At least $1.9 million spent by UM System for search firms


By Lucas Geisler

COLUMBIA, Mo. - **On March 9, Daniel Parker sent University of Missouri Athletics Director Jim Sterk a letter and contract. Sterk was four days removed from the men’s head basketball coach stepping down, and Parker promised to help him find a new one.**

MU Athletics agreed to pay Parker and Parker Executive Search, the firm he served as vice president and managing director, $80,000 to help. Parker’s firm would find qualified people for the job, schedule job interviews for those people and even help MU prepare for the job interviews. The first payment of $40,000 came when the contract was signed, and the other half after either 30 days or when the school choose its coach, whichever came first.

Six days after Parker’s letter, MU hired Cuonzo Martin to coach.

MU Athletics is just one of many departments within the UM System to have used an executive search firm to help find people for important roles. ABC 17 News obtained two dozen contracts signed by school, athletic and even MU Healthcare officials from July 2015 to the present day for those services through an open records request. The contracts show these agencies agreed to pay firms at least $1,948,553 for their work.

Some contracts did not have a total amount listed in their contract. The University of Missouri-St. Louis, for example, signed a contract with The Hollander Group to find candidates for several positions within its School of Nursing. The contract listed a breakdown of how much it would cost for certain services, but did not list a final amount the school agreed to with the firm.

ABC 17 News has reported on many of these deals in the past. Along with the firm that helped hire, MU Athletics agreed to search firm services that landed Barry Odom as the football coach, Sterk as athletics director and Steve Bieser as baseball coach. Those contracts cost $84,720.60 to College Sports Solutions, $75,500 to Collegiate Sports Associates and $25,000 to Eastman & Beaudine respectively.
The University of Missouri spent the most on search firms since July 2015, agreeing to pay at least $854,220.60. Along with the four athletics department searches, it retained firms for seven hiring searches. Those include deans for the colleges of Business, Arts & Science, Agriculture and Public Affairs, along with searches for chancellor, vice chancellor for Extension and vice provost of Enrollment Management.

The UM System had just two contracts, and spent $233,333 on its two searches - one for UM System president ($150,000) and the other for its first ever chief diversity officer ($83,333). Isaacson, Miller performed the work on both of them.

MU Healthcare also had two contracts, but agreed to pay $450,000 for them - one to MSA Executive Search for $200,000 and another to InveniasPartners for $250,000. Neither contract stated what position the firms were helping MU Healthcare hire.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said the use of executive search firms helps the school develop a diverse pool of candidates to make critical hires. Firms have experience and resources to find and vet candidates from across the country, Basi said, which helps the school interview and decide on who to bring in. Basi said if Missourians want MU to maintain a national status, it needs good leaders, which good searches help them find.

Sometimes, the school embarks on its own searches for administrators. MU used internal search committees to hire the deans of the Journalism, Education, Health and Environmental Sciences and Law schools, Basi said. The decision to either hire a firm or conduct its own search often comes from the faculty's national connections.

Isaacson, Miller collected the most money from the UM System at $557,333. It is currently handling the search for MU's chancellor at an agreed upon cost of $140,000. It also handled the searches for the College of Business, which netted the hire of Ajay Vinze, and recently completed the search for the School of Public Affairs. The university recently ended the search, deciding not to hire any of the chosen candidates. Basi said it was in the process of closing out its contract with Isaacson, Miller.

Proposed budget cuts threaten local doctor training program

By Kadee Brosseau
Massive proposed state budget cuts are threatening a Springfield program that trains the next generation of doctors.

A partnership between local hospitals and the University of Missouri started last year and is already on the chopping block.

University of Missouri System President Mun Choi stopped in Springfield to talk with local partners.

"To grow our research, education, and outreach programs," Choi said.

Some of those partners are CoxHealth and Mercy, which join with MU to provide local training to medical students through the Springfield Clinical Campus of the University of Missouri's School of Medicine.

"Nine medical students will graduate next year as the first class of student that have benefited from this partnership," Choi said.

While the new program is just getting started, it's possible that a huge budget cut is on the horizon.

"Currently, we believe it is going to affect it," Choi said.

Choi says it takes $10 million to run the medical clinic program, but, right now, the proposed state budget only provides half of that amount.

"So, we are going to request support for this program from the legislature for this program because it is that important," Choi said.

Local medical leaders agree that it's important to train doctors here to, hopefully, keep doctors here.

"It's also great for them just to be exposed to Southwest Missouri because from a recruitment standpoint, it can be difficult at times to attract people here. But, once you're here and you live here, it's really hard to leave," CoxHealth Recruitment and Retention Director Celeste Cramer said.

Cramer says as more doctors are retiring, it's time to fill the growing need for physicians here in the Ozarks.

"We definitely need to be proactive in our recruiting and growing of talent," Cramer said.
Choi says the goal is to get to 128 full time medical students enrolled in the program, however the extent of that growth depends on how much funding is awarded in the final budget.

MU student groups want UM System to divest interest in fossil fuels

By Alyssa Weisberg

COLUMBIA — Representatives from MU student government organizations are calling on the University of Missouri System to discontinue allowing its endowments to fund fossil fuels.

The Missouri Students Association passed a resolution Tuesday night asking the UM System to divest from funding fossil fuel companies through the system's $1.5 billion Endowment Pool by 2022. The resolution also asks the system to provide financial support to the green energy sector.

The Mizzou Energy Action Coalition, a student environmental organization and advocates for the system's divestment since 2013, submitted the resolution. The student group alleges that roughly $10 million of the endowment fund is invested in fossil fuel companies.

According to the UM System website, the Endowment Pool "contains gifts, bequests and other funds directed to be used to support a university program in perpetuity." The fund's investments are managed externally and are supervised by the system's Office of the Treasurer.

UM System spokesman John Fougere said in an email Wednesday: "The Endowment Pool’s investments are managed by nearly 50 external managers that have been given discretion to make investment decisions within their respective mandates; the university is not involved in decisions to buy or sell individual investment securities. The university does not currently track individual investments in categories such as ‘fossil fuels.’"

Mason Brobeck, an MSA representative from the Trulaske College of Business, said MSA has been working with Cathy Scroggs, the vice chancellor of student affairs, to place the issue on the agenda at the next UM System Board of Curators meeting, April 27-28.

Fougere said the resolution is not slated for discussion at the curators' meeting. However, he said UM System President Mun Choi plans to meet with an MU student group in May to discuss the topic.

Other organizations working with the coalition and MSA include:
The coalition's president, Frankie Hawkins, said she was inspired to increase the group's momentum and effort after Concerned Student 1950 and graduate student workers advocated for their rights last year in a series of campus protests.

"These protests paved the way for us to thus far move forward with some relative ease," she said. "We're in a position of privilege and power to be able to do something about climate change."

"Fossil fuel divestment has a tangible impact with the amount of carbon that won’t be burned, and it also raises a collective consciousness about the issue," Hawkins said.

Paying it forward: MU researchers discover volunteering might prevent substance abuse for female student-athletes

Generated from News Bureau press release: Volunteering Might Prevent Substance Abuse for Female Student-Athletes

University of Missouri researchers find that behaviors such as community service, civic engagement might be effective in reducing substance abuse among student-athletes

More than 180,000 student-athletes from 450 colleges and universities compete in Division III sports, the largest NCAA division; nearly 44 percent are female. As substance abuse continues to be a health concern in colleges and universities across the U.S., a social scientist from the University of Missouri has found that female student-athletes who volunteer in their communities and engage in helping behaviors are less likely to partake in dangerous alcohol and marijuana use.
“Past research has demonstrated that prosocial behaviors such as comforting or assisting others has long-term benefits for young people,” said Gustavo Carlo, Millsap Professor of Diversity in MU’s College of Human Environmental Sciences. “For this study, we were interested in understanding how female student-athletes might be impacted by community service because they make up a growing number of the college population.”

Carlo and Alexandra Davis, former doctoral candidate from MU and current assistant professor of family and child studies at the University of New Mexico, led a research team that investigated Division III women student-athletes’ social and health behaviors over a five-year period. Participants in the study self-reported their helping behaviors such as willingness to volunteer as well as their individual alcohol and marijuana use. The researchers found that student athletes with a tendency to help others were less likely to abuse alcohol or use marijuana.

“Female student-athletes experience increased demands while in college from coaches and professors to family and friends,” Davis said. “Because student-athletes occupy multiple roles simultaneously, they could be at an increased risk for substance abuse to cope with stress. Our findings suggest that community service might be a tool to reduce substance abuse among female student-athletes.”
Questioning indicates court favor for church

Decision in Trinity Lutheran case expected by late June

By Roger McKinney
Columbia Daily Tribune

Former Missouri solicitor general James Layton came under tough questioning Wednesday by U.S. Supreme Court justices during oral arguments in the case that tests the Missouri Constitution's ban on providing state funds to churches.

The case of Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comey resulted from the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' 2012 denial of the Columbia church's application for a grant to provide waste tire chips to resurface the playground at its preschool.

A key issue in the case is Article I, section 7 of the Missouri Constitution, which prohibits state money going toward any church or religious organization. The same type of prohibition is listed in Article IX, section 8 of the state constitution, which specifies that no public money can support any "institution of learning controlled by any religious creed, church or sectarian denomination." Thirty-eight states have similar laws in place.

Carl Esbeck, professor emeritus in the University of Missouri School of Law, said he was surprised by the questioning by justices Elena Kagan and Stephen Breyer, who are in the court's progressive, liberal wing. Esbeck had

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read reports about the arguments but wasn’t present in the court.

“They seemed hostile to the state’s case and asked some very tough questions of Jim Layton,” Esbeck said. He said Layton argued that Locke v. Davey, a 2004 case from the state of Washington applied. The justices argued that Locke was an exclusion because of religious conduct, not because of religious status. The decision here was made because it was a church,” Layton said. “And assuming that’s what status means, then I — I suppose we — we know that. I mean, that’s true.”

Esbeck said the tone of the justice’s questions led people to one conclusion: “Everyone is saying the state of Missouri lost today.”

An article about the oral arguments on Scotusblog by Amy Howe notes the justices are leaning toward a ruling for Trinity Lutheran. It notes the state only has two certain votes in its favor, from justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor.

“We were very pleased with how the oral argument went,” said Erik Stanley, attorney on the legal team of Alliance Defending Freedom, representing Trinity Lutheran. “Most of the justices seemed to be troubled by the state’s case.”

Stanley said the justices repeated the phrase “religious status discrimination,” which is a phrase ADF had used in its briefs.

“I think the court was troubled by the obvious discrimination against a church and we’re hopeful for a good opinion,” he said.

Daniel Mach, director of the American Civil Liberties Union Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief, was in the court for the arguments Wednesday, but said he didn’t
want to speculate about how

the case would be decided.

"The court had tough ques-
tions for both sides," Mach
said, adding there's still a

chance the case will be dis-
misssed because Gov. Eric

Greitens last week reversed

the state's policy on providing the

grants to the churches. There

was some discussion during the

oral argument about whether

the case was moot.

"Now that the state has

reversed course, there's simply

no live controversy for the
court to consider," he said.

Sotomayor, in one exchange

with David Cortman, the attor-

ney arguing in front of the court

for Alliance Defending Free-
dom, said the playground is

part of the church's ministry

and asked how one separates

its secular function from its

religious function.

"Even though the motivation

behind operating this pre-
school is a religious motivation,
doesn't mean that every single

activity that occurs there hap-
pens to be religious," Cortman
answered.

"The church makes abso-
lutely clear that the school is a

church ministry," Mach said.
"The church uses the school to

spread the gospel to members

and nonmembers."

Annette Kiehne, director of

the Child Learning Center at

Trinity Lutheran, said outside

the Supreme Court after the

hearing that she was grateful
to the justices for hearing the
case, according to an ADF news
release.

"Playground time, for a child
is about play," she said in the
release. "And play should be

safe. Safety shouldn't hinge

on whether a child is religious

or they are playing on a play-
ground at a religious school or

a secular or public institution."

She said many children who

play on the playground on eve-
nings and weekends are from

the surrounding neighborhood.

"We aren't asking for special
treatment," she said. "We are

just asking not to be treated

worse than anybody else."

U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt,
R-Mo., also issued a statement

on the case, saying it will have a

"lasting impact on Americans' right to religious liberty, one of
our nation's most fundamental first freedoms."

"The government shouldn't

be able to categorically deny
benefits to Trinity Lutheran,
or any religious organization,
simply because they are reli-
gious," Blunt said.

A ruling is expected by the
time the term concludes on

June 25.

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Where there’s smoke, there’s fire training at Kansas City’s airports

By Robert Cronkleton

Travelers and others shouldn’t be concerned if they see a plume of smoke or what appears to be an aircraft on fire at Kansas City airports the next few days.

The Kansas City Fire Department and the Kansas City Aviation Department are going through live burn training to hone their skills and tactics in fighting aircraft fires. The training also ensures compliance with Federal Aviation Administration guidelines.

Kansas City’s Fire Department Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting unit will conduct the training at both airports. They will use the Mobile Aircraft Firefighting Trainer, which resembles an aircraft fuselage, to simulate aircraft fires.

The Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting unit will train with mutual aid fire departments on procedures and techniques to save lives if an aircraft crashes or incident occurs. The training includes the use of special aircraft rescue and firefighting trucks and hoses from regular fire trucks used to battle structural fires.

Training at the Downtown Airport began Tuesday and continues Wednesday on the west side of the airfield near the control tower.

The training at KCI will take place at the U.S. Post Office at 3 p.m. Friday to Sunday and 8 a.m. Monday through next Wednesday.

*Funded by the FAA and the Missouri Department of Transportation, the operation of the Mobile Aircraft Firefighting Trainer is coordinated by the University of Missouri Fire and Rescue Training Institute.*
Illinois and Everyone Else

Support for public higher education rose in 33 states and declined in 17 in 2016 -- including a massive drop in Illinois.

No MU Mention

By Rick Seltzer

April 20, 2017

It’s impossible to examine state higher education finances in 2016 without separating the collapse in Illinois from a more nuanced picture across the rest of the country.

State and local support for higher education in Illinois plunged as the state’s lawmakers and governor were unable to reach a budget agreement and instead passed severely pared-down stopgap funding. Educational appropriations per full-time equivalent student in the state skidded 80 percent year over year, from $10,986 to $2,196. Enrollment in public institutions dropped by 11 percent, or 46,000 students.

That situation proved to be enough of an outlier that it weighed down several key markers in the 2016 State Higher Education Finance report from the State Higher Education Executive Officers association, which is being released today. The report annually offers an in-depth look at the breakdown of state and local funding, tuition revenue, enrollment, and degree completion across public higher education, a sector that enrolls roughly three-quarters of students in U.S. postsecondary education.
Include Illinois in the report’s key markers, and overall public support for higher education fell by 1.8 percent per full-time equivalent student in 2016, to $6,954, according to the report. Exclude Illinois, and overall support increased by 3.2 percent, to $7,116.

STORY CONTINUES: https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/04/20/state-support-higher-education-increased-2016-not-counting-illinois