



**MU News Bureau**

*Daily Clips Packet*

April 26, 2017

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

## University of Missouri curators delays vote on tuition changes

By Ashley Jost

**ST. LOUIS • Breaking ranks with tradition, the University of Missouri Board of Curators will not vote on tuition and fee changes for the four campuses at this week's meeting.**

The curators will discuss the issue of a tuition increase but will hold their vote until sometime in May after the Legislature finalizes the budget.

The spring meeting at the Missouri University of Science and Technology campus in Rolla is scheduled for Thursday and Friday. This is the first meeting for university system President Mun Choi, as well as three recently confirmed board members, Darryl Chatman, Jeff Layman and Jamie Farmer.

The curators are considering waivers to increase tuition at a rate that's greater than allowed by a statewide cap.

The tuition cap comes from a 2007 law that prohibits all state schools from raising tuition more than the Consumer Price Index each year. The index value has hovered around 1.8 percent since 2008, which university leaders have previously said gives them little wiggle room.

Higher education bore the brunt of budget withholds announced by Gov. Eric Greitens after he took office, which were then compounded with added cuts to the coming year in the governor's budget proposal.

A version of the budget passed the Missouri House and is currently in deliberation in the Senate. The two chambers are expected to reach agreement on the budget and send it to the governor before they adjourn in a few weeks.

Of the nine other public four-year schools, at least seven aren't applying for a waiver. Governing boards of four schools have voted to increase tuition by as little as a percentage point, but up to the current year's cap of 2.21 percent.

Harris-Stowe State University's board was set to vote on a tuition increase Tuesday, and Missouri Western University and Southeast Missouri State University are voting on potential increases in the coming weeks.

The University of Missouri System board will announce a separate, public meeting in May to decide on rates, according to spokesman John Fougere.

## ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

### In push to finish budget, Senate adds money for Missouri schools

By Kurt Erickson St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1 hr ago

JEFFERSON CITY • The Missouri Senate approved a plan Tuesday to fully fund the state school aid formula next year.

**Operating under a May 5 deadline to deliver a budget to Republican Gov. Eric Greitens' desk, senators voted 19-14 to cover the school aid formula. On a 30-3 vote, they also softened cuts to the University of Missouri system.**

The chamber was expected to [continue grappling over other thorny issues in the \\$27.8 billion package on Wednesday](#), including reducing funding to in-home and nursing care services offered to disabled Missourians.

Changes OK'd in the Senate will have to be hammered out by a joint House-Senate committee and then approved again by both chambers.

“There’s a lot of moving parts in this budget,” said Sen. Dan Brown, R-Rolla, who chairs the budget committee.

The crafting of the budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1 comes as state tax revenues are growing, but not as robustly as hoped.

Corporate tax revenues have been dropping since last year after the Republican-controlled Legislature approved a change in policy that allows companies to pay less.

At the same time, the growing cost of Medicaid has pushed lawmakers to reduce spending on other programs .

There is added pressure on the Legislature this spring after Greitens — a political newcomer — asked for a [two-week extension to deliver his budget outline](#).

Greitens said last week that he would consider calling a special session on the budget if lawmakers are unable to resolve their differences by May 5.

Among the potential conflicts with [the House version was the Senate's inability to approve a controversial plan to eliminate a tax credit for senior citizens](#) who rent. Repealing the so-called “circuit breaker” credit would have freed up an estimated \$52 million in order to avoid the cuts to seniors and disabled proposed by Greitens.

“Our backs are kind of up against the wall. I wish we could fully fund everything that is essential to our citizens. But we can't,” said Sen. David Sater, R-Cassville. “There's just not enough money.”

The budget includes no tax increases and no general wage increases for most state workers, who are the lowest paid in the nation.

In boosting funds for schools, Senate leaders failed to quash a rebellion by their fellow GOP members who wanted to match what the House had allocated for basic education costs.

Opponents worried that the maneuver would trigger a 2014 law that would require the state to fund early childhood programs.

Brown, the budget committee chairman, said the \$63 million cost of expanding preschool was too steep in a year where other programs were getting cut. The budget plan also reverses Greitens' proposal to lower state aid for school busing costs.

Supporters said money could come from a cushion Greitens and the House built into the blueprint. “Our goal is to make sure our students get the best possible education,” said Sen. Gary Romine, R-Farmington.

“We need to decide what’s most important in our state,” added Sen. Bill Eigel, R-Weldon Spring.

For higher education, the House version had called for a 9 percent cut to the four-campus University of Missouri system. The Senate plan knocks that down to 6.6 percent.

Other parts of the budget expected to be voted on later include an expansion of the state’s managed care health insurance program, which is set to get underway on May 1.

Three companies are set to provide managed care for 750,000 low-income Missourians. The state would pay the companies to manage patients’ care, as opposed to providing insurance through a fee-for-service model, which reimburses physicians as patients are treated.

Also on tap for funding are efforts to pay for educating voters about a new photo ID law, a summer jobs program benefiting St. Louis youths and money for the state’s public defender system.

Sen. Maria Chappelle-Nadal, D-University City, also was able to earmark \$3 million in the budget to help buy out homeowners in north St. Louis County affected by radioactive waste buried in the nearby West Lake Landfill.

Chappelle-Nadal had sought \$12 million for the program, but agreed to the smaller amount as a way to get the buyouts underway.

“It’s a good start,” Chappelle-Nadal said.



## State budget fully funds Missouri's K-12 schools, though Greitens can say no

By Marshall Griffin

**Updated 5:25 p.m. with more details** — What once seemed a challenge became reality Tuesday: Missouri's K-12 schools will be fully funded under next year's budget, something only Gov. Eric Greitens can change.

The Senate approved \$45 million increase in funding, which is the same amount the House approved a couple weeks ago and is far more than the \$3 million increase the governor had proposed. However, the definition of "fully funded" is up for debate among Democrats and Republicans.

Last year, Republicans lowered the definition of what it meant to fully fund the state's public schools. Democrats disagreed, and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education had said it needed \$450 million more, not \$71 million, and Gov. Jay Nixon vetoed the bill. But Republicans overturned the veto, so the lower threshold is law.

The Senate budget committee chairman Dan Brown, a Rolla Republican, argued against Tuesday's vote. His committee had given the Senate an estimated spending range of \$3 million to \$45 million.

"Not that I'm against fully funding the (K-12) formula," he said, "(but) that's why we left the budget as I presented it...to have that negotiating ability (with the House)."

Fellow Republican Gary Romine of Farmington, who led the effort to add \$45 million, disagreed: "We can be political, we can talk about fully funding the formula, or we can do it."

Greitens can change the amount of funding for public schools if he chooses, by using the line-item veto to permanently cut funding or by temporary withholding money and releasing it later if the state receives more revenues than projected.

The 19-14 vote on K-12 funding was among a few budget bills to pass in the Senate on Tuesday.

**Another was the higher education bill, which kept the suggestion by the chamber's budget committee to give the University of Missouri System a 6.5 percent cut and other four-year**

**universities a 9 percent cut.** The funding is a reversal of what the House passed, meaning the chambers will have to come to an agreement at a later date.

As of early Tuesday evening, eight others awaited action; some will need to be changed during negotiations. The deadline to get the full budget to Greitens is May 5.



## **MU considers changing sidelines, seating structure at Memorial Stadium**

By Blake Toppmeyer and Joe Walljasper

**The Missouri athletic department is considering moving the MU football team from the east sideline to the west at home games, which would lead to a change in student seating.**

The move would uproot the student seating directly behind the east benches between the 30-yard lines, an area currently filled by the Tiger's Lair student fan group. The student group is against the proposed change.

"We're looking at it," MU athletic spokesman Nick Joos said. "Nothing has been finalized."

Joos said a final decision would need to come within a month so season-ticket locations can be completed.

On Thursday, the athletic department held a meeting to discuss the proposal and invited nine student groups, including the Tiger's Lair, which is an official club under the direction of MU Student Life. An MU student provided to the Tribune a written account of the meeting.

The letter said Coach Barry Odom spoke first, saying he had three concerns with the current game-day arrangement: that the heat was worse on east sideline during day games; that the teams have to cross paths coming and going from their locker rooms; and that he feared opposing coaches could steal Missouri's signals.

Joos confirmed those concerns. He said 11 of 14 SEC schools have the primary television camera shooting into the visiting team's bench. Currently, Missouri is one of three schools that doesn't. The coaches signaling in plays from the sideline opposite the camera are more visible to viewers as well as to opposing coaches in the press box.

The switch of sidelines would require a change to student seating. Joos said Southeastern Conference rules stipulate that student sections can't be directly behind the visiting team's bench in the first 25 rows. He said there are no plans to move the Tiger's Lair to the area behind the Missouri bench on the west side — if the move happens — because those seats have already been spoken for by season-ticket holders.

If the change is made, the new student section would be outside the 30-yard lines. Joos said eight SEC schools have student seating outside the 30-yard lines on the visiting sideline, with the others either on the home sideline or in the end zone or a corner.

Moving the student sections outside the 30-yard lines would divide the student fans. Currently, students command the seating in the lower section on the east side in a united group.

As for who will fill the old Tiger's Lair area behind the bench on the east sideline, Joos said the plan is for the first 10 rows to be filled by visiting fans. Joos said SEC rules stipulate that 1,000 tickets in the lower bowl must be made available to visiting fans. Joos said the next 10 rows would be designated for recent MU graduates, with the final five rows for MU players' families.

Currently, the visitor's seating area is in the southwest corner of the stadium.

Having the student seating broken up by visiting fans is one of the concerns Tiger's Lair Director Brooke Reynolds has with the proposal. She wonders what that will do to the atmosphere along the east sideline and how it will affect game-day traditions.

“There's going to be a lot of traditions that are put at stake by doing this,” Reynolds said, “including pregame activities with Truman and the firetruck and the water hose. That's a big tradition. This affects the Golden Girls, the cheerleaders, the whole spirit squad, as well, splitting them up. This affects a lot of things, not just Tiger's Lair, not just the student section. It affects a lot of things. I'm thinking that there's other things we're not thinking of, tradition-wise. I'm not sure how the M-I-Z, Z-O-U chant with the students and the alumni is going to work quite as effectively now that the students are going to be split.”

The Tiger's Lair section has often featured a front row of shirtless students who spell out messages on their chests. The organization requires a \$25 membership fee and the purchase of season tickets. Its membership is first-come, first-serve with a capacity of 1,600, according to the group's page on the University of Missouri's web site.

Reynolds, a senior who has been in Tiger's Lair for four years, including three years on the group's leadership team, also questioned the timing of the proposed change.

Missouri is coming off back-to-back losing seasons, which coincided with declining attendance at Memorial Stadium. Missouri's average home attendance of 52,236 in seven home dates last season — the stadium's capacity is 71,168 — was its lowest of this millennium.

“I think it's going to give students the wrong impression that their attendance is not as meaningful to the football team and to Mizzou athletics by moving them over and giving the

visitors those prime seats, like as seen in the proposal,” Reynolds said. “So I think it’s just coming at the wrong time. I think people would be a lot more accepting of the idea if we had just come off the two SEC East championships.”

An athletic department staff member wrote in an email to a student concerned about the proposed changes that the Tiger’s Lair’s current seating area behind the bench has poor sight lines because of players being in front of the seats.

Reynolds said she doesn’t buy this argument, adding that the students enjoy sitting directly behind the home bench.

“I could maybe possibly see that” the sight lines aren’t good “if the people sitting in those seats were going to be sitting the entire game, ... but our fans are standing for the entire 3½ or so hours,” she said.

# MISSOURIAN

## Missouri eyes changes to seating at Memorial Stadium

By Colin O’Brien, Andrew Kessel and Daniel Konstaninovic

**COLUMBIA — Missouri football coach Barry Odom has proposed moving the team from the east to the west sideline next season, dividing the student section as a result.**

Currently, the student fan group Tiger's Lair occupies part of the student section along the east sideline, from the 50-yard line to the north 20 — just feet away from Missouri players. But if the teams switched sides, the students would have to move, as well.

Per SEC rules, students are not allowed to sit in the first 25 rows behind the visiting team bench. Tiger's Lair would still get front-row seats, but they'd be split into two groups between the 30-yard line and the end zone on each half of the field.

According to a diagram provided by MU Athletics, the proposed changes include:

- Home and visiting teams would switch sidelines.
- The first 11 rows behind the visiting team on the east sideline would go to visiting fans.
- Rows 12-17 would go to "young alumni" who graduated from MU within the last three to five years.

- The section for guests of MU players would remain unchanged.

The possibility of change first surfaced on Thursday, when the athletics department held a meeting with nine student organizations, including Tiger's Lair. According to a written account of the meeting provided to the *Missourian*, Odom said the reasons for the proposed changes were strategic.

On the east sideline, where Missouri's bench is now, the team deals with glare from the sun during day games, the account said. The east sideline is also opposite the press box, making it easier for opposing assistant coaches during games to steal signs from Missouri. What's more, Missouri's locker room is on the west side of Memorial Stadium, meaning teams have to cross each other before the game and at halftime.

"In an effort to provide the best competitive home field advantage for the Mizzou football team, the athletic department has been studying the possibility of switching the team benches at Memorial Stadium for the 2017 season," the department said in a statement.

For Tiger's Lair, whose 1,600 members are season-ticket-holders and pay a \$25 membership fee, the change would be an unwelcome one.

"We know how much of an advantage the Tiger's Lair section — and the entire student section — is to our football team," said Tiger's Lair in a statement Tuesday. "Mizzou Football has one of the most unique atmospheres the SEC has to offer by having the University's students right behind their team."

Brooke Reynolds, Tiger's Lair game-day chair, said Tuesday she questioned the timing of the decision, as well as its intended effect.

"I could understand if they'd want this coming off of a winning season," Reynolds said. "I think this is really going to turn away a lot of people who in the past only came because they had those good seats."

"I think that being in Tiger's Lair for going on four years now and sitting behind our players for every single home game, standing every game for 3½ hours, I think that all of our fans would agree that we would much rather use our energy and enthusiasm to cheer on our team rather than use that energy to tear down the other teams."

Nick Joos, MU senior associate athletic director for strategic communications, said Tuesday that though the sideline layout has changed in the past, it had been consistent for the past decade and that the proposed changes had nothing to do with the proposed south end zone project.

"The proposed change would be permanent," Joos said. "It has that opportunity."

Joos also stressed that the athletics department is seeking as much input as possible and is planning further meetings to address student concerns.

"We're planning a second meeting, and I think that meeting will be within the next 24 hours," Joos said.

The Missouri Students Association is considering opposition to the change. A resolution that would announce the organization's support of Tiger's Lair was proposed by its Student Affairs Committee.

MSA doesn't have the authority to stop the change, but Reynolds said she was pleased to see a show of student support.

"Having MSA support behind us is going to help not just Tiger's Lair but the entire student section," Reynolds said. "This affects Truman, the team, the Golden Girls and the fans. Having MSA support from the student body would help."

If the changes are implemented, Missouri wouldn't be alone in the SEC. Joos said 11 of the 14 schools in the SEC have the main television cameras aimed at visiting schools.

The SEC requires that all schools give visiting fans 1,000 seats in the lower bowl of their stadium. This change would fulfill those requirements while surrounding the fans of opposing teams with students and young Missouri graduates.



## [Mizzou considering football sideline, seat changes](#)

Watch story: <http://krcgtv.com/news/local/mizzou-considering-football-sideline-seat-changes>

By Ashley Zavala

**COLUMBIA — Mizzou Athletics officials said Tuesday the department is considering switching the team benches at Memorial Stadium for the 2017 football season.**

In a statement from the department, officials said no decision had been made.

The football team currently sits on the east side benches. The [current seating chart](#) has the visiting team on the west side bench, and visiting team fan sections mainly seated on the southwest corner of the stadium.

If moved, Southeastern Conference rules would force Mizzou to adjust its student seating areas between the 30 yard lines on the east side of the stadium, the area where the Tiger's Lair student section sits. SEC rules don't allow student sections to sit in the first 25 rows inside the 30-yard lines behind the visitors bench.

Tiger's Lair released a statement Tuesday prior to the athletic department's release on possibly switching benches.

"It would be disappointing as we know how much of an advantage the Tiger's Lair section - and the entire student section- is to our football team," the statement read.

"Tiger's Lair fears for the survival of our program if these changes were to be implemented. According to speculated plans, Mizzou Athletics has proposed moving the visiting team's seating section to the current Tiger's Lair section. This would allow them to have the seats on either side of the 50-yard line at Faurot."

"As part of this process, we invited leaders from nine campus organizations to meet with Coach Odom and members of our athletic staff last week to discuss this purposed concept," department officials said Tuesday.

The department said it plans on having another meeting with the same leaders in the near future before making a decision by the end of the spring 2017 semester.

A similar story ran in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. That story can be found here: [Sideline changes would alter student seating at Faurot Field](#)



## **Mizzou Students Organized a Local Health Fair in Owensville as Part of Mizzou Alternative Breaks**

Watch the story: <http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=335bffec-dae3-487e-929a-7a994fd805fe>

# MISSOURIAN

## Ten actors take on 64 roles in MU's 'The Laramie Project'

By Bobbi Watts

COLUMBIA — Abstract painted doors plastered the backdrops while tools buzzed and screeched throughout the theater.

"I wanted to find a way to abstract the Western feel," said Catherine Gleason, director and co-scenic director for "The Laramie Project." "(The doors) are all different shapes and sizes," she said.

**The backdrop is one of the symbolic elements of the production opening Wednesday at MU's Rhynsburger Theatre.** Also referred to as "documentary theater," "The Laramie Project" recounts the 1998 murder, later designated a hate crime, of Matthew Shepard, a gay college student in Laramie, Wyoming.

Although almost 20 years old, "The Laramie Project" is relevant today, which is why Gleason said she chose to pursue it.

"I think one of the most important messages of this play is that we all contribute to a culture that creates situations like what happened to Matthew Shepard," she said.

The play by Moisés Kaufman draws from 200 interviews and the stories of 64 townspeople. In this production, 10 actors have been cast to take on the challenge of portraying 64 characters.

Shepard's murder was credited for shedding light on the number of hate crimes targeting people in the LGBTQ+ community, according to the Matthew Shepard Foundation.

"I think the real value of this work is that it engages with all the voices of Laramie — from the people who think that being gay is a lifestyle choice and a sin all the way to people who are terrified," she said. "I think it's important for people to know that all of these people's voices matter."

MU sophomore Ronnie Rice plays seven characters who vary in age and represent different professions and perspectives.

"There is no one set idea, and it's not just a one-way street," Rice said. "Every character has their own personality."

Gleason said she selected a diverse cast as much as possible.

“None of the actors match up with the identities they’re playing,” she said. “It’s 64 people with different ethnicities, so I didn’t work to cast a ‘look.’ I wanted to be as inclusive in the casting as possible.”

For Rice, this production is both an honor and a challenge. He found playing seven characters exciting.

Actress Leah Huskey, a sophomore at MU who plays five characters, said each of her characters express different points of view, sexual orientations and influence.

“It’s a very emotionally heavy play,” Huskey said. “Even from the beginning, we were all in tears after the table read because it was such a powerful script.”

One of Huskey’s characters, Reggie Fluty, a first responder to the 911 call when Shepard was found, was essentially a reluctant hero.

“She is a powerful character in the play and is essentially one of the heroes,” Huskey said. “But she doesn’t see it as such — she just does the right thing.”

Because the characters in the play are real people, living and dead, the actors did extensive research to embody their characters.

“Each character has to be distinct. It has to be unique from yourself, yet you find yourself in the character,” Huskey said.

Emmanuel Llorente, a sophomore at MU who plays seven roles, said “The Laramie Project” is one step toward changing the national narrative around LGBTQ+ issues.

“It took a sad and tragic story of an anti-gay hate crime and used it to spread awareness and to tell Matthew Shepard’s story,” Llorente said.

After working with the cast and production team, Huskey said she looks forward to presenting a play that is going to matter and leave the audience with something to think about.

Gleason said “The Laramie Project” an important play and also said it is a privilege to help her students grow through the process.

“You can tell if you’ve picked to do the right thing ... when you feel better after a day of work than before you’ve started it,” Gleason said. “I always come out energized and excited about the work we’re doing.”

## America's \$1.2 Billion Mexico Milk Trade Is Now at Risk

by Deena Shanker

April 26, 2017, 4:00 AM CDT

With a tweet on Tuesday morning, President Donald Trump told Wisconsin dairy farmers—and the world—that America “will not stand for” the Canadian policies he says are hurting U.S. exports:

**@realDonaldTrump** Canada has made business for our dairy farmers in Wisconsin and other border states very difficult. We will not stand for this. Watch!

But his next tweet might have hurt those farmers even more:

**@realDonaldTrump** Don't let the fake media tell you that I have changed my position on the WALL. It will get built and help stop drugs, human trafficking etc.

Even as the Trump administration jousts with Canada over its latest trade dispute, it might want to keep a closer eye on Mexico, America's No. 1 one dairy importer. Its southern neighbor, which figures prominently in the U.S. government's crime and immigration rhetoric, spent almost twice as much money as Canada did on U.S. dairy in 2016. That's \$1.2 billion.

Now it appears Mexico is looking for new trading partners.

In the first two months of 2017, Mexico increased its imports of skim milk powder from the European Union by 122 percent over last year, according to the EU Milk Market Observatory (as first reported by the *Irish Farm Journal*). Mexico has also been exploring talks with dairy powerhouse New Zealand. That country's trade minister visited Mexico City in February to discuss a potential trade deal.

Why the moves by Mexico? In a word: Trump.

**“Mexico is looking to make sure they have market alternatives because of the rhetoric from the U.S. on renegotiating Nafta,” said D. Scott Brown, who teaches agricultural and applied economics at the University of Missouri, referring to the North American Free Trade Agreement.** “This may be an opportunity to find other places for skim milk

powder.” Rabobank also reported that tensions between the U.S. and Mexico are the reason for Mexico’s changing dairy purchasing strategy.

While most Americans probably aren’t looking for skim milk powder at the supermarket, it’s a major export product (along with nonfat dry milk) because it has low moisture content and a longer shelf life. These products are “the barometer for what’s going on in world markets,” said Ben Laine, an economist at CoBank Acb.

The U.S. Dairy Export Council, currently led by Obama-era Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, is stressing the importance of U.S. dairy to Mexico. “We all have an opportunity and a responsibility to maintain and strengthen relationships with those that we work with in Mexico, to reassure them that we’re going to continue to be open for business,” he said at the Dairy Forum in late January. “The relationships at the ground level, at the grass-roots level, can oftentimes overcome any stormy seas that might be created by comments coming from Washington.”

For now, those relationships seem to be holding: Exports of skim milk powder and nonfat dry milk powder to Mexico were up 14 percent in January and February from the same period a year earlier, according to the Dairy Export Council, which also stresses that it ships significantly more of the products than the EU. That 122 percent increase brought the EU to only about 4,000 tons. In that time, the U.S. sent about 45,000 tons to Mexico. More than 70 percent of Mexico’s dairy imports come from America. In total, the U.S. exports about 15 percent of its dairy production.

But the surge in imports from the EU could signal a changing dairy landscape.

“We’re still seeing strong exports from the U.S.,” Laine noted, “but it does make people nervous, makes the markets nervous, even though there’s no policy changes yet.”

And it’s not just the Nafta talk. Demanding that Mexico pay for a border wall and taking a hard line on immigration likely have an impact, too. “It’s probably some combination,” Laine said. “I think some of the rhetoric early on, that’s what shook up the markets initially. Concerns around Nafta and trade are what’s keeping the markets worried.”

## **New Scrutiny for Confucius Institutes**

National Association of Scholars calls on universities to close their Confucius Institutes. Defenders say there's nothing sinister about the Chinese-backed centers.

### **NO MU MENTION**

*BY ELIZABETH REDDEN APRIL 26, 2017*

More than 100 American colleges and universities house Confucius Institutes, centers of Chinese language and cultural teaching funded and staffed in part with instructors screened by a Chinese government-affiliated entity known as Hanban. The Confucius Institutes may seem to many to be benign outposts offering cultural events programming and noncredit courses in introductory Chinese, calligraphy or Tai Chi, but for nearly as long as the Confucius Institutes have been around -- more than 10 years now -- they've been controversial.

Advocates for the institutes say they've brought welcome new resources for Chinese language study and study abroad at a time when financial support for the humanities has been shrinking, while critics question whether American universities sacrifice some degree of academic freedom and autonomy in hosting the Chinese government-backed institutes, which in some cases are involved in delivering for-credit classes. Many Confucius Institutes are also involved in teaching or teacher training for local K-12 schools.

One U.S.-based Confucius Institute, at the University of Chicago, closed in 2014 after more than 100 faculty signed a petition that cited, among other things, concerns that Hanban's role in the hiring and training of teachers "subjects the university's academic program to the political constraints on free speech and belief that are specific to the People's Republic of China." Ontario's McMaster University closed its Confucius Institute a year earlier after a former instructor filed a complaint alleging that the university was "giving legitimization to discrimination" because her contract with Hanban prohibited her participation in the spiritual practice Falun Gong. Over the years, Confucius Institutes have been dogged by allegations that they self-censor when it comes to sensitive subjects in China such as Taiwan, Tiananmen Square, Tibet and Falun Gong; the institute's supporters frequently reply that these topics are largely outside the confines of the Confucius Institutes' narrow cultural and language education mandates. In 2014, organizers of a Chinese studies conference in Europe accused Hanban, a sponsor of the conference, of outright censorship of conference materials related to Taiwan.

The latest take on this contentious topic, a 183-page report on Confucius Institutes from the National Association of Scholars, by the author's account finds "few smoking guns, and no evidence of outright policies banning certain topics from discussion" -- but reasons for concern nonetheless. The report, which examines hiring policies, course offerings and textbooks, funding structures, academic freedom protections, and what the author describes as "formal and informal speech codes" at 12 Confucius Institutes in New Jersey and New York, concludes that "to a large extent, universities have made improper concessions that jeopardize academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Sometimes these concessions are official and in writing; more often they operate as implicit policies."

The report from NAS recommends that universities close their Confucius Institutes. "Confucius Institutes permit an agency of a foreign government to have access to university courses, and on principle that is a university function," Rachele Peterson, the author of the report, said in an interview. "Institutions should have full control over who they hire, over what they teach, and Confucius Institutes basically act like class-in-a-box kits that come ready-made for universities to use."

Short of closing the institutes -- NAS's primary recommendation -- the report makes a series of recommendations for changes that faculty and administrators should push for. Those recommendations include: increased transparency and public disclosure of contractual and funding agreements, and the renegotiation of contracts "to remove constraints against 'tarnishing the reputation' of the Hanban" and "to clarify that legal disputes should be settled only in the jurisdiction of the host institution (in our cases, American courts)."

*Story [continues](#).*