Concerned Student 1950 renews demands as University of Missouri curators begin presidential search

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 5:58 pm

On the same day the University of Missouri Board of Curators selected a Presidential Search Committee and a consulting firm to help recruit candidates for the top position, members of Concerned Student 1950 said demands that helped topple former UM System President Tim Wolfe still had not been met.

In a statement released via Twitter and through an explanatory note posted online, the group that organized demonstrations against racism on the Columbia campus emphasized that they were making demands, not suggestions or requests. During a Feb. 17 hearing of the legislative Joint Committee on Education, interim UM President Mike Middleton told lawmakers that he considered the demands to be requests that he would try to fulfill.

“While the university is working to garner the support of individuals working to uphold white supremacy, marginalized students on campus are still suffering,” Concerned Student 1950 wrote the statement issued Wednesday. “We will remain committed to ensuring our demands are met by any means necessary.”

Middleton issued a response to the group’s statement, listing efforts to meet Concerned Student 1950’s original list of demands. Middleton said the university system has formed a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force with representatives from each campus, created a chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer position and conducted a full review of all UM policies for staff and student conduct.

“The time for demands has passed,” Middleton said. “We have already begun the very important work of making our campuses more diverse, equitable and inclusive.”

Middleton said the UM System has encouraged students to be part of the solution by working together with the new campus and system efforts.
Of the eight demands made Oct. 20, Concerned Student 1950 members said, six have not been addressed. The group's first demand is actually a pair of unmet demands issued by the Legion of Black Collegians back in 1969. The legion sought an academic bankruptcy program that would allow students to drop a semester of work from their records with proper justification as well as legion oversight of hiring decisions in the Office of Minority Students.

The demands should be met by August, Concerned Student 1950 said.

Other unmet demands include a call to increase the percentage of black faculty to 10 percent and a 10-year strategic plan to increase retention rates for marginalized students and provide diversity curriculum and training.

“Retention rates for black students after their first year of enrollment has constantly declined since 2002, making this community the most likely to drop out,” the group stated.

Concerned Student 1950 brought international attention to MU in November when member Jonathan Butler, a graduate student, began a hunger strike to force action on the demands; the Missouri football team later declared a boycott of athletic activities in support of the group. Wolfe resigned Nov. 9, and Middleton, a founding member of the Legion of Black Collegians, was named interim president.

The statement did not mention Middleton by name but emphasized that the demands were not requests. In an interview after the committee hearing last week, Middleton said he was trying to explain to lawmakers how to view the student protesters.

“Demand is a very combative, confrontational word,” Middleton said. “Back when I was making demands, I made those demands, I called them demands for effect. A much more polite and collaborative way to look at it is this is something we really, really want you to do or consider. Call it a request, call it a demand, it means the same thing to me when it’s coming from students in the context they were in.”

Organizers of Concerned Student 1950 were unavailable for comment Wednesday afternoon.
Concerned Student 1950 reissues list of six remaining demands to be met

Their first two demands were left of the presentation.

This past November, members of Concerned Student 1950 said that even though they were successful in ousting former UM System President Tim Wolfe, their work to achieve equality at the university would continue.

After releasing a list of eight demands the organization had in October, Concerned Student 1950 issued a more in-depth list of demands today via Twitter that have yet to be met, along with their expected deadlines.

First and second demands: The original first two demands, which asked for Wolfe’s resignation and a handwritten apology, were left out of the Prezi presentation.

Third demand: Demand No. 3 called for MU to meet the Legion of Black Collegians’ demands from 1969, specifically their eighth and ninth demands.

LBC called for the implementation of an academic bankruptcy program, which would allow a student to drop an entire semester from one’s records for any justifiable cause. The legion also called for a panel to interview all potential hires for the Office of Minority Students, which isn’t currently listed under MU’s Diversity Offices.

Deadline: August 2016

Fourth demand: Demand No. 4 called for programs such as Summer and Fall Welcome to create workshops for racial awareness and inclusion.

“The core of these cultural workshops will focus on building cultural competencies by properly educating students on the creation, implementation, and long-lasting effects of racism on marginalizing identities, particularly African-Americans,” the presentation read.

Concerned Student 1950 also suggested members of a board to oversee the implementation of the workshops:

- Black Studies Department Chairwoman Stephanie Shonekan
- Interim Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Chuck Henson
- Graduate student Reuben Faloughi
- Sophomore Marshall Allen
- Sophomore Imani Simmons-Elloie

Deadline: Aug. 15, 2016

**Fifth demand:** Demand No. 5 outlined the need for an increase in black faculty to 10 percent. Black professors currently make up roughly 3.25 percent of MU’s faculty.

“It would be beneficial to the university to hire more black faculty so that they can prove to their students, the nation and the world that the university hires black scholars,” the presentation read.

Deadline: The original demand asked for it to be met by the 2017–18 school year, but now Concerned Student 1950 wants this demand, which they’ve called “Targeted Hiring,” met by August 2016.

**Sixth demand:** Demand No. 6 asked for a 10-year plan to increase the retention rates among “marginalized students” and sustain diversity curriculum and training.

Concerned Student 1950 cited Academic Retention Services, a program designed to help increase retention and graduation rates in underrepresented ethnicities at MU, as a service at risk of being terminated because of budget cuts.

They said the lack of a hate crime policy on campus needs to be addressed, stating that “white students are given autonomy to demonstrate hatred to their minority counterparts with little fear that they will face consequences.”

They also want courses that focus on issues of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic standing, sexuality and religion to become mandatory for all students. Students would be required to earn a C or higher in these classes.

A diversity course requirement was proposed by the diversity course initiative lead by the Faculty Council Diversity Enhancement Committee in November. It has since been updated to allow existing classes to qualify for the credit.

Deadline: May 2, 2016

**Seventh demand:** Demand No. 7 called for more funding and resources for the MU Counseling Center, specifically in increasing the number of mental health professionals on staff who are of color.

“Students at the University of Missouri need counselors with lived experiences that extend beyond their formal training,” the presentation stated. “Students dealing with mental health crises especially need counselors that can understand the intersection of their identities and relate to their lived experiences.”
Concerned Student 1950 specifically demanded one psychologist or counselor for every 1,500 students at MU. According to presentation, that would mean MU would need to hire 14 more psychologists or counselors.

Deadline: June 2016

**Eighth demand:** Finally, Concerned Student 1950 demanded increased funding, resources and personnel for the social justice centers on campus.

They asked for $6,000 for outreach and programming, $250,000 for the expansion of Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center, and a statue of Lloyd Gaines in the center of Carnahan Quadrangle, where the campsite was in November.

Deadline: August 2016

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**THE KANSAS CITY STAR.**

**FEBRUARY 24, 2016 12:14 PM**

**MU curators choose presidential search committee**

Among the panel: head of black studies at Columbia, leader of student multicultural group at UMKC

Curators are also interviewing prospective search firms

President and chancellor resigned amid protests of racism

**BY GREG HACK**

ghack@kcstar.com

Members of the search committee for a president of the University of Missouri System were chosen Wednesday by its Board of Curators and will include the head of the Columbia campus’ Black Studies Department and the leader of the Kansas City campus’ Multicultural Student Organization Council.

The curators, meeting at the Kansas City Airport Marriott, decided that the search committee should include all the curators, including the student
representative to the board, plus another student, two faculty members, a staff member and two co-chairs from the alumni community.

They then approved Stephanie Shonekan, the Black Studies chair and an associate professor of ethnomusicology in Columbia, and Rakeem Golden, a sociology major at UMKC.

They also chose Sheilah Clarke-Ekong, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and Joe Boehm, who works in building maintenance at the Missouri University of Science & Technology in Rolla and heads that campus’ staff council.

The two co-chairs will be chosen later.

Golden is the first student chosen to serve on a presidential search committee. There could be another student on the panel if the Board of Curators’ nonvoting student representative post, now vacant, is filled.

Three regular voting spots on the board also are vacant.

The curators also approved four open forums to get public comments on the presidential search. They will be April 4 in Rolla and St. Louis, April 6 in Columbia and from noon to 1:30 p.m. April 8 at the Student Union at UMKC.

A staff member said efforts were underway to have the sessions live-streamed on the Internet and to set up email or another way for people to submit questions for the forums and to comment on the search.

The board then went into closed session, which chairwoman Pam Henrickson said was for the purpose of interviewing representatives of companies interested in being the search firm that recruits and screens prospective candidates for the search committee to interview.

The university system currently has an interim president, Mike Middleton, and the Columbia campus has an interim chancellor, Hank Foley. They were appointed in November when, amid student protests of the handling of racial issues, Tim Wolfe resigned as president and R. Bowen Loftin resigned as chancellor. The protests got national attention when the MU football team joined them by voting not to play unless Wolfe resigned.
Also Wednesday, the group Concerned Student 1950, which led the protests, issued a statement expressing disappointment that its eight demands for change were not being met and that the university instead had “punished faculty and staff from the athletic department.”

Elsewhere on the Columbia campus, graduate student workers Wednesday filled the main floor lobby of Jesse Hall to protest the university system’s recent decision to deny their push to be classified as employees.

The Coalition of Graduate Workers, a group of graduate student workers seeking collective bargaining rights, said the university declined to recognize them as employees “because they simply don’t want us to form a graduate employee union,” said Connor Lewis, coalition co-chair.

Graduate students called Wednesday’s eight-hour gathering in the Jesse Hall lobby a “work-in.” They held classes and office hours and did whatever work they had scheduled for the day there in the lobby.

In response, the university referred to a statement it issued two weeks ago: “We believe that the best approach is for the graduate students and our leadership to continue to engage in direct, ongoing communication to seek and achieve collaborative solutions to relevant issues.”

University of Missouri board picks presidential search panel

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The committee that'll help search for a new president of the University of Missouri system will include representatives from each of the system’s four campuses.

The system’s governing board of curators on Wednesday in Kansas City, Missouri, signed off on the panel that will assist them in finding the successor to Tim Wolfe.
Wolfe and the Columbia campus’ chancellor resigned Nov. 9 in the midst of protests over what some saw as university leadership’s indifference to racial issues.

Joining curators on the search committee will be a Kansas City student, two faculty members from Columbia and St. Louis, and a Rolla staffer.

Former University of Missouri football player and strength coach Pat Ivey separately was named to be the Columbia campus’ assistant vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity.

Curators make selections for presidential search committee, add alumni co-chairs

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 2:00 pm

KANSAS CITY — The University of Missouri Board of Curators selected two black faculty members and a black student from the University of Missouri-Kansas City on Wednesday to join the all-white board on an expanded Presidential Search Committee.

The curators selected Stephanie Shonekan, chairwoman of the Black Studies Department at MU, and Sheilah Clarke-Ekong, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, as the faculty representatives and Rakeem Golden, a sociology major at UMKC, as the student member. C. Joe Boehm, Building Services supervisor at the Havener Student Center, will represent university staff on the committee, which also will have two alumni members to be named later.

“We were seeking to add diversity,” Associate Vice President Kelley Stuck told the curators when asked how the names were selected from nominations made from each campus. “Age, gender and race, all those things were considered in selecting those individuals.”

The committee will consist of the curators, the student representative to the board and the six outside members. The board is short-handed, with only six seats filled, after the resignations of three members, including both black members, since President Tim Wolfe resigned Nov. 9.
At its Feb. 4 meeting, the board originally had excluded alumni representatives from the committee. Chairwoman Pam Henrickson said at the time that because all the curators were alumni, that group was adequately represented. A resolution approved 5-0 by the board made the two alumni members co-chairs.

The board adjourned to a closed session to interview search consultants who will recruit a permanent president. Henrickson has said she expects to complete negotiations and select a firm Wednesday.

The board is beginning the process of selecting a permanent replacement for Wolfe, who resigned because of pressure from a Columbia campus protest over racial issues that included a hunger strike by graduate student Jonathan Butler and a threatened boycott of athletic activities by the football team.

The protests were just one source of the discontent that also led to the resignation of Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

Interim President Mike Middleton was appointed Nov. 12. He did not attend the Wednesday board meeting and has said he does not intend to be a candidate for the permanent presidency.

The next step in the search will be a series of public forums to comment on the selection process for and qualifications of a new president. The forums are scheduled for:

- 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. April 4 at the Missouri University of Science & Technology in Rolla. Henrickson will host the forum in the Carver/Turner Room 204 A&B of the Havener Student Center.
- 3:30 to 5 p.m. April 4 at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Curator Marcy Graham will host the forum in the Century Room of the Millennium Student Center.
- 10:30 a.m. to noon April 6 at MU. Curator John Phillips will host the forum in the Great Room of the Reynolds Alumni Center.
- Noon to 1:30 p.m. April 8 at UMKC. Phillips will host the forum in Room 401BC of the Student Union.

The meeting opened with a short debate over whether all six current members of the board or only three should sit on the committee because curators have the final selection. After objections from curator David Steelman of Rolla, the original decision to have all curators participate remained intact.

The board resolution changing the composition of the search committee, including reducing the curators’ representation to three members, was sent out by staff on Tuesday night. Steelman said he had not seen it.

“To find that out at 8:35 in the morning as I am attending is not adequate board governance,” Steelman. “Of course, I don’t find this particularly an oddity that I wasn’t told about this beforehand.”
The question of whether all six curators should sit on the committee or whether fewer should participate was to allow anyone who felt overburdened by the other work of the board to bow out, Phillips said.

“I want to be involved,” he said. “I don’t know who might not want to be involved.”

Curator Phil Snowden said the number of curators did not matter to him because the board has the ultimate power to choose the president.

“I see some good going both ways,” he said. “If there is a smaller set going forward, that doesn’t concern me as long as we know at the end we’ve got a vote”

**University of Missouri System curators agree on presidential search committee**


KANSAS CITY, Mo. - The search for a new University of Missouri system president continues in Kansas City as curators agreed upon the composition of the search committee Wednesday morning.

The search committee is comprised of all six curators, two students - one of whom is the student board representative - two faculty members, and one staff member.

The student representative is Rakeem Golden from the Kansas City campus; the two faculty members are Stephanie Shonekan from the MU Columbia campus and Sheilah F. Clarke-Ekong from the St. Louis campus; and the staff representative is C. Joe Boehm from Missouri University of Science and Technology.

UM System Chief Communications Officer John Fougere says, "We want to make sure that they find a candidate that matches UM. You know the size of that job. Obviously it's extremely important, so I think that the pool of candidates that they get and the quality of candidates is the most important factor right now"

Their meeting began at 8:30 a.m.
A public forum will be held on the MU campus in the first week of April to collect student input.

MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: Head of MU's Black Studies Department named to UM president search committee

BRIANA SAUNDERS, Updated 15 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri Board of Curators named four additional people to the UM System presidential search committee.

One of them, Stephanie Shonekan, is the chair of the Black Studies Department at MU.

"I felt very honored (to be selected) to represent my colleagues as we all care deeply about the future of this university," Shonekan said.

This is Shonekan's first year as the chair of the Black Studies department at MU. She said she looks forward to working with the committee to recommend candidates for the system's presidency who have experience leading diverse groups of students, staff and faculty, and who understand the unique needs of each campus.

The curators created the committee in the wake of the resignation of former UM System President Tim Wolfe, according to previous Missourian reporting.

In addition to Shonekan, the committee's new members are:

- **C. Joe Boehm**, building services supervisor at the Havener Center at the Missouri University of Science Technology in Rolla.

- **Rakeem Golden**, sociology student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.
• Sheilah F. Clarke-Ekong, associate professor of anthropology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Clarke-Ekong hopes to contribute to the search with her experience in the educational field.

"The whole nature of higher education is in a state of flux right now," Clarke-Ekong said. "I want to look for a person that has the right skills, vision and passion to get this right."

Nominations for the search committee came from the Intercampus Faculty Council, Intercampus Student Council and Intercampus Staff Council.

Six of the search committee members already were previously named. They are curators Maurice Graham, David Steelman, John Phillips, Donald Cupps, Phillip Snowden and Pamela Henrickson.

Each member of the search committee will have a vote. The new student representative to the Board of Curators will join the committee once appointed by Gov. Jay Nixon and confirmed by the Missouri Senate.

The committee plans to conduct public forums in early April, according to previous Missourian reporting.

Curators finalize presidential search committee

Stephanie Shonekan, black studies department chairwoman, is one of two UM System faculty members on the committee.

The UM System Board of Curators met Wednesday morning to finalize the members of the search committee for the next UM System president.
The committee includes all six current curators, two faculty members, two students and one staff member, according to an email from UM System spokesman John Fougere. The board currently has three vacancies, and Fougere said any new curators appointed would immediately join the search committee.

Stephanie Shonekan, chairwoman of MU’s black studies department, is the only representative from MU. Shonekan has previously spoken out about social justice issues on campus. Sheilah Clarke-Ekong, associate professor of anthropology at UM-St. Louis, is the other faculty representative.

Rakeem Golden of UM-Kansas City is the only student currently named to the committee. The committee will also include the next student representative to the board, who will be from MU and has not yet been appointed by Gov. Jay Nixon.

Joe Boehm, a building services supervisor at Missouri University of Science and Technology, is the staff representative.

The board also finalized its decision to hold public forums on the presidential search on each of the four UM System campuses during the first week of April. The board has not announced which search model will be used or if public forums with candidates will be held.

Curators won't reveal University of Missouri presidential search consultant until deal is signed

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 5:47 pm

KANSAS CITY — The University of Missouri Board of Curators must negotiate the final details and have signed contracts before it will reveal the name of the firm selected to help find the UM System’s next president, Chairwoman Pam Henrickson said Wednesday afternoon.

Henrickson and the other curators spent most of Wednesday in closed session interviewing representatives of three search firms selected from a list of companies that submitted proposals to the university. The closed session followed the selection of faculty, staff and student
representatives who will join curators on the Presidential Search Committee that will guide the process.

Ten prospective firms responded with proposals, UM System spokesman John Fougere said, but their names will be withheld until the curators announce which company they have selected.

Stephanie Shonekan, an associate professor of ethnomusicology and chairwoman of the Black Studies Department, will be one of the faculty members of the search committee. She said Wednesday afternoon that she agreed to be the faculty nominee from the Columbia campus after discussing the process with Tim McIntosh of the UM System's human resources office.

McIntosh assured her that the search committee would have a strong role in the selection process and adequate resources to do its work, Shonekan said.

“I felt honored to be asked because this is such an important process,” Shonekan said.

The search committee will include all six curators and the student representative on the board as well as two faculty members, another student, a staff member and two alumni, who will chair the committee. Sheilah Clarke-Ekong, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, will serve as the second faculty representative, and Rakeem Golden, a sociology major at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, will be the student member. C. Joe Boehm, building services supervisor at the Havener Student Center, will represent university staff on the committee.

The two alumni chairs will be named later.

The board is seeking a permanent replacement for Tim Wolfe, who resigned Nov. 9 as pressure built from protests over racial issues on the Columbia campus that included a hunger strike by graduate student Jonathan Butler and a boycott of athletic activities by the Missouri football team.

Interim President Mike Middleton was appointed Nov. 12. He did not attending board meeting Wednesday but has said he does not intend to be a candidate for the permanent presidency.

The curators are being careful to choose the correct consulting firm, Vice-Chairman Maurice Graham said.

“This is the most important thing the board will do for a decade,” Graham said. “It will start the healing process.”
Graduate student protesters occupied the first floor of the MU administration building on the Columbia campus to protest the university’s denial of their bid to be classified as employees.

The Coalition of Graduate Workers, a group of graduate workers seeking collective bargaining rights, says the University of Missouri System has declined to recognize them as employees “because they simply don’t want us to form a graduate employee union,” said Connor Lewis, coalition co-chair.

Graduate students called Wednesday’s 8-hour gathering in the Jesse Hall lobby a “Work-in.” They held classes, office hours and did whatever work they’d scheduled for the day, there in the lobby.

“The work of graduate employees tends to happen out of the public eye,” said coalition co-chair Eric Scott. “Today, we are bringing our labor out into the open.”

MU graduate students have been moving toward forming a graduate student workers’ union since before the fall semester started, when graduate students protested against the university cutting their health insurance subsidies and some tuition waivers.

Those decisions have since been reversed but were among the issues at the heart of student protests, including those related to race, that led to the resignation of
the system president and the MU chancellor in November. Graduate student assistants have continued, though to complain that their pay was too low.

In his January state of the university address, interim chancellor Hank Foley announced that MU would address graduate students’ pay raise demand by increasing the minimum stipend over the next two school years, effective July 1.

Then two weeks ago, on Feb. 10, the System Vice President for Human Resources, Kelley Stuck, notified graduate workers that the system would not recognize them as university employees without legal action.

“We believe that the university needs clarity on the graduate students’ legal right to organize, as there is no legal precedent or clarity in current Missouri law to make that determination,” Interim System President Mike Middleton said in a statement on that same day.

It also said that MU administrators were working with graduate assistants to address such concerns as workload, and support structures for graduate students. And they said that in addition to pay increases the university is also working on providing affordable graduate student housing and childcare.

When contacted on Wednesday for a comment MU officials directed The Star to the statement the system had put out two weeks ago.

“We believe that the best approach is for the graduate students and our leadership to continue to engage in direct, ongoing communication to seek and achieve collaborative solutions to relevant issues,” Foley said in the statement.

“We are going to continue trying to organize,” Lewis said. “We are going to take a vote to form a union regardless of whether the university agrees to participate in the process or not.”

He said the coalition’s plan is to hold a graduate student election for all 2,700 on the Columbia campus before the end of this spring’s semester.
Graduate student employees hold grade-in to make their work publicly known

“We are paid a wage,” posters read in Jesse Hall’s entrance for the Coalition of Graduate Workers grade-in Wednesday. “We receive W-2’s. We pay taxes. What else do we have to do?”

Graduate student employees held office hours, tutored, graded exams and wrote lecture plans in Jesse Hall from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

“We want to make that labor visible and to remind the (Board of) Curators that we aren’t going anywhere, and certainly not silently,” a Coalition for Graduate Workers Facebook event read today.

The Coalition of Graduate Workers first seeks to achieve graduate student employee recognition by the UM System, action coordinator Sarah Senff said. The coalition would then like to unionize, certify the union and elect officials, she said.

“Attempts to define student employees as solely ‘students,’ to the detriment of either their organizing rights as employees or to the detriment of any other of their employee rights, will be interpreted as an act of intentional disenfranchisement,” Doug Valentine, General Assembly representative of the Graduate Professional Council wrote in a resolution this week. “It would hinder both their right to democratically determine union representation and their right to secure other standard labor-related protections.”

The Coalition of Graduate Workers would like to represent their interest as a collective group to ensure MU’s 2,700 graduate employees have fair and enforceable contracts and working conditions, Co-Chairman Connor Lewis said.

“For decades, the Graduate Professional Council has been doing great work to advocate for graduate students,” Lewis said. “The university has been unwilling to listen to that advocacy. They have traditionally put a student on a committee to claim that they consulted with students, but they’ve ultimately done what they’ve wanted.”

Last semester’s graduate student issues, specifically those regarding health care coverage, “proved we needed a grassroots movement in order to make changes,” Lewis said.

The development of the Coalition of Graduate Workers has led MU administrators to make progress in addressing issues such as low pay, specifically promising an increase in graduate stipends, Lewis said.
Senff said there is no guarantee that MU will follow through with its administrative promises to graduate students. Promises aren’t enough; they are just words, she said.

“We have been encouraged by the steps that the campus is trying to take to listen to our concerns even though many of those steps aren’t quite enough,” Lewis said. “It’s the University of Missouri System that is becoming the problem now. The system has tried to stonewall us at every turn, and at many times, has lied to us in order to prevent us from exercising our democratic right to vote on union representation.”

GPC Director of Communication Matt McCune said that in back-to-back meetings, UM System administrators claimed they have gone through the proper shared governance channels to address graduate student rights despite never speaking to Faculty Council and GPC.

“The political environment in Missouri has gotten toxic due to fear of backlash,” Lewis said. “HR is calling the shots, and when it comes down to it, these people are trying to maintain the status quo. They are bosses acting like bosses, and the bottom line is that no boss likes employees standing up for themselves.”

Senff said the Coalition of Graduate Workers has begun court proceedings to declare graduate students’ employee status. Graduate students carry out many of the same responsibilities as faculty, so there is no reason for the UM System to not acknowledge them as employees within Missouri law, she said.

“The University of Missouri System has chosen to take the hard route, and we are willing to do it that way,” Senff said. “We want to be able to enact our constitutional rights. A collectively bargained contract is the only thing that will make us feel secure in our position at the university.”

McCune said GPC, as the official graduate student government, not only supports graduate students as employees who deserve full labor rights, but acknowledges their right to unionize.

“We are trying to raise awareness of our value at Mizzou,” Senff said. “We don’t just study at Mizzou, we work.”
Graduate Student Employees and Unionization - Part I

Madeleine Elfenbein is a Ph.D. candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. Patrick Bigsby is a student, employee, and wrestling fan at the University of Iowa.

No MU Mention

Welcome to Part I of our discussion of graduate student labor and the benefits and concerns related to unionization! Two GradHacker authors, Madeleine Elfenbein and Patrick Bigsby, have agreed to discuss their experiences and views related to graduate employment and explain some of their feelings on graduate labor unions.

Let’s meet our panelists!

Name: Patrick Bigsby
Employer: University of Iowa
Union or Labor Advocacy Group on campus: COGS (UE Local 896)
Relationship to labor union: nonmember

Name: Madeleine Elfenbein
Employer: University of Chicago
Union or Labor Advocacy Group on campus: Graduate Students United (GSU).
Relationship to labor union: proud member

What kinds of work do you do at your university?

P: I’m a teaching assistant in the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I currently teach two of the required professional skills courses for undergraduate journalism students. My appointment and salary are based on 20 hours of work per week. Between class, staff meetings, office hours, grading, responding to student questions, and the other trappings of being a teacher, I don’t have trouble reaching the 20-hour mark.
The way I see it, I do a lot of different kinds of work at my university. Some of it is paid directly by the university, some is paid by other sources, and some is entirely unpaid. The most obvious form of work I do is my teaching: I’m currently a lecturer in the college’s Social Science core, where I teach first- and second-year undergraduates in a sequence called Classics of Social and Political Thought. I’ve also been paid by the university for my work as an academic workshop coordinator, a conference organizer, a teaching consultant, and an instructor in the Writing Program. And for the first five years of my Ph.D. program, I was paid for my learning and scholarship as well.

In my first few years of grad school, I felt more like a student than a scholar, and the work I did on campus was not really scholarly in a deep sense. That’s no longer that case. At this point in my graduate career, I am no longer taking classes; instead, I am teaching them. Like my professors, I do a lot more than teach: I conduct research, write for publication, and I spend time contributing to the intellectual life of the university through participation in workshops, conferences, and public outreach efforts. My professors do all this because it’s part of their job description; it’s what they’re paid for. And in fact, it’s what I’m paid for, too, although my pay situation as a grad student is way more complicated. But the pattern was set for me in those first five years of my graduate program, when I received a salary (although it was called a “stipend”) that was designed to make my studying, research, and service work possible. This stipend amounted to only a small fraction of what my professors earn, but I paid my bills with it, and I paid taxes on it. It was a salary for scholarship -- for all the scholarly activities it enabled me to pursue.

Do you consider those workshops, conferences, and public outreach efforts to be part of your job? For me, I limit work duties to the requirements of my contract. I perform other functions for the university (e.g. I judge at the undergraduate research festival, serve on a university-wide judicial body, etc.) but those are volunteer positions I assume out of a sense of citizenship within the organization. I don’t associate that work with my job because I don’t expect anything, remuneration or otherwise, and I could stop performing them at any time without any penalty.

I wouldn’t receive a formal penalty if I stopped doing these things, but I do consider them to be part of my job. Like you, I feel a sense of citizenship, but I also see these things as essential to my current role as a teacher and scholar and to my training as a future professor. So I’m doing what I want to do, but that doesn’t mean I shouldn’t be paid for it.

Generally, how do you approach graduate student employment?
P: I consider my status as an employee at Iowa and my status as a student at Iowa as totally different, nearly unrelated roles. They’re certainly correlated insofar as I wouldn’t be one if I weren’t the other, but I separate the two worlds as much as possible. This separation is probably enhanced in my case, as I don’t spend a lot of time as a student in the department where I spend all my time as an employee.

As corny as it sounds, I really love my job and take training future media producers and consumers seriously. Since my income from teaching sustains my enrollment and costs of living, being able to excel at and retain my job is paramount.

M: I respect that you see your work as a student and your work as a teacher as completely separate. Maybe the difference in our perspectives comes from the kinds of Ph.D. programs we’re enrolled in and the professional futures we envision for ourselves. Myself, I can’t imagine doing the teaching work I’m doing now without the promise of future employment as a professor. It’s very satisfying work, but it’s too poorly paid to be a job on its own. Instead, I see my current college teaching as part of my training as a future professor, alongside the mentorship I receive from my dissertation committee. I also recognize that the university’s revenue model relies on graduate instructors like me to educate its undergraduate and even MA students. So when I teach, I’m doing more than getting myself some professional training; I’m performing a service for the university. I’m contributing to its bottom line.

Here’s the trick: it’s not just my teaching that contributes materially to the university’s mission. It’s also the outside fellowships I apply for, the paid and unpaid work I do presenting my research in public, hosting visiting scholars, etc. These are all activities that feed the economy of revenue and prestige that drives the university. I earn my living from a combination of research fellowships and teaching wages, and I see both activities as branches of the same scholarly project.

I know people who work exclusively as scholars or as teachers, and I can imagine doing one of these things to the exclusion of the other, but I would be sad to have to give one of them up. And what’s more, the value-system of the research university where I’m in training strongly promotes the idea that these two are best pursued in tandem. So in that sense, you could say I’m a product of my environment, with the same ideological predispositions as most of my peers.

P: That sounds ideal. Since you can’t imagine doing one without the other, I have to ask: would you do one for free? In other words, if you didn’t receive a paycheck for teaching your classes, would you still do it? I enjoy teaching and have had a great employment experience, but it is time and energy that my employer has contracted from me and not something I would volunteer for. My current college teaching, like
yours, is a great professional development opportunity, but that’s a side effect; I’m in it for the compensation. It’s a job that leaves me with enough time, energy, and money to accomplish the goals I want to accomplish. I haven’t been promised future employment as a professor and, since that’s not in my contract, I don’t know why I would expect to receive it.

M: I have taught for free before, as a volunteer tutor for kids living in shelters, for example. But I would not teach for free a class that someone is paying for. My willingness to do this labor isn’t a measure of how much I enjoy it, but a function of the conditions under which I’m performing it. If someone is drawing revenue from my labor, I want to be compensated for it.

‘Teaching Green’ buildings important for future of green technology, study finds

Half of fossil fuel emissions in the U.S. are created by the electricity used to power non-environmentally friendly buildings.

Students who attend school in green buildings are more educated on energy efficiency and environmentally friendly building practices, according to a recent study by an MU researcher.

The study also found that educating children on these processes could have a major effect on the value they find in owning and operating green buildings in the future.

Laura Cole, assistant professor of architectural studies, studied five middle schools across the country. The schools were located in buildings ranging from older, energy inefficient designs to new buildings architecturally designed as “teaching green” buildings.

MU is moving toward building green as well. The South Providence Medical Park, which opened Jan. 20, 2015, contains many energy-saving and cost-efficient features, according to an MU Health Care news release.

The study suggests that if students are exposed to innovative green technology coupled with the normalcy of a school environment every day, the students will internalize the importance of having green buildings, Cole said in a news release. The buildings operate as a museum-type structure so the students can learn the green technology.
Cole said in the release that even when not in a “teaching green” building, discussing and teaching students about green technology can benefit them.

“Anything educators can do to utilize existing space can help their students’ green building literacy. We all use buildings every day,” Cole said in the release. “Our children will soon be the people buying and constructing homes, offices and other buildings. Learning and translating that knowledge into future green building design will play a huge part in solving our environmental problems.”

UM Board of Curators to Meet Today Amidst Funding Controversy

The University of Missouri Board of Curators is meeting today in a closed session in Kansas City.

This comes as the UM system continues to face scrutiny from state legislators. One Missouri lawmaker proposes cutting $8 million from the system roiled by recent race-related protests at its Columbia campus.

The possible cuts were rolled out yesterday by Republican House Budget Chairman Tom Flanigan of Carthage.

The cuts include reducing funding to the Columbia campus by $400,000, among other things by eliminating the salary of suspended University of Missouri assistant professor Melissa Click. The budget plan also would cut more than $7 million from the system's administration.

Tenure-seeking Click had a confrontation with a student photographer and videographer during the Nov. 9 protests at the Columbia campus over the university leadership's perceived indifference to racial issues. State lawmakers broadly have called for Click to be fired.

Gov. Jay Nixon called the budget proposal "devastating to public education."
Cutting Melissa Click's salary not 'enforceable hammer'

By Alex Stuckey

JEFFERSON CITY • Mike Price wanted to be clear with lawmakers Wednesday: cutting assistant communications professor Melissa Click's salary from Mizzou's budget "would not be a enforceable hammer."

And it wouldn't mean the embattled university would have to fire Click on July 1, said Price, director of House Appropriations.

House Budget Leader Tom Flanigan, R-Carthage, released this week a plan for the 2017 budget year that begins July 1 that would slash the University of Missouri System's budget by about $8 million. That cut still must be approved by the House Budget Committee.

About $7.7 million of that cut would come from the UM System administration, which includes the board of curators and the president's office. The other about $400,000 comes eliminating the salaries of Click; Mizzou's Communication Department Chairman Mitchell McKinney; and College of Arts and Science Dean Michael O'Brien.

But once a university receives state funds, they decide how those funds are spent, with a few exceptions.

The salary cuts "are suggestions that represent the concerns of the body," Flanigan said.

Liz Coleman, spokeswoman for the Department of Higher Education, told the Post-Dispatch on Tuesday the governing board of each state university -- not the Legislature -- is responsible for salaries, as well as hiring and firing staff and faculty.

Lawmakers have been threatening to punish the UM system after racial turmoil on the Columbia campus led to a leadership shake-up last fall.
Members of the House and Senate have threatened special audits and have called for the removal of Click, who was caught on video in November trying to block journalists from recording student demonstrations.

The university system’s Board of Curators also has seen its two black members resign, leading to a dust-up between Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon and Republican legislative leaders over finding replacements.

The House Budget Committee still must approve these and other changes before the measures are sent to the House floor. Lawmakers have until May 6 to complete the budget.

The bill is House Bill 2003.

Kinder: Wolfe should have 'called players' bluff' rather than resign from University of Missouri

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — The major candidates for governor said Tuesday that they have been hearing a lot about the University of Missouri and are ready to offer a few solutions, including a call from Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder for the Board of Curators to slow the search for a permanent UM System president.

The four Republicans vying for their party’s nomination — former U.S. Attorney Catherine Hanaway, Navy veteran Eric Greitens, businessman John Brunner and Kinder — all filed for office before noon. Kinder said while he waited in line that it was a mistake for former President Tim Wolfe to resign in the face of protests on campus over racism and a boycott of athletic activities by the Tigers football team in support of the demonstrators.

Kinder cited reports in the Tribune that new donations and pledges were down $6 million in December compared with December 2014 and that a likely decline in enrollment might cost MU $20 million in tuition revenue.
“It would have been far better to call the players’ bluff and forfeit the BYU game and pay the $1 million penalty than to incur the loss that has since occurred to the reputation of the university and the state that is ongoing,” Kinder said.

The curators began meeting at 8:30 a.m. Wednesday at the Kansas City Airport Marriott to select noncurator members of a presidential search committee and to hire a consulting firm to assist in the search. The board is short-handed, with only six of nine seats filled, and Senate President Pro Tem Ron Richard, R-Joplin, has said he will not consider any nominations by Gov. Jay Nixon for confirmation.

Nixon, a Democrat, will leave office Jan. 11 and has the power, after the legislature adjourns in May, to appoint curators who could act until their appointments either are confirmed or withdrawn by his successor.

The terms of two more curators expire Jan. 1, so the incoming governor will be able to name a majority of the board.

The timeline for selecting a permanent replacement for Wolfe projects a November decision. The next governor will be chosen Nov. 8.

That timeline should be delayed, Kinder said. “It is this contingent of curators who has led so poorly.”

The university’s issues are a common question from voters, Hanaway said. “We can’t go anywhere without being asked about it.”

The university must focus on its mission, Hanaway said, meaning faculty members need to teach and athletes need to play. The public needs assurance that the curators will provide the leadership necessary to obtain that focus, she said.

“If they can’t, we need to find curators who can,” she said.

Attorney General Chris Koster so far is opposed only by perennial candidate Leonard Steinman for the Democratic nomination. After filing Tuesday, Koster said he also has heard a lot about the events transpiring at the university.

“There is a lot of concern about the university and the stability of the university and making sure there is a productive environment for students to feel safe in,” Koster said.

Koster was careful while speaking not to state any disagreements either with Nixon or lawmakers, and the university was not an exception. Koster said it was up to Richard to work out filling the curator vacancies with Nixon, if possible.

“Those are the decision-makers on the nomination process,” Koster said. “We’ll leave it to them at this point.”
Greitens blamed “the situation at the University of Missouri” on a lack of leadership from Nixon and Koster. Missouri “was embarrassed on their watch, and we’re seeing the consequences of their failure. Time and again, problems in Missouri turn into crises because of absent leadership.”

The curators should fire Assistant Professor Melissa Click, Greitens said.

The most common comment, Brunner said, is disappointment with the university and its leadership. He said the outcry against the continued employment of Click, a major political point for Republican lawmakers, is a way of calling for firm leadership.

“If confidence can be restored, then the university can be restored,” Brunner said.

**Former MU player and coach appointed to diversity post**

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A former University of Missouri football player and strength coach has been named to one of the jobs created amid race-related protests.

Pat Ivey has been named the assistant vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity. Columbia campus spokesman Christian Basi said in an email that Ivey is expected to help "improve attendance, retention and graduation rates for students from all backgrounds." He will make $150,000 a year.

Ivey was a defensive lineman from 1993 to 1995 at Missouri. He also earned undergraduate, master's and doctorate degrees from the university.

He started working for the athletic department in 2004 and became associate athletic director for athletic performance in 2011. But new Coach Barry Odom did not retain Ivey in December.
Former MU football strength coach in new role

COLUMBIA, Mo. - The former strength coach for MU football has already started in a new role.

Pat Ivey has been named the University's Assistant Vice Chancellor for Diversity, with a salary of $150,000.

He was not kept with the team in December when Mizzou named a new head football coach.

Ivey will now focus on recruiting and keeping students from diverse backgrounds.

Construction on new softball stadium to begin Monday

By Blake Toppmeyer

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 at 2:00 pm

Construction on Missouri’s new softball stadium will begin Monday, with the expectation that the Tigers will be playing in their new home during the 2017 season, said Tim Hickman, MU’s executive associate athletic director who oversees the softball program.

The stadium will be located east of the Hearnes Center, in what is now a parking lot.
Plans approved in February 2015 by the University of Missouri Board of Curators had called for construction to commence Nov. 22, 2015, the day after Missouri’s final home football game last fall, and for the stadium to be completed by December 2016 and be ready for the 2017 season.

However, the start of construction was delayed while MU and Tarlton, the project’s construction manager at-risk, worked to rein in the cost and garner more bids from subcontractors. Hickman told the Tribune last month that construction likely would need to begin by the end of February for the stadium to be ready for the 2017 season.

“We’re squeaking in under the wire,” Hickman said Tuesday. “They’re still telling us we’re going to be ready for the ’17 season. We don’t have that schedule set yet, so whether or not that’s Game 1 or Game 3, I don’t know yet, because, well, I don’t know the schedule, but that is still the plan, is to get in for ’17.”

It took an increase in the project’s price tag to allow construction to commence.

Hickman said Tuesday that, while figures haven’t been finalized, the project now is likely to cost in neighborhood of $17 million.

That’s an uptick from the $16 million funding plan the Board of Curators unanimously approved last February. Under that plan, $13.5 million of the cost would come from private gifts, while the other $2.5 million was set to come from debt financing as part of the $72 million approved by the board in 2012 for athletics facilities projects. Now, Hickman said, it appears as if closer to $4 million from that pool of $72 million will be allocated to the softball stadium project.

“The construction market has changed a little bit from earlier,” Hickman said of the cost increase, “and, frankly, they probably missed some of our estimates a little bit earlier, too, so it’s probably a little bit of a combination there. But part of it, the market is pretty busy right now.”

After the new cost is finalized in a contract with Tarlton, that becomes the locked-in price. If any cost overages were to occur after the cost is finalized, Tarlton would be responsible for them as the construction manager at-risk.

Designs of the new softball stadium released by Lempka Edson Architects in June indicated the stadium will be a 1,500- to 1,700-seat venue, with additional seating for 500 to 1,000 fans on a berm beyond the outfield wall. The stadium will be oriented north toward Stadium Boulevard.

University Field has been Missouri’s home since 1980. It has a grandstand seating capacity of 600, with additional seating in the form of portable bleachers in the outfield.

Tarlton, which is based out of St. Louis, has been involved with the project since the design process and was the construction manager for the project’s first phase: the construction of parking lots southeast of the Hearnes Center. Those parking lots were created to replace the parking spaces that will be lost by the stadium’s construction.
Missouri will host the Southeastern Conference Tournament in 2018, so there was a year of leeway in that regard if construction was delayed too long for the stadium to be ready by the 2017 season. But 2017 remained the goal, a goal that’s a step closer to becoming reality.

“We’re absolutely excited to get back on track and get it for the ’17 season,” Hickman said. “Two things: We want to fully vet the facility out before we do host” the SEC Tournament “in ’18. And just the success of our program, we need that space, and we need that improvement. I’m really excited that we’re going to be able to get it for the ’17 season.”

**As iconic bur oak declines, clones promise to keep lineage alive**

TOM HELLAUER, 1 hr ago

COLUMBIA — John Sam Williamson compares the iconic bur oak that stands sentry in the Missouri River bottoms to a 100-year-old human.

"It has better health and genes than most," Williamson said. "But to avoid injury or disease for this long as well is remarkable."

The state champion oak, also known as the Big Tree, has endured floods, droughts and lightning strikes as history unfolded beneath its branches.

The 350-year-old Bur Oak tree sits on Farmer John Sam Williamson's land and is a frequently visited by Columbia residents and visitors to the region.

As each year passes, the specimen that rises 90 feet with a 24-foot circumference, shows continuing signs of decline. Estimates of the trees age range from 200 to 350 years. How long it will live is anyone's guess, but Williamson rests easy knowing the tree's lineage will survive.

A 35-foot bur oak in Williamson's front yard, grown from a cutting taken 16 years ago, stands as one of at least five clones of the bur oak that offer assurance its parent's genes survive.
"The clone will be a family heirloom, especially when the original goes," Williamson said.

Williamson calls Chris Starbuck, a retired MU professor of plant sciences who lives down the road, his "tree expert." When Starbuck makes recommendations for the Big Tree, Williamson listens.

That's what happened in 2008 and 2013 when Starbuck helped arrange to have dead branches pruned, the soil aerated and mulch applied. The tree keepers also took cuttings of twigs and stems, or scion wood, that were grafted to roots to create baby bur oaks with the same genes as the Big Tree — at least above the graft.

Of the grafts collected, some were distributed to tree enthusiasts and those involved with the project.

MU forester Mark Coggeshall, who made the grafts, said those taken to MU greenhouses were lost from not being planted soon enough. "We did not readily identify a place to plant the few grafts we retained," he said.

Although MU doesn't have any live grafts, Coggeshall said, the clones growing elsewhere provide an opportunity to re-graft the bur oak in the future.

Fortunately, some grafts managed to take root along with the one in Williamson's yard. Starbuck's tree, about 8 years old, stands 15 feet tall and counting.

"It grows fast," Starbuck said. "Just like its parent tree."

Kyle Spradley, a nature photographer from St. Louis who worked on the tree in 2008 and 2013 with his father, a professional arborist, has two of the clones at his family farm.

"It's a superior tree worth preserving," Spradley said. "There's also a cool factor to have a clone off of this famous tree."

Spradley discouraged others from attempting to take their own scion wood from the champion bur oak to make clones and suggested looking for acorns instead.
"It's a very particular process, and without the trained knowledge, you could be harming the tree," he said.

Starbuck said it's difficult to predict how long the aging bur oak will live, but he doesn't give it longer than another 50 years. Another stressful event such as drought or a lightning strike, he said, and the tree could die in a few years.

Either way, Starbuck believes the champion bur oak is entering a vulnerable stage where it will not be able to as easily defend itself against insects and disease.

"Branch dieback seems to have accelerated about 10 years ago," he said. "Since the flood of 1993, which killed its sister tree, the tree has been showing signs of stress." In that flood, the tree was in 8 feet of water for nearly six weeks.

Its decline is also aggravated by its own popularity. Starbuck noticed the majority of dead branches are on same side as a blacktop road that covers the roots. In addition to car and truck traffic, visitors often park within feet of the tree.

The tree continues to attract vandals. Graffiti spray-painted on the tree in January, the most recent in a long line of such incidents, prompted an investigation by the Boone County Sheriff's Department.

Copper wire and grounding rods that Spradley and his father installed in 2013 to protect the tree from lightning disappeared and were presumably stolen just weeks later to resale as scrap.

In spite of the occasional disrespect, Williamson enjoys watching folks stopping at the tree on his land for a quick visit or family picnic. He considers the living landmark a treasure that should be left open to the public.

"We're glad to share it despite the few who do bad things," Williamson said. "To fence it off would be the wrong thing to do. You couldn't see it, touch it or sit under it, which would diminish the experience for the vast majority of people who do things right."
On her busier weeks, when she’s out in the field, Carly Ebben is sure she works more than 40 hours.

But it varies. When she’s at the University of California at Berkeley, she works less. When she’s out conducting research, she works more. She isn’t sure how much more. Like most postdoctoral researchers, Ebben is a salaried employee, and she’s never had to track her hours. She isn’t paid for overtime.

Had she been making less money, things would be different. Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, employees making under $23,660 are guaranteed overtime pay, while certain white-collar employees making more are considered exempt.

Most postdocs make considerably more than $23,660, disqualifying them from mandatory overtime protections. So do most librarians, financial aid administrators, admissions officers, coaches and IT workers.

But over the summer, President Obama announced a proposal that would raise the salary threshold to $50,440. If the change goes through, white-collar workers making less than $50,440 will be guaranteed overtime pay if they put in more than 40 hours a week.

In higher education, the change would reclassify thousands of workers across the country. Colleges would be required to pay these professionals for any time worked over 40 hours a week -- or else raise their salaries significantly to get over $50,440.

For struggling workers making less than $50,440, the change could mean more money in an uncertain job market. The Fair Labor Standards Act’s exemption was originally meant only for highly compensated employees, and in 1975, 62 percent of full-time salaried workers fell below the government’s threshold. Now, that number is 8 percent.

But colleges are worried. To comply with the new law, they will be forced to pay millions of dollars in overtime pay and increased wages. And once the new rule is announced -- if it’s announced -- they could have as few as 60 days to comply.
“There is general agreement that the salary threshold is long overdue for a change, but the transition -- such a huge transition -- to $50,440 is a major concern,” said Andy Brantley, president of the College & University Professional Association for Human Resources. “Every area of campus would be impacted.”

When the Department of Labor opened public comments, CUPA-HR submitted a letter signed by 18 other higher education groups. Sixty days is simply too short, the letter argued, and the $50,440 threshold is simply too high. Instead, the group proposed three lower options: $29,172, $30,004 or $40,352.

There’s no doubt that the change would be expensive for colleges. At Florida’s state university system, over 6,500 employees would be affected, according to El pagnier K. Hudson, an assistant vice president of human resources at Florida International University. Increasing those employees' salaries to meet the new threshold would cost more than $62 million.

But colleges have options: they can increase salaries, or they can pay overtime wages. Most will likely do a bit of both. At Indiana University, depending on how the university system decides to comply, the new law could cost it anywhere between $5 and $15 million.

And increasing some employees’ salaries could have a kind of ripple effect: What if, when an employee’s salary is raised to meet the new threshold, she is making as much as her supervisor? To preserve salary equity, the supervisor’s salary may also need to be raised.

“There are no dollars that are coming with the regulation,” Hudson said. “They’re just saying, ‘Make it happen.’”

Yet another concern has been raised by the National Postdoctoral Association, which favors higher salaries for postdocs, but fears how colleges and universities may react to the rule. The association’s statement to the government says some institutions may cut the number of postdocs they employ to raise the salaries or pay overtime to others. Another fear, is that institutions may try to reclassify postdocs as non-employees.

'Perpetual Scarcity'
But for many college and university employees, working long hours and taking home smaller paychecks, institutional finance doesn’t seem quite so pressing.
Erin Clark spends 60 hours a week in the lab and makes $44,556 a year. She’s wanted to be a scientist since high school, and she’s spent 13 years of her adult life in college
and graduate school, but she didn’t know she would have to make so many sacrifices. She expects to work as a postdoc for three to five more years. Her story is personal, and it isn’t backed up by legions of education organizations. But last year, in late August, she typed it up and submitted it to the Department of Labor, where it lives along with the comments from human resources groups and state university systems.

“I went to college, I got a Ph.D. and now I make less than $15 an hour and work in an environment that is constantly pressuring me to work more,” she wrote. “How could someone in my situation raise a family?”

“Not being able to afford modern conveniences that would help alleviate the stress of such a workload means living in a state of perpetual scarcity,” wrote James Irving, a postdoc at the University of Maryland.

“Even teaching 10 classes I made under $20,000 and qualified for government assistance,” wrote Jeffrey Nall, a former adjunct in Florida.

The regulation would have an immense reach in higher education, with one caveat: even under the new law, adjuncts -- along with most faculty members -- won’t qualify for overtime protections. They fall into a special exemption for teachers, and they can be denied overtime even if they fall below the salary threshold.

Yet faculty members frequently work overtime without receiving compensation. They are pressured to volunteer for certain duties, the Service Employees International Union wrote in its comment letter, and they’re afraid that they won’t be rehired if they refuse.

Of adjuncts working in part-time positions, 40 percent work 40 or more hours a week, according to New Faculty Majority, which advocates for adjunct and contingent faculty. The group also submitted comments, asking that contingent faculty be covered. “When the act was originally devised and the exemption was applied to contingent faculty, it was a vastly different situation than it is today,” said New Faculty Majority President Maria Maisto. “The framers of the act presumed that being a college professor is a stable profession.”

**Mass Reclassification**

If the regulation goes through, it will reclassify large numbers of employees all at once: 1,400 at Indiana University, 1,034 at Kansas State University, 2,700 at the University of Iowa.

But many of those employees work odd hours, colleges argue, with schedules that fluctuate from week to week. Admissions officers may travel more during busier times
of the year. Coaches work longer hours depending on the season. Postdocs conduct research that won’t conform to a nine-to-five schedule.

The idea here is that higher education is somehow different. That the new rule works well for retail employees and restaurant workers, but not for postdocs and librarians. “The reality is that organizations don’t necessarily have that extra funding, so the result will be paying the employee the same amount they make now and restricting their hours,” said John Whelan, Indiana University’s associate vice president for human resources.

They’ll be expected to finish their work in 40 hours each week, even though they’re used to having more time, while employees who meet the threshold will have more flexibility. (“They can check emails at random hours,” Whelan said. “They can do work on weekends if they need to.”)

And forced into a 40-hour week, some employees may ignore the restrictions. Maybe they feel that they need more time; maybe they need to be more productive to compete for a promotion; maybe they just love their work. But under the law, employees cannot opt out of overtime.

“If it’s determined that that individual worked more than 40 hours in a workweek and was not paid overtime,” Whelan said, “then there’s a compliance issue.”

In some colleges, there are real and unspoken differences between hourly and salaried employees, and issues of morale and fairness could also come into play. Depending on an employee’s classification, she might receive different parking privileges or retirement plans. And when an employee suddenly becomes nonexempt -- and starts getting paid on an hourly basis -- she may view it as a drop in status.

“There are perceptions in some organizations that an exempt position is a more valuable position,” Whelan said. “There’s a perception of importance.”

But Ebben, the postdoc from the University of California, wouldn’t argue with a higher paycheck. She understands the concerns about switching to an hourly schedule -- it’s impractical, she said, to track a postdoc’s erratic hours -- but she hopes that the rule will encourage colleges to raise salaries.

“This regulation is intended to help skilled workers, and that’s basically the definition of a postdoc,” she said. “All we’re really asking is to be fairly compensated for the contributions that we make.”
She is committed to a career in academia, and she knew it wasn’t going to be easy. But the Bay Area is expensive, and her husband is a postdoc, too. “It’s been a struggle,” she said, “to get by on two postdoc salaries.”

**Legislators should help, not punish, University of Missouri**

*Dr. Julia Crim • Professor of radiology, University of Missouri*

I am sorry to hear the negativity emanating from some members of the Legislature regarding the University of Missouri. Mizzou contributes immensely to the prosperity and well-being of Missourians, and we should all be proud of our flagship university.

It is unfortunate that Tim Wolfe was chosen to be the previous president of the university. Wolfe had no background in either education or in administration of a large organization. During his tenure, he showed no understanding of issues facing the university.

If he had met with minority students when they first raised their concerns to him, he probably could have avoided the whole mess that tied up the campus last fall. The university made another unfortunate error when R. Bowen Loftin was chosen to be chancellor. His career has been characterized by arrogant self-aggrandizement, controversy and conflict. His negative actions as chancellor of the University of Missouri harmed our university and especially our medical school.

The legislators want to punish the university in order to score cheap political points. If successful, they will shoot the state in the foot by harming one of the state’s best assets. Instead, legislators should help the University of Missouri build on its many strengths.

I hope we will strengthen the Board of Curators by including on the board educators and people who represent the diversity of our state. I hope our next president, like our interim president, will be a person with expertise in the fields of education and administration.