari or Nick Saban.

If we did this, downsides would prevail. MU would spend vastly more money, risking harsh criticism even if success on the court or field improved. We would be competing in a realm where success is elusive and even impossible for almost everyone. If we decided to settle for nothing less than the top two or three, four or five would be failure. Staying at the very top is devilishly hard and demanding. It can hollow out one's soul.

What would be our chances of hiring a superstar coach and recruiting
superstar players even if we became committed to the task? Being able to pay nearly unlimited amounts of cash is not the whole story. Getting fully in the race for the top is a sure way to spend the money but not necessarily to succeed.

Back when Norm Stewart was gradually building MU basketball, we didn't expect to win every game, but the games were fun. And when the Tigers did stage an upset, we were perhaps more excited than Kentucky Wildcats fans are when they—ho-hum—win another big one. The same for Gary Pinkel's football teams.

To be sure, fans of Kentucky basketball and Alabama football turn out in droves and go nuts when their teams flirt with "best in the land." We certainly hope for more of that excitement at Mizzou. But if the only way to get there is to bump Alabama or Kentucky, we will drive ourselves nuts in the quest. For Mizzou, the road must be partway up the mountain with a goal to match.

Then, guess what, as we learn how to climb, there will be no particular limit. Going from 30 to 25 to 20 will generate more and more excitement, and we will be playing in our league. We’ll knock off the tops now and then, with excitement to match. If we only aspire to the stratosphere, we are bound to be disappointed and angry.

Eventually we must ask, "What is success?" Winning games is almost all there is in the professional leagues. In college there must be more to it. At places like Mizzou, we want to win, but we will have to be happy with something less than staring down at the world from the top of the mountain. There's no room and not much air up there.
MU agrees to separation package with former basketball coach

By Zachary Farwell

COLUMBIA, Mo. - The next time the University of Missouri men’s basketball team takes the court, it will be under a new head coach.

It didn't come as a surprise to many fans when Mizzou Athletics announced Sunday afternoon that former head Coach Kim Anderson would step down at the end of the season.

That moment came in a 74-86 loss at the hand's of Ole Miss in the Southeastern Conference basketball tournament.

"I think when I walk out of here or when I leave, which will be tomorrow, I think that -- I think we did some good things," said Anderson following Thursday's loss.

The team finishes the season with an overall record of 8-24 and a conference record of 2-16. The loss also brought Anderson's career total at MU to 26-67 (.280) and just 8-46 (.148) in SEC play.

"We didn't generate enough money. And when you don't do that in college athletics, you don't get to keep your job. I'm not bitter. I certainly understand that. I understand that."

On Friday, ABC 17 News obtained a copy of the agreement between the University and Anderson.

The agreement was approved on Monday by Interim Chancellor Hank Foley and Anderson.

According to the agreement, Anderson's last official day with the school is April 4.

"You know, if you would have asked me when did you know you were going to get fired, I would have said probably the first day I took the job," said Anderson.

First-year Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Jim Sterk will continue to oversee Anderson during that time.
Anderson will continue to make the same salary established in his employment contract. MU will also continue to provide full-time employee benefits to Anderson.

The agreement doesn't obligate Anderson to stay with the University. Anderson can seek employment or accept another position before April 4.

The document reveals Anderson received a lump sum payment of $450,000 from Mizzou.

MU will also pay another $200,000, distributed into an annuity fund. The payment is for exceeding academic achievements and social responsibilities that were created for Anderson during the 2016-17 basketball season.

Finally, the University will compensate Anderson for outstanding vacation time he accrued while head coach.

Anderson was hired nearly three years ago on April 30, 2014, by then-Director of Athletics Mack Rhoades (now at Baylor University) after former head coach Frank Haith bolted for the University of Tulsa.

It was a homecoming for Anderson, who played for Missouri (1973-77) under coaching legend Norm Stewart. After a spending a few years playing in the NBA, Anderson again joined the University as an assistant coach under Stewart in 1982.

After winning the NCAA Division II Men's Basketball Championship with the University of Central Missouri in 2014, Anderson again joined the Tigers, this time as head coach.

ABC 17 News has compiled a list of coaching candidates mentioned in local or national reports.

Here are a few names Mizzou may target that have been mentioned by local and national reports as well as ABC 17 sources:

- South Carolina's Frank Martin
- Washington's Lorenzo Romar
- Oklahoma State's Brad Underwood
- California's Cuonzo Martin
- St. Louis University's Travis Ford
- VCU's Will Wade
- Indiana's Tom Crean

ABC 17 Sports Director Austin Kim also inquired about Virginia Tech's Buzz Williams. But a source told ABC 17 that Williams "will not take the job," citing Williams' $3 million salary next season, his unwillingness to take on another rebuild job and his desire to keep his kids in the same high school for four years.
Agricultural technology could be opportunity for MO entrepreneurs


By Nora Faris

COLUMBIA — Advances in the fields of science and technology are finding their way into fields of corn and soybeans. Technologies like drones, data-driven mobile applications, GPS and precision agriculture systems allow farmers to use less land and fewer inputs, enhancing sustainability and elevating yields.

With its academic and research infrastructure, entrepreneurial culture and location along the "Biotechnology Beltway" between Kansas City and St. Louis, Columbia leaders said the city could be poised to market itself as a lucrative place for ag technology businesses.

On Saturday, entrepreneurs, farmers, researchers and technology gurus discussed the growing opportunities surrounding ag tech during a symposium hosted by Columbia Regional Economic Development, Inc. (REDI).

Collin Bunch, entrepreneurship coordinator for REDI, said the event brought together individuals in many different roles but who share a common interest in feeding communities and fueling innovation.

"There have always been a lot of silos of interest and expertise in ag, so we're just trying to bridge those connections," Bunch said.

In 2015, ag tech industry startup investments totaled $4.6 billion, with more than 500 new ventures raising funds. That was nearly double the global investment in ag technology in the previous year.

Bunch said Columbia has an opportunity to capitalize on the growth of the ag tech market.
"Columbia's always done a lot in ag innovation and ag technology," Bunch said. "A lot of it stays here or goes off to St. Louis or is licensed out to bigger companies. But there are also a lot of people in town and farmers who are creating real solutions on the ground that have real business potential."

Gary Duncan, a former plant breeder, dedicated his career to advancing agricultural innovation, particularly in plant genetics.

"I look back to when I completed by degrees in the early 60s, and we talked about running out of food by 1975," Duncan said. "Some of us who were on the staff at Oklahoma State University had a meeting one day, and one of our people walked through the door, and he said, 'I tell you what, we're really a poor group of scientists if we let that happen.'"

Thanks partly to advances in precision agriculture and biotechnology, the world underwent the "Green Revolution," a period of increasing agricultural productivity using higher-yielding crop varieties.

Now, farmers must plan to feed 2 billion more people by 2050, when the world population is expected to approach 9 billion. Duncan said agricultural technology is part of the solution, and advances are already happening here in Columbia.

"We have a lot of biotech at MU, and those businesses are blooming here right now," Duncan said. "Some of them go to St. Louis. Some of them go other places, but the fact of the matter is, MU is a great device to keep these things coming along."

Agricultural technology research, investment and innovation continues to grow in Missouri. Fly Ag Tech, the nation's largest networks of FAA-licensed drone operators and agronomy service providers, is based out of Kansas City and provides mapping, analytics and crop consulting on farmers' fields.
Steven Watts

Interview with MU History Professor

By Aarik Danielsen

Age: 65

Hometown: Springfield, Ill.

In Columbia since: 1970, with the exception of a year during graduate school

Medium: Nonfiction

Education/experience: A professor of history at the University of Missouri, Watts holds a bachelor’s degree and doctorate from MU; his master’s degree was earned at the University of Virginia. He has written books on subjects including Walt Disney, Henry Ford and Hugh Hefner. His latest, “JFK and the Masculine Mystique,” was released in November.

Land of Lincoln: Watts was raised “almost literally in the shadow of Abraham Lincoln,” a circumstance he credits with his early affinity for history. Rather than reject Lincoln's ubiquitous presence as a nuisance, Watts' place within a large extended family caused him to see Springfield’s history as his own.

“I suspect I looked at history from early on in that kind of light, not as something to escape, but something to embrace,” he said.

He didn’t necessarily plan to make history a career, but his interests and talents eventually led him there. Watts has focused on intellectual and cultural history, the “ideas and values” that shape America.

His first books were published by academic presses and examined “the early Republic.” A family trek to Disney World was a fork in the road for his research and writing. Fascinated by the popularity of the place, he grew curious about the response it inspires and resonance it instills.

Watts turned his attention to the way American values are influenced by consumer values and a “culture of self-fulfillment.” In Disney, the entertainer; Ford, the inventor of America’s great consumer item; and Hefner, “the embodiment of self-fulfillment,” he found lives and lenses through which to tell a greater American story.
**The man, the myth:** John Kennedy was a natural next subject. “He was a new kind of politician, the politician as celebrity almost,” Watts said.

Researching Hefner, Watts recognized a “recurring cast of characters” in the pages of Playboy during the 1950s and early ’60s — the likes of Ian Fleming, Norman Mailer and Frank Sinatra. All became political backers, and friends, of the future president. Watts wanted to find the cultural junction at which their paths crossed.

During that age, there was a “gnashing of teeth” about the decline of American masculinity. Post-World War II, some believed that men had become soft, sitting behind desks rather than making their stand on a battlefield, Watts said.

Kennedy represented a rebirth, a redemption. He was cool; he had important friends. He was “this handsome guy who’s a man of ideas, but also a man of action. He’s part-war hero, part-intellectual,” Watts said.

Watts' book parses Kennedy's appeal and sheds light on related cultural phenomena.

Kennedy presented many of his supporters, and many who have come along since, with an ethical dilemma: How does society reconcile the public statesman with the private cad? Watts was surprised to find that Kennedy's sexual proclivities actually have been understated on the historical record.

“I think what most people do is they sort of shove that private guy to the margins. They prefer to think about the public guy,” Watts said.

His research, however, yielded insight into how the two Kennedys fit together. In an attempt to remain professional, and a desire to curry the president's favor, journalists of the day largely steered around his sex life. Yet, the image of Kennedy as a suave character worked itself out into their descriptions of him on the campaign trail, Watts noted.

Watts can also connect some dots between Kennedy and Donald Trump. Trump is a more "bombastic," inelegant version of Kennedy in that, for some voters, he represents a "remedy" for perceived gender anxieties.

Trump's famously crass "Access Hollywood" remarks had less effect than expected, Watts hypothesized, because some supporters heard them as an unfortunate "byproduct" of the "aggressive masculinity" they craved in a leader.

Comparing the two presidents and eras, Watts noted Kennedy was well-versed in policymaking; celebrity, for him, was more a "veneer." Today, celebrity has become the “sum and substance of what many people find attractive.”
Despite nationwide threats, local Jewish community feels safe

By Alan Burdziak

Jewish people in Columbia are concerned about continued reports of anti-Semitic events unfolding nationwide, but after two University of Missouri students were arrested recently on suspicion of a hate crime for allegedly harassing a student of the faith, religious leaders said they haven’t feared for their safety.

Bomb threats to Jewish community centers, vandalism at Jewish cemeteries and anti-Semitic vitriol has left people on edge, Mizzou Hillel Director Jeanne Snodgrass said, adding that students she’s spoken to since the arrests have said they feel safe and have been looking out for each other.

“I don’t think people are concerned that this same type of harassment would happen to them,” Snodgrass said.

The main reason they feel that way, she said, is because it's the first time she’s heard of that a person was singled out. In the last few years, there have been incidents of people drawing swastikas, including one in feces, in residential halls, but she said those were not directed at one person. She said there is concern that incidents of discrimination are under reported.

Noah B. Rogers, 19, and Erich J. Eastman, 18, were arrested Feb. 27 on suspicion of first-degree harassment, a Class E felony punishable by up to four years in prison, for launching slurs at Eastman’s roommate both verbally and in writing. Both are free after posting bond at the Boone County Jail. Though both of their cases are still under review at the Boone County Prosecutor’s Office, the arresting officer noted in his report that the probable cause statement included a request for an enhancement that they be charged with a hate crime.

The harassment against the victim, whose name the Tribune agreed not to publish because he is afraid of being further targeted, began in August and included referring to him as a “f---ing Jew” and posting anti-Semitic quotes and other epithets above Eastman’s bed that the victim could see, according to a probable cause statement. Rogers also had thrown a water bottle at the victim from a moving car in October, the statement said, hitting the man in the back of the head.

Congregation Beth Shalom, a south Columbia synagogue with 145 member families, sent out a message to its members to reassure them that the organization was aware of the arrests and that
there was no threat to them, Vice President Shari Weinman said. Though anti-Semitic incidents have been occurring around the country, including in St. Louis where there were bomb threats to a Jewish community center and vandals toppled hundreds of headstones at a Jewish cemetery, Weinman said there hasn’t been anything of the sort in Columbia.

“We just feel really blessed to be in such a wonderful, inclusive community that has always been supportive of the Jewish community,” Weinman said.

Many minorities in the U.S., including Jews, Muslims, Mexicans and black people, have felt targeted in recent months. In the month after Donald Trump was elected president, there were 1,094 bias-related incidents reported to the Southern Poverty Law Center. According to the Anti-Defamation League, there have been six waves of bomb threats to Jewish community centers in the U.S. since Jan. 4, totaling 152 incidents. A St. Louis man recently was arrested on suspicion of eight of them.

Karen Aroesty, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League for Missouri and southern Illinois, said Jewish people and many minorities are feeling vulnerable right now. The incident at MU is different from vandalism at the cemeteries because it is clear that it was a hate crime, she said, while no arrests have been made in the vandalism cases and the motive is unknown. However, the effect of both incidents is clear.

“It’s as destructive as the most intentional anti-Semitic incident,” Aroesty said. “People are that anxious and afraid. That translates to people not just here, in St. Louis, but people all over the region.”

Targeted harassment of ethnic, religious or other groups is vastly under reported, Aroesty said, because many people feel nothing will happen even if they tell authorities, or they’re afraid. She said she has long worked with MU and groups, agencies and organizations in Mid-Missouri to reduce bias, but the university should be more proactive.

“You can say two kids got arrested but then what?” she said. “What does the university look to do holistically to be responsive?”

Snodgrass, though, commended the university’s quick response to the harassment allegations, including the arrests and interim Chancellor Hank Foley’s condemnation.

“The university has been very clear, and we appreciate, that this type of behavior is not” acceptable, she said. “It’s not OK to target someone because of their religion. It’s not OK to target someone because of their race” or ethnic or gender identity.
Wrongful Death Lawsuit Settlement Hearing Cancelled

Watch the story: [http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=b08efec2-3bd7-42a5-a57d-dd5c0002ea2c](http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=b08efec2-3bd7-42a5-a57d-dd5c0002ea2c)

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**MUPD arrest man for drug paraphernalia and resisting arrest**

By Taylor Petras

A man was taken into custody early Friday after an University of Missouri police officer found drug paraphernalia inside his car.

MUPD said an officer was helping William Gatewood with his car on Mick Deaver Memorial Drive when he noticed the drug paraphernalia. When the officer asked Gatewood about the item, Gatewood reportedly tried to throw it into a storm drain and moved away from the officer.

Police said Gatewood was taken into custody and the drug item was found. Gatewood was arrested on suspicion of possession of a controlled substance, unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia, resisting arrest by flight and tampering with physical evidence.

He's currently being held in the Boone County Jail.
Bald eagle injured during tornado near Smithville Lake headed to wildlife rehab

BY TORIANO PORTER
tporter@kcstar.com

A bald eagle injured during a tornado near Smithville Lake is headed to rehab.

Missouri Department of Conservation officials said Friday the eagle has a damaged wing and has been turned over to wildlife rehabilitation experts at Excelsior Springs.

**Plans call for the eagle to be transported to the University of Missouri Veterinary Health Center for rehabilitation.**

Brian Bartlett, a conservation agent based in Clay County, said the EF2 tornado that passed through the Smithville Lake area Monday knocked down a bald eagle nest on private land.

No other adult eagles or eaglets were found near the nest site, Bartlett said.

The injured eagle suffered a badly fractured wing during the storm.

A passer-by found the eagle Thursday on the roadside near Route F and Southwest King Road.

The Smithville Lake area usually hosts three to four active eagle nests annually, Bartlett said. Eagles feed on fish and wildlife such as waterfowl.

Bald eagles are protected by federal and state wildlife codes.
Prospective International Students Show New Reluctance to Study in the U.S.

NO MU MENTION

By Vimal Patel March 13, 2017

The anti-globalist policies of President Trump and increased isolationist rhetoric in American politics have worried college leaders that fewer international students will want to study in the United States. While it’s still unclear whether enrollments of international students will actually decline, a report released Monday indicates colleges indeed have reason for concern.

Nearly one in three prospective international students surveyed said they had less interest in studying in the United States because of the current political climate, according to the report by Royall & Company, a division of EAB (formerly the Education Advisory Board). Their most cited reason: President Trump. Nearly 69 percent of those students reported "concerns about the U.S. presidential administration" as a factor.

“The interesting thing is a decline in interest across all nations.”

Since taking office in January, President Trump has issued two executive orders limiting visitors from a handful of predominantly Muslim countries. The latest order was issued this month and replaced an initial measure that was put on hold by a federal court. The new order imposes a 90-day ban on issuing new visas, including student visas, to citizens of six countries — Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. (Iraq was included in the original measure.)

Royall conducted its survey before the second order came out, yet its findings show that the impact of the president’s moves is being felt in the Middle East and beyond.

"I would have suspected that Muslim-majority countries — those specifically targeted with the initial travel ban and others that might have a heightened sensitivity to shifting sentiments in the U.S. — would have felt more dramatically the decline in interest," said Pamela Kiecker Royall, head of research for Royall. "The interesting thing is a decline in interest across all nations."

Rounding out the top five reasons cited for lower interest were worries about travel restrictions, at 55 percent; safety concerns, at 53 percent; cost, at 50 percent; and prejudice or discrimination, at 48 percent.
The report, "Effect of the Current Political Environment on International Student Enrollment," surveyed 2,104 international students in February from a pool of about 30,000 high-school students who had made inquiries about applying to American colleges. Not surprisingly, students from predominantly Muslim countries were more likely than students from other countries to worry about travel restrictions and prejudice or discrimination. And female students tended to be more concerned, with 37 percent of women reporting that the current political climate lowered their interest, while 27 percent of men reported the same.

One finding administrators may especially want to pay attention to is that 43 percent of students from India, a key U.S. market, reported less interest, the highest percentage of any country aside from Canada, at 51 percent.

Ms. Kiecker Royall suspects the decline in interest among Indian students may be the result of high-profile cases in which young professionals came to study or work in the United States but returned to India because they found it more hospitable. The survey was conducted before the shooting of two Indian men in Kansas last month, an incident covered widely internationally that could further complicate whether Indian students continue to seek American degrees.

While it remains unclear if students’ worries will translate into enrollment troubles for colleges, several institutions already have reported a drop in overseas applications. Thirty-nine percent of institutions say they have had a decline in applications at the undergraduate and graduate level, according to a survey by Aacrao, an association of registrars and admission officers. The survey, which more than 250 institutions responded to, also found that 35 percent of colleges experienced an increase in applicants and 26 percent had no change in applicant numbers.

Colleges said that the largest declines in applications came from countries in the Middle East, which sent more than 100,000 students to American colleges in 2015-16.

Colleges can’t control world events, Ms. Kiecker Royall said, but they can focus on sharpening their messaging to convey they are welcoming to international students. Her firm’s survey, for example, found that prospective international students relied most on college websites and emails for information about studying overseas.

"Most of the messaging students consider as they look at colleges and universities is controlled by the institutions," Ms. Kiecker Royall said. "The degree to which schools can be more nimble than they have been historically with their websites and make that a priority will determine how successful they are in conveying the right message to international student prospects."