



**MU News Bureau**

*Daily Clips Packet*

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## Graduate assistants take big tax hit in GOP plan

By RUDI KELLER

**Graduate assistants at the University of Missouri would see their federal taxes increase by as much as 350 percent under the tax plan being pushed by Republicans in the U.S. House.**

The proposal being debated in the House Ways and Means Committee would require graduate assistants receiving tuition waivers to count the benefit as income, ending a decades-old exemption for people seeking advanced degrees. The provision is one of several being panned by critics as an attack on access to higher education.

Other proposals to end tax breaks aimed at higher education target deductions for tuition and student loan interest and a tax exemption for employer-paid tuition.

“This legislation, taken in its entirety, would discourage participation in postsecondary education, make college more expensive for those who do enroll, and undermine the financial stability of public and private, two-year and four-year colleges and universities,” Ted Mitchell, president of the American Council on Education, [wrote in a Monday letter](#) to the chairman and ranking Democratic member of the committee.

Approximately 145,000 graduate assistants received tuition reductions in 2011-12, Mitchell wrote in his letter to the committee leaders. The House proposal would cripple research and teaching in science, technology, engineering and math programs, he wrote.

Graduate assistants at MU receive a stipend based on the amount of work expected of them each week to support teaching or research. The minimum stipends range from \$8,263 for a master’s degree student with a quarter-time appointment to \$18,000 for a doctoral candidate with a half-time appointment.

Most also receive a waiver for all or part of their tuition and fees. For a Missouri resident, a full waiver is worth \$7,587. For a non-resident, the value is \$18,851.

Under current law, a single doctoral assistant from outside Missouri receiving the largest minimum stipend would pay \$768 in taxes on \$7,650, their taxable income after the standard deduction and personal exemption. Under the Republican proposal, that graduate student would

pay \$2,977 in taxes on \$24,815, the stipend plus waived tuition and fees minus the increased standard deduction of \$12,000. The tax plan eliminates the personal exemption on the federal tax return.

“For me, that is about four months’ rent,” said Joe Moore, spokesman for the Coalition of Graduate Workers. “I would have to make significant sacrifices, eating ramen two meals a day and maybe peanut butter for breakfast. But I am relatively privileged compared to some that it would prevent some from continuing their education.”

Many graduate assistants spent part of Wednesday calling members of Congress as part of the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students day of action.

“One analogy is that it is akin to taxing a coupon or a voucher, money that you don’t physically have,” Moore said.

Once committee work is completed, the bill will move to the House floor, where Speaker Paul Ryan hopes to hold a vote by Thanksgiving. U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Harrisonville, has been supportive of tax cuts generally in public statements but has not taken a stand on the graduate tuition waiver or many other specific provisions.

Hartzler is watching the committee’s work closely to determine whether the bill helps or hurts Missourians, spokesman Steve Walsh wrote in an email.

“The objective of tax reform is to simplify the tax code, grow the economy and lower taxes on hard working Americans,” Walsh wrote. “The blueprint of this plan does so by lowering rates and increasing the standard deduction — a highly popular deduction for most people in Missouri.”

The Senate Republican tax bill is expected to be unveiled this week and it is uncertain whether it will include some of the controversial provisions of the House plan. U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., has also been supportive of tax cuts in public statements but won’t take a public stand on specifics of the House bill, spokeswoman Katie Boyd wrote in an email.

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., is skeptical about several provisions in the House tax plan, Sarah Feldman, spokeswoman for McCaskill, wrote in an email. She supports some concepts in the tax bill and will decide how to vote based on its impact on working families, she wrote.

McCaskill would likely oppose ending the exemption for tuition waivers in single-issue legislation but wants to see the proposal as a whole, Feldman wrote.



## Missouri Ranks Among Top States In Decreasing Student Loan Defaulting

By ERICA MUNSINGER

Missouri is one of the top ten states for reducing student loan default rates, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

Zora Mulligan is the Missouri Commissioner of Higher Education at the Missouri Department of Higher Education. Mulligan said Missouri offers statewide programs that have helped lower default rates. The Default Prevention Loan Program gives students the knowledge they need to pay back their loans, she said.

Mulligan said the department stresses that students should borrow only what they need, apply for scholarships and complete their degree.

“Every state does it a little bit differently,” Mulligan said. “I think that we focus on it more than some other states as is reflected in our success this year. We have staff that work exclusively on this program. We have a lot of people that we work with at the colleges and universities who also make it a very high priority.”

**Although Missouri’s default rate is lower than most other states, the University of Missouri’s default rate is even lower.**

Nick Prewett, Executive Director of Student Financial Aid at MU, said this may mean that despite the University of Missouri's higher tuition than other schools in the state, their financial outreach to students is better than other schools.

MU has been awarded the Student Loan Default Prevention Grant from the state for the past four years. Prewett said the reasoning may be budgeting workshops held on campus.

“Not only are we helping them reduce the total amount of money that they need,” Prewett said, “we’re also setting them up for future success by providing them options in budgeting to make sure that they can make payments on their loans if they decide to take those out.”



## [MU tackles increasing diversity in higher education](#)

By GABIRELLE HAYS

Watch video at: <http://www.komu.com/news/mu-tackles-increasing-diversity-in-higher-education>

**COLUMBIA - Faculty at the University of Missouri met on Wednesday to discuss ways to increase and support diversity among faculty on MU's campus.**

The four-part workshop series concentrated on identifying resources and areas of improvement and stressed the need to have difficult conversations about diversity.

Dr. Erin Lynch-Alexander was brought in by the College of Education and the Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity.

"When I feel connected to my institution I'm more likely to stay and that's on the student side and on the faculty side," Lynch said.

Lynch is the Director of Student Research at the College of Education at Austin Peay University in Tennessee.

"It is important that we have these types of conversations about diversity and inclusivity to help make sure that the right narrative is being told and the right conversations are being had," Lynch said.

She also said the number of students of color in higher education only emphasizes the need to have broader representation on the administrative side.

"More students of color are going to college campuses and so we need to make sure that they are seeing people who look like them."

Caprice Leighton is an executive assistant with the Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity at MU.

She said holding workshops about topics like diversity provide the university with a chance to take a step in the right direction.

"We have the opportunity to be a powerful voice, to create safe spaces for faculty to come together so that we can address the areas we need to improve."

Leighton also said the response from MU's faculty has been positive.

"The faculty here is excited to be presented with new ideas and to learn how to be better," Leighton said.

"The opportunity to create change here is great and we're here so that we can put in work to make that change."

The Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity was created a year after the 2015 campus protests, which led to the resignations of UM System President Tim Wolfe and MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin. The protests started in part because of complaints of a lack of diversity among MU faculty and staff.



## [MU task force meeting as possible program cuts approach](#)

By ALYSSA TOOMEY

Watch video at: <http://www.abc17news.com/news/mu-task-force-meeting-as-possible-program-cuts-approach/653447794>

### **The University of Missouri Task Force on Academic Program Analysis, Enhancement and Opportunities met Wednesday as possible program cuts approach.**

As ABC 17 News previously reported, the task force is working to examine every academic program and will ultimately make recommendations to the provost's office on which programs could possibly be cut.

The task force's final report is due to the provost on January 15. University leaders have previously said they will begin making decisions on program investments, consolidation and cuts in the spring.

The task force, which was formed in June 2017, is comprised of 15 faculty members, along with co-chairs Matthew Martins, Faculty Fellow of Academic Programs and Cooper Drury, Associate Dean of College of Arts and Sciences,

Throughout the fall semester, the task force has been meeting with the MU community about their findings. They have had several meetings with different campus groups, including MU's faculty council, and once those are complete, an open forum will be held.

Prior to engaging with the university community, the task force developed an analysis strategy that is being used to evaluate programs. That analysis strategy is outlined in the phase 1 report, which was released on Sept. 1.

The co-chairs previously told ABC 17 News that the task force has three main objectives-look for programs that need to be invested in, identify programs that could be consolidated, and identify which programs the university can no longer support.

"I think the most important thing that we're going to have to do as a group is to actively engage with the campus. The full campus community," Martins said back in August. "The real work, I think, of this group is getting out, getting feedback and ideas from faculty, staff, from students from alumni, from leaders on campus. So, whatever recommendations this group ends up with, it's almost a certainty that there are folks on campus who will not be pleased with some of this. That's just a natural part of this process. But it's really important for us to make sure that we can say that everybody had an opportunity to provide input and ideas."

## THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

### Duke U. Lecturer's Syllabus Excludes Student Reporters From Course

#### NO MU MENTION

By NELL GLUCKMAN

In an age when professors' comments often quickly ricochet across the internet, asking students to consider a course "off the record" may seem reasonable. But what about excluding student reporters from the course altogether?

A lecturing fellow in economics at Duke University, Lindsey Lebowitz Hughes, seemed to try. The student newspaper, *The Chronicle*, reported on Monday that her Spring 2017 syllabus for "Inside Hedge Funds" stipulated that "anyone who is on the staff of *The Chronicle* is [not permitted to take this class.](#)"

The syllabus also said that audio recordings were not permitted and information shared by some of the guest speakers was confidential. "Please honor this in order that we can continue to get high-quality visitors and information," the syllabus said.

The university's vice president for public affairs and government relations, Michael J. Schoenfeld, told the Duke newspaper that no *Chronicle* staff member had ever been barred from taking the course in the past, nor would they be. The Duke *Chronicle* said professors regularly restrict their classes to students who have a certain level of experience, or to majors to ensure they can take their required courses, but Mr. Schoenfeld said they do not exclude members of particular student groups.

The Spring 2017 syllabus has since been removed from the economics department's website, but the newspaper posted it online. The guest speakers listed include executives at two hedge funds,

Perry Capital Management and Silver Point Capital Management. Ms. Hughes did not immediately respond to a request for comment from *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

# MISSOURIAN

## Medal of Honor recipient visits with student veterans, speaks at Jesse Hall

*Story resulted from direct pitch by MU News Bureau.*

By JIM FINNEGAN

U.S. Army Capt. Florent Groberg grew up in what he calls a “ghetto in France,” but in 2015 President Barack Obama awarded him the highest honor for an individual in the U.S. Armed Services: the Congressional Medal of Honor.

“America really is the land of opportunity, and I am living proof of it,” Groberg said.

Groberg spoke at Jesse Hall Wednesday evening as part of MU Veterans Week. In his speech, he outlined his unusual, tragic and heroic path to the White House.

Groberg was born in France and lived there until he was 11 years old, when he moved to the U.S. with his mother and adoptive father. Shortly after, his life changed forever when his uncle, who was 19 years old and serving in the Algerian army, died in battle. When he heard the news, 13-year-old Groberg threw out all of his childhood toys.

“That is the last time I play soldier,” Groberg recalled saying to his father. Groberg remembers wanting to enlist in the U.S. Army immediately after the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. However, his father persuaded him to pursue a college degree, which Groberg received from the University of Maryland. Shortly afterward, he enlisted.

On the morning of Aug. 8, 2012, Groberg was part of a personal security detachment tasked with protecting 28 people in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. The patrol was about to cross a small bridge when two motorcyclists began crossing the bridge from the other side before getting off their vehicles and retreating.

At this point, Groberg noticed a person walking backwards suspiciously in the direction of the patrol. When the man abruptly turned toward the patrol, Groberg was prepared. “You know with everything in your body that this is really wrong,” he said.

He shoved the man away and felt what he knew to be a suicide vest. Groberg and another member of the personal security detachment grabbed the bomber, pushed him away from the

patrol and threw him to the ground. The suicide vest detonated at Groberg's feet and caused a second suicide vest to detonate prematurely in a nearby building. Groberg's actions disrupted the plans of both bombers and saved countless lives.

"I just did my job," said Groberg. "Why? Because I love my boss and I love my friends."

During the attack, 16 soldiers were injured and four army personnel were killed. Groberg lost 45 to 50 percent of the muscle in his left calf with significant nerve damage, ruptured an eardrum and suffered a mild traumatic brain injury.

Groberg recalls feeling like a failure while at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center recovering from his injuries until he met Travis Mills, a quadruple amputee. Groberg said that Mills told him he had a responsibility to honor his fallen comrades.

"In 15 minutes, that guy changed my life," Groberg said. To honor his fellow servicemen who died in the attack, Groberg wears a bracelet bearing their names.

On Nov. 12, 2015, Groberg was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. During the Medal of Honor presentation, President Obama called Groberg "an American we can all be grateful for." "Because on his very worst day, he managed to summon his very best," Obama said. "He showed his guts, he showed his training; how he would put it all on the line for his teammates."

Earlier on Wednesday, Groberg visited with student veterans at the MU Veterans Center in Memorial Union. Robert Ross, director of the MU Veterans Center, introduced Groberg to student veterans and took him on a tour of the union, which was originally built in 1926 to honor students who died in World War I.

Groberg and Ross went outside and viewed the memorial archway, which has the names of 117 men carved into it. Ross took Groberg inside and showed him the memorial wall with names of veterans from other American wars. The names that are etched in gold have known Missouri ties, while the names etched in white are former MU students.

After the tour of the union, Groberg sat down for a longer discussion with student veterans. Douglas Wilbur, a retired military major who is now a doctoral student in the School of Journalism, likened the conversation he had with Groberg to the "veteran talk" that he remembers from his service.

"We are part of a special fraternity, we don't have secret handshakes or anything like that," Wilbur said. "We make fun of the food we eat, the Marines tease the Army guys, the Army guys tease the Marine guys, everyone teases the Air Force ... so we are just bonding."

Wilbur said Groberg excels in his role as a representative of the military to the community. "I am very proud to have him represent me as a fellow veteran, and you couldn't have asked for a better person to do that," he said.

Ross said the Medal of Honor Groberg received represents "the ultimate in military service." "It is a point when the service member reaches deep down inside and does something that has a lasting impact and changes the world; it is a transformative moment," Ross said.

At the end of the speech, Groberg presented the audience with a challenge. “I challenge you every day to do one good thing,” he said. “You would be surprised how much you can accomplish.”



## Intersection - Could Dogs Help You Live Longer? How Interacting with Pets Can Affect Our Health

*Generated by MU News Bureau release.*

By SARA SHAHRIARI & ABBY IVORY-GANJA

**This week on intersection we are joined by Dr. Rebecca Johnson. She is the Millsap Professor of Gerontological Nursing and Public Policy Professor at the University of Missouri Sinclair School of Nursing.** She's also a professor and serves as the director of the Research Center for Human Animal Interaction in the MU College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Johnson researches how people and pets interact, including the beneficial effects animals can have on people and the science behind it all.

- “There are biochemical benefits that we can measure,” Johnson says. “We can also measure heart rate and the space between heart beats because we know that when you interact with an animal there is a relaxation effect - your heart rate slows respiratory rates and your blood pressure goes down.”
- Johnson's research found that there are health benefits for older adults who walk dogs.
- The TigerPlace Pet Initiative is a collaboration between the MU Sinclair School of Nursing and the MU College of Veterinary Medicine. The initiative helps older adults living in the TigerPlace retirement community acquire and care for pets.



## The decisions behind Monsanto's weedkiller crisis

By Emily Flitter Reuters 1 hr ago (0)

In early 2016, agri-business giant Monsanto Co. faced a decision that would prove pivotal in what since has become a sprawling herbicide crisis, with millions of acres of crops damaged.

Monsanto had readied new genetically modified soybeans seeds. They were engineered for use with a powerful new weedkiller that contained a chemical called dicamba but aimed to control the substance's main shortcoming: a tendency to drift into neighboring farmers' fields and kill vegetation.

The company had to choose whether to immediately start selling the seeds or wait for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to sign off on the safety of the companion herbicide.

The firm stood to lose a lot of money by waiting. Because Monsanto had bred the dicamba-resistant trait into its entire stock of soybeans, the only alternative would have been "to not sell a single soybean in the United States" that year, Monsanto Vice President of Global Strategy Scott Partridge told Reuters in an interview.

Betting on a quick approval, Monsanto sold the seeds, and farmers planted a million acres of the genetically modified soybeans in 2016. But the EPA's deliberations on the weedkiller dragged on for another 11 months because of concerns about dicamba's historical drift problems.

That delay left farmers who bought the seeds with no matching herbicide and three bad alternatives: Hire workers to pull weeds; use the less-effective herbicide glyphosate; or illegally spray an older version of dicamba at the risk of damage to nearby farms.

**The resulting rash of illegal spraying that year damaged 42,000 acres of crops in Missouri, among the hardest hit areas, as well as swaths of crops in nine other states, according to an August 2016 advisory from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The damage this year has covered 3.6 million acres in 25 states, according to Kevin Bradley, a University of Missouri weed scientist who has tracked dicamba damage reports and produced estimates cited by the EPA.**

The episode highlights a hole in a U.S regulatory system that has separate agencies approving

genetically modified seeds and their matching herbicides.

Monsanto has blamed farmers for the illegal spraying and argued it could not have foreseen that the disjointed approval process would set off a crop-damage crisis.

But a Reuters review of regulatory records and interviews with crop scientists shows that Monsanto was repeatedly warned by crop scientists, starting as far back as 2011, of the dangers of releasing a dicamba-resistant seed without an accompanying herbicide designed to reduce drift to nearby farms.

In 2015, just before Monsanto released its soybeans seeds, Arkansas regulators notified the firm of damage from illegal spraying of its dicamba-resistant cotton seeds. Some cotton farmers chose to illegally spray old versions of dicamba because other herbicides approved for use on the seeds were far less effective.

**Story continues:** [http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/the-decisions-behind-monsanto-s-weedkiller-crisis/article\\_ed36c679-e495-5559-a91b-6ecc806137ab.html](http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/the-decisions-behind-monsanto-s-weedkiller-crisis/article_ed36c679-e495-5559-a91b-6ecc806137ab.html)

# Albuquerque Journal

## Editorial: Good luck to Stokes, UNM

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By Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board

Congratulations and good luck to the new president of the University of New Mexico, Garnett Stokes.

**While her new university is facing enrollment and fiscal challenges, Stokes has an impressive background leading an institution of higher learning through tough financial times – as provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs she helped the University of Missouri navigate declining enrollment and a \$60 million cut in funding in the wake of racially charged protests.**

That experience created a consensus among regents as well as faculty and other UNM stakeholders that Stokes is the woman for the job – and the fact she will have interim President Chaouki Abdallah returning to his provost position adds important continuity to, and confidence in, the administration.

Stokes will need both. UNM enrollment has dropped for five straight years, the state has cut funding by about \$27 million in the past two years, and the Athletic Department's financial management has prompted three state agencies to launch investigations or increase oversight.

But there are successes for Stokes to build on as well, including a four-year graduation rate that has doubled since 2012 and recognition from both the Brookings Institution and Carnegie for UNM's high level of research activity.

As she leads UNM into 2018 and beyond, Stokes must restore transparency to university operations – the current structure of the UNM Foundation and Lobo Club and use of third parties have shielded the business of a public institution from the public for too long.

Stokes officially dons the cherry and silver March 1 and will be the first female president in UNM's history. We wish her every success, because when UNM wins, Albuquerque and New Mexico do as well.

## T COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

### Reasons for UM not to divest from fossil fuels

By HJW III (HANK'S VIEW)

**Last Friday I suggested in this column the University of Missouri may want to sell its endowment portfolio holdings in companies involved with fossil fuels because the financial benefits might not be worth the political hassle involved.**

I was reacting to news of a student protest organization calling itself MEAC that urges officials to divest with arguments fossil fuels are bad for the environment. I recalled the controversy the university got into back when it faced similar pressure to divest holdings in companies doing business in South Africa.

This time around the times are different, the issue is different and UM management is different. **In a lengthy comprehensive response UM President Mun Choi and Board of Curators Chair Maurice Graham lay out a lucid case for respectfully ignoring the MEAC request.**

They say in essence the world will remain primarily dependent on energy from fossil fuels for some time and divestiture by the University of Missouri will not make a substantial difference. He cites extensive contributions to energy sustainability by the institution and its faculty members, and says efforts of this type contribute in more meaningful ways.

The UM response makes sense. I daresay most Missourians probably agree divestiture of fossil fuel stocks would be a symbolic gesture without much impact. Politically speaking, in the wake of the November 2015 protests I doubt many citizens are ready for another "bailout" by university management. For some this may not be the most emotionally satisfying grounds for resolving this latest call for divestiture, but given the current status of progress on campus toward

renewed management credibility and the lack of empirical reasons for selling fossil fuel stocks, Choi, Graham & Co. are on solid ground and will be able to continue with their portfolio investments.

From the standpoint of the university's economic welfare it won't matter whether its portfolio continues to include the stocks in question. But since the question is given a political slant by the MEAC protestors the Choi administration is making a good case for the status quo.



## **MU Doctors Warn Against Using Gasoline for Burning Leaves**

Generated from a MU Health press release

Watch the story: <http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=61618ee0-3af5-4db1-9816-16f1e89b559c>



## **Gary Pinkel, L'Damian Washington give back to Douglass students**

By ANTHONY ROMANO

**Watch video at: <http://www.komu.com/news/gary-pinkel-l-damian-washington-give-back-to-douglass-students>**

COLUMBIA – To say L’Damian Washington had a difficult childhood would be an understatement.

His father was murdered when he was five years old. His mother had a stroke and died at one of his high school basketball games when he was 15.

Now, Washington is using his experiences to inspire future generations.

“Growing up as a kid, going through the struggle that I went through, going to alternative school and just kind of knowing that sometimes your thoughts could be so negative, there's not really much hope to grasp on to,” Washington said.

**So he and his former head coach at Missouri, Gary Pinkel, teamed up to help bring hope to students at Douglass High School on Monday.**

In an event called “One Step Forward,” a packed auditorium of students, teachers and other members of the community listened to Pinkel give words of wisdom before watching an emotional video detailing Washington’s path through childhood to playing college football to attempting to make it to the NFL.

“L’Damian Washington came from a very challenging background and has remarkable success, so he's going to do such a great job, and he will instantly be a role model for all those kids,” Pinkel said.

After the video, Washington addressed the audience before revealing the event’s surprise: a pair of brand new Nike sneakers for every student.

“It's one step forward and it's about getting up every day and putting your shoes on and taking another step,” Pinkel said. “Some days it's not a whole lot of fun doing that and that's what we're going to be talking about.”

The event’s sponsors, ZOUNation Magazine, Missouri Employers Mutual and Academy Sports, helped make the gifts possible.

For Washington, giving back in Columbia is just the first step.

"This is the place that gave me hope, that gave me opportunity, that gave me a chance when most places didn't give me a chance so to come back, for me, hopefully it starts here,” Washington said. “Hopefully I make my way back to Shreveport, Louisiana, because that's where my roots are, but I have to start here.”

Washington currently plays for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League. He came to the Columbia event immediately after his regular season ended before traveling back north of the border for the team's upcoming playoff game on Sunday.