Michael Middleton: Mizzou touches people, boosts economy all over

The four Missouri campuses provide the talented workforce that is critical to the state’s employers.

The Kansas City campus makes important strides in health sciences, bioscience research and other fields.

BY MIKE MIDDLETON
Special to The Star

When I was appointed interim president of the University of Missouri system last November, after three decades of serving in academic and leadership roles on our Columbia campus, I was both honored and humbled by the awesome responsibility. Becoming president of the entire UM system has allowed me to reflect on something I always knew to be true: that all 6 million Missourians, in communities across our state, have a connection to the system.

Just consider, for example, how the university system affects Kansas City and Jackson County every day.

Currently, we educate nearly 78,000 students on our four campuses (Columbia, Kansas City, Rolla and St. Louis), providing the talented workforce that is critical to our state’s employers. Currently, 8,347 of those students are residents of Jackson County, many of whom will return, educated and ready, to join the workforce and help boost the Kansas City-area economy upon graduation.

The people of Kansas City benefit from the many research advances discovered on our campuses, from life-saving medical cures to the powering of some of our state’s most important industries, such as bioscience, engineering and computer
technology. In 2015 alone, system research brought in more than $295 million in grants to Missouri, further helping to spur our statewide economy.

The universities provide health services to hundreds of thousands of Missourians. Clinical faculty, staff and students at UMKC’s Health Sciences Campus on Hospital Hill provide millions of dollars in dental, nursing, pharmaceutical and medical care each year through university partners. For example, more than 14,000 patients were served by a student group affiliated with the UMKC School of Pharmacy, and another 7,187 patients were seen by the UMKC School of Dentistry in 2015.

UMKC bioscience research teams put a teaching and research focus on the important issue of health disparities. Urban residents suffer heart disease, breast cancer, asthma and diabetes at rates much higher than those of the general population, and our work is improving the standard of care and quality of life for these residents.

UMKC’s urban environment also creates a real-world learning laboratory for students in the department of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design. Student projects focus on situations in real Kansas City neighborhoods, and the assignments call for students to develop solutions that enhance the community.

As computer technology and engineering have grown in size and importance to Kansas City’s economic base, UMKC’s computing and engineering students intern and later join the workforce of numerous Kansas City-based companies. And on the entrepreneurship front, the UMKC Innovation Center launched a program call Digital Sandbox KC, devoted to high-tech start-ups; since 2013, Digital Sandbox KC has helped more than 30 start-up tech companies connect with $18 million in investment capital, producing more than 180 new jobs paying more than $5 million in salaries.

There are far more examples, but the point remains. For decades, the UM system has provided indispensable service in helping our state, and the Kansas City area, move forward. We have challenges now, as we have in the past and will certainly face in the future. But our mission of education, research, economic development and service has been making Missourians proud for generations. Our university is as strong as ever and will always be a beacon of hope for our state’s young people.
The view from the MU faculty trenches

By Jay Dow

It’s been a tough year at the University of Missouri. The racial tension that sparked the fall events is unlikely to be resolved any time soon, and faculty and administrators who engaged these issues have sometimes been condescending, incompetent and irresponsible. In this the perspective of faculty is largely lost.

I speak for myself, but I’ve served on the faculty for nearly 25 years and my understanding of these events is shared by many colleagues. The University of Missouri belongs to the citizens of Missouri. In addition, your tax dollars fund much of MU’s operation and students’ parents pay much of the balance. We get it. Your money is well-spent. The 21st century is driven by a knowledge-based economy, and Missouri’s success in it requires a world-class university.

Professor Melissa Click’s behavior was rightfully described as “appalling.” The reason for this has nothing to do with the First Amendment, which protects us against government abridgment of certain rights. Professor Click’s actions were inexcusable because she behaved in a manner inconsistent with our role as faculty.

The relationship between faculty and students requires professional distance. This maintains the mutual respect necessary to fulfill our educational mission. We are not our students’ friends; we are their teachers and mentors. We provide students with knowledge and perspective so they can engage the world in their own way and on their own terms. There’s a line between faculty and students that shouldn’t be crossed, and Professor Click crossed it.

There were also administrative failures. Those of former Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin and system President Timothy M. Wolfe were most visible, but there were others. MU
has staff to maintain lines of communication among students, administrators and faculty, and to mediate campus conflicts. These people were either ineffective or exacerbated the situation.

Janna Basler, assistant director of Greek life, exemplified this as she escalated campus tension and justified her behavior by saying that “she believed she had official authority to order media” from Carnahan Quadrangle. Get a grip. Basler enjoys very limited authority that does not include deciding where people may stand in a public space. Her remarks reveal considerable administrative hubris. Administrators should also leave the tweeting to B-list celebrities; it’s unbecoming.

Perhaps most damaging is that Melissa Click perpetuated an unfortunate stereotype of faculty. It’s said that there are stereotypes because there are types, and there are types in the academy. Many of us have spent our professional lives in the university and sometimes don’t appreciate how we can appear and sound to the broader community. However, like all stereotypes, this image is overdrawn.

We’re adults, and our lives and values are similar to other Missourians’. We belong to houses of worship, our kids play soccer and, believe it or not, some vote for Republicans. It’s true that more than 100 faculty members signed a letter supportive of Professor Click, but this suggests she enjoys only modest support. MU has more than 1,000 faculty members; I reside in the College of Arts and Science, and the large majority of these faculty — including most of Professor Click’s Communications Department colleagues — didn’t sign this document.

That said, the Board of Curators’ decision to fire Professor Click was a mistake. There are good reasons why the tenure process is lengthy and should be respected. The bar for tenure at MU is high. To be tenured, a professor should make scholarly contributions appropriate for a leading research university. This assessment requires review by outside experts, evaluating voluminous amounts of material and assessing years of teaching. The process includes several levels of review and is painfully slow, but it ensures we have the best possible faculty.
I doubt Professor Click would have been tenured under this process. Her scholarship aside, Professor Click’s stature in the classroom was hopelessly compromised by her actions. That alone placed tenure in doubt. Regardless, tenure should have been decided by our regular process because that is in the long-run best interest of the state.

Finally, most faculty members have a firm commitment to freedom of speech because this is central to our purpose. A university that restricts potentially offensive speech isn’t worth attending. It is incumbent on faculty such as myself to explain why protecting speech, including speech some find offensive, improves the human condition.

The University of Missouri will emerge from these trials stronger. MU is an institution: It was here long before I arrived and it will be here long after I’m gone. Such a great university is worth our patience and our investment.

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**IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT LESS CORRUPT THAN WE THINK?**

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

Posted by [Jeff Sossamon-U. Missouri](mailto:Jeff.Sossamon@missouri.edu) on March 8, 2016

The phrase “public corruption” invokes images of former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich or disgraced Virginia Governor Robert McDonnell. Often shaped by sensational media coverage of high level officials, public perception of corruption in the United States is that it is on the rise.
But a new study that examined thousands of corruption cases from 1986 to 2014 finds that convictions are not increasing as fast as the public may think and mostly involve low-ranking officials.

The Executive Office of US Attorneys defines official corruption as criminal prosecution of public employees "for misconduct in, or misuse of office." Examples include bribery, conspiracy, embezzlement, false statements, and theft.

“In the past, most research on public corruption relied on survey data that is of dubious quality,” says Jeffrey Milyo, professor of economics at the University of Missouri.

“In nearly all previous studies, the data used by scholars have been taken from reports made to Congress by the Public Integrity Section (PIN) of the Department of Justice. This data is compiled from retrospective surveys of federal prosecutors rather than directly from administrative records. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in reporting over time and across prosecutors in different parts of the country.”

For the study, published in the journal Public Integrity, researchers used a dataset compiled from administrative records to piece together a more accurate picture of public corruption. Electronic records of actual court case filings and up-to-date government records accessed through the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), Milyo and Cordis provided a better assessment of the state of public corruption in the US.

“We examined records of more than 16,000 corruption cases from 1986 onward,” Milyo says. “This provides an objective picture of public corruption, in contrast to public perceptions that are colored by sensational media coverage of a few outlier cases. We found that overall corruption convictions are, in fact, declining from year to year and that only about 2 percent of those cases involved elected or high-ranking officials.”

Adriana Cordis, assistant professor of accounting at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC is a coauthor of the study.
Spike Lee is on campus to work on a film about the Black Lives Matter movement at MU

University officials need a better working relationship with students to address African Americans’ concerns

BY LEWIS DIUGUID
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It’s important that the Concerned Student 1950 is continuing to press officials at the University of Missouri-Columbia to meet its demands to combat racism on campus.

But black movie maker Spike Lee’s presence Monday to work on a film on the Black Lives Matter movement at the university tended to give the protest and rally that day by students more of a show for the cameras than earnest talks with administrators to develop solutions. The real and recurring problems of racism at MU need a focused and sincere effort from students and university officials and not theater for TV lights.

Last semester African American students with the Legion of Black Collegians were practicing for homecoming when someone shouted racial slurs at them. Earlier in the school year, Missouri Students Association President Payton Head on Facebook told of drive-by racial slurs he endured from white males riding in the back of a pickup truck.

That’s nothing new on the campus in mid-Missouri known as Little Dixie. What also wasn’t new was the scant attention MU officials gave to black students’ concerns.
MU graduate student Jonathan Butler last semester started a hunger strike, refusing to eat until MU system President Tim Wolfe resigned. Black University of Missouri football players in an unprecedented move with the backing of their coach threatened to boycott future games over the university’s failure to do something about the racial concerns.

That resulted in Wolfe’s resignation in addition to the resignation of MU chancellor R. Bowen Loftin. The campus activism was directly linked to the Black Lives Matter movement that emerged from the Aug. 9, 2014, police shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., which is about a 1 1/2-hour drive from campus. The Black Lives Matter movement has drawn attention nationwide to the recurring problem of police killings of unarmed African American males.

The link of the movement to MU and the student activism is generated was bound to bring a filmmaker like Lee to the university. But for students’ efforts to actually result in substantive change, they need to ensure that the “show” that film crews create is not part of the talks with university officials.

MU administrators also should have been conducting regular and meaningful talks and listening sessions with students to fully understand the scope of the problem, show their interest in doing something about it and get new ideas for solutions. The locked doors that the students encountered at interim chancellor Hank Foley’s office send the wrong message.

Chuck Henson, interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity, spoke briefly in the hallway with protesters before going back into his office. But that was hardly enough.

Video statements like the one he issued later are nice ahead of football or basketball games, but they don’t send the right message to students insisting on improving the racial climate at MU.

Lee was in Columbia to see a documentary about Concerned Student 1950 at the True/False Film Fest, The Kansas City Star reports. The film Lee is working on is titled “2 Fists Up.”

It is to be released digitally next month as part of Lee’s ESPN Film series, “Spike Lee’s Lil’ Joints.” It is to be on the Black Lives Matter movement at MU and the football team’s support.
Lee has produced such films as “Malcolm X,” “Jungle Fever,” “Do the Right Thing,” “Chi-Raq,” “She’s Gotta Have It” and “School Daze.” He recently among blacks in Hollywood pointing out that for the second year in a row, no African Americans were among the nominees for Oscars this year.

Lee, in addition to filming the protest on Monday, he and his crew interviewed several protesters afterward.

It’s a free country and it’s free speech practiced on the campus of the world’s oldest and best School of Journalism. But to effectively tackle the problem of racism on campus and be a model for universities nationwide grappling with the same concerns, student talks with MU administrators need to be off-camera but open, honest, ongoing, accountable and inclusive.

Nothing less than that will result in meaningful solutions.

University of Missouri trimmed further under Mo. House budget

JEFFERSON CITY • Republican Rep. Mike Lair says that six years on the House Education Budget Committee taught him that the only way to get the University of Missouri System’s attention is with dollar bills.

And the Missouri House used that method Tuesday to send the system a message as they approved the $27.1 billion budget for 2017 that begins July 1. It needs one more vote in the House before moving to the Senate.

That budget would cut the UM System administration, which includes the president’s office and the board of curators, by $7.7 million. An additional $1 million was cut from the UM-Columbia campus and redirected to Lincoln University in Jefferson City to boost its ability to match available federal land grant funding.
“I think we have their attention,” Lair, of Chillicothe, said Tuesday.

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 called for the removal of Melissa Click, who was recently fired after she was caught on video in November trying to block journalists from recording student demonstrations.

“The handling of the entire incident screams of a lack of leadership,” said Rep. Rocky Miller, R-Lake Ozark, who contemplated an attempt to reduce Mizzou’s budget to $1. “We need real change and we need it done now.”

Some lawmakers, such as Rep. Gail McCann Beatty, D-Kansas City, expressed their concern over the university cuts.

“I don’t support cutting the university’s budget as a means of punishing them: I don’t think that’s fair,” McCann Beatty said. “It ultimately hurts all the students at the university because they’ll have no choice but to increase college tuition.”

The UM System also was excluded from receiving any increase based on performance funding. The state’s other public higher education institutions would receive a piece of an about $9.4 million increase if revenue growth in the coming year exceeds the House’s revenue growth estimate.

Republican House leaders based their overall state budget on an estimated 3.1 percent growth in revenue. This is pared back from Gov. Jay Nixon’s 4.1 percent growth projections.

To address the difference, House Budget Leader Tom Flanigan, R-Carthage, plans to implement a surplus revenue fund, where money will be funneled if the state revenues exceed the 3.1 percent growth rate. Dan Haug, Nixon’s budget director, estimates the state will reach Nixon’s projection with about three days left in the budget year.
Nixon recommended a $55.6 million increase for all institutions based on performance funding, which would have allowed for a tuition freeze.

Rep. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, who is running for Senate this year, tried and failed Tuesday to provide the UM System a $4.3 million increase based on performance funding in the surplus revenue fund, saying it would “ensure the financial issues happening here don’t hit students.”

Rep. Justin Alferman, R-Hermann, agreed with Rowden. He understands lawmakers’ frustrations with the UM System, but said “cutting performance funding is not going to achieve the end goal to resolve this frustration.”

Rowden’s attempt to provide this increase to UM System was met with a resounding “no” from House members in the chamber. Some lawmakers did not like the fact that Rowden would have taken money away from a transportation department program meant to offset some of its funding woes.

That program, known as cost sharing, would allow the department to split the cost of transportation system projects with local communities. The department suspended its cost-share program in 2014 as its construction budget continued to decline.

The budget approved Tuesday would provide $30 million to that program in the surplus revenue fund, meaning it only would be funded if revenue growth exceeds the House’s estimate.

Other details of the House’s 2017 budget proposal:

• $71 million increase for the Foundation Formula, which funds K-12 public schools, and leaves the formula $438 million underfunded. Nixon recommended an $85 million increase.
• $54.1 million for a 2 percent pay raise for state employees. Nixon recommended the same amount.

• $5 million increase for K-12 transportation. Nixon recommended the same amount.

• $4 million increase for the need-based scholarship, Access Missouri. Nixon recommended the same amount.

• $2.5 million increase for the A+ Scholarship. Nixon recommended the same amount.

• $500,000 increase for the Bright Flight scholarship. Nixon recommended the same amount.

• $500,000 for the Urban Education Institute at Harris-Stowe State University.

Missouri House cuts funding for MU, Planned Parenthood

Lawmakers stick with a plan to cut about $7.6 million from the University of Missouri system budget

The proposal prevents money from going to Planned Parenthood for vaccinations, examinations
JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The Missouri House is sticking with a plan to cut about $7.6 million from the University of Missouri system budget, and on Tuesday lawmakers voted to cut an additional $1 million from the Columbia campus.

Lawmakers also amended the $27.3 billion state budget proposal to prevent state money from going to Planned Parenthood for services such as vaccinations and medical examinations. Missouri already prohibits state money from funding abortions.

The House plan to send the budget bills, which cover the fiscal year that starts July 1, to the Senate by the end of the week.

Other changes added Tuesday included more money for K-12 education, transportation projects and Lincoln University, which would receive the $1 million cut from the University of Missouri.

Lawmakers also inserted wording that would prohibit the Missouri Department of Natural Resources from implementing the federal Clean Power Plan, President Barack Obama’s plan to slow climate change by cutting power-plant emissions.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers prevailed over the leaders of both parties on an 83-75 vote to transfer money from the University of Missouri to Lincoln University in Jefferson City. The House speaker, majority floor leader and the budget chairman along with the chamber’s top five Democrats voted against the cut.

The University of Missouri drew national attention in November after students protested what they saw as administrators’ indifference to systemic racism on campus. The turmoil culminated in the resignation of the system president and the chancellor of the Columbia campus, and in February an assistant professor involved in the protests was fired.

Lawmakers have criticized administrators for how they handled student concerns and for caving to protestors’ demands.

Republican leaders have said their relationship with the university is improving, but on Tuesday some lawmakers suggested a budget cut was the only way to keep administrators engaged with the Legislature.
Rep. Jay Barnes, a Jefferson City Republican, said the cut was meager compared to the university’s total budget.

Rep. Joshua Peters, a Democrat from St. Louis, said the cut is less than administrators spend on discretionary expenses such as stays at luxury hotels.

Columbia-area lawmakers said it was wrong to pit students against each other for funding.

Rep. Robert Ross, R-Yukon, sponsored a successful amendment that would block state funds from going to any entity that provides nonemergency abortions or counsels women to have abortions.

Lawmakers removed more than $379,000 from the Department of Social Services’ budget, which is roughly what the state paid Planned Parenthood in the past for services such as pregnancy tests and HPV vaccinations. The state’s portion, about $55,000, was shifted to the K-12 education foundation formula, and the rest was federal money.

Democrats said that amendment was an effort to shutter Planned Parenthood.

Rep. Jon Carpenter, D-Gladstone, noted that Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump supports the women’s health care services Planned Parenthood provides. He said there’s no reason the Legislature needs to go to the right of Trump.

Thousands of the more than 60,000 people who get health care from Planned Parenthood in Missouri use Medicaid to cover their expenses, said M’Evie Mead, director of statewide organizing for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Missouri.

Planned Parenthood is still assessing how the proposed cuts would impact the organization, she said, but it would likely have a “substantial” effect on low-income patients’ ability to access health care.
University of Missouri budget cut further as Rowden effort fails in House

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at 5:13 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri House of Representatives on Tuesday defeated efforts to mitigate budget cuts aimed at the University of Missouri, deciding instead to increase the cuts by shifting $1 million from the Columbia campus to Lincoln University.

State Rep. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, received a vehement “no” on the voice vote deciding his amendment to provide $4.3 million to the UM System for meeting performance measures. The money, from a pot of surplus revenue set aside for road needs and also used for boosts to other colleges and universities, would only be available if tax receipts exceed baseline projections.

“They hit those goals and they are entitled to this money,” Rowden said during the debate.

State Rep. Jeremy LaFaver, D-Kansas City, pointed out that his funding source was not secure.

“It is not funny money, but it is not real, ongoing programmatic cash flow money,” LaFaver said.

After the defeat of his amendment, Rowden decided there was no chance his other proposals to reduce the impact of cuts could succeed. He had prepared amendments to restore cuts to UM System administration with money allocated to the Medicaid program.

Preventing cuts to the budget is now up to state Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia and chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Rowden said.

“I think that those were admittedly tougher lifts from the beginning,” Rowden said. “I think the message there is as much where the money is going as it was where it is coming from. But I am the one guy who offered amendments to try to do something about it.”

When the budget debate began in the morning, the UM System was facing a $7.6 million cut to its state allocation for administration. The university received an appropriation of $434.6 million for the current fiscal year. The appropriation became a target for lawmakers angry over the administration handling of campus protests, the way the Board of Curators dealt with Assistant Professor Melissa Click and issues such as ties to Planned Parenthood and faculty teaching waivers.

The cut grew by $1 million when state Rep. Jay Barnes, R-Jefferson City, won an amendment to cut the $189.7 million allocation to the Columbia campus in order to increase Lincoln University’s ability to match $1 million in federal land grant funding.
During the debate, Rowden argued that it would hurt students because the Columbia campus already faces cutbacks due to a projected decline in enrollment.

Barnes said that made his amendment stronger. “If you serve fewer students, you shouldn't ask for the same or more money,” Barnes said.

State Rep. Stephen Webber, D-Columbia and Rowden’s rival for the state Senate this year, argued with Barnes that he was forcing an unfair choice on lawmakers.

“A higher education policy that pits students against students for resources will not lead to the Missouri that we want,” Webber said.

The $8.6 million total reduction is less than the difference between what lawmakers appropriate and what the university generally receives as a result. State law requires a 3 percent restriction on general revenue funding and an affirmative action by the governor to release it. For example, in fiscal 2015, which ended June 30, the university’s total appropriation was $428.5 million and it received $416.4 million.

Gov. Jay Nixon could mitigate the cut, if it survives until the budget is final, by releasing all or part of the standard withholding. Webber said he is unsure if his colleagues knew that or if they would have cut deeper if they had.

“I think that is a possibility and I am concerned there is not a bottom to what they are going to do to hurt the university,” Webber said.

Rowden said he did not think the cuts would have gone further. “I know there is a lot of anger, but people are aware of the current situation that we’re in,” he said.

The higher education budget overall had several increases and new budget lines. Schools other than the university will share a $9.1 million pool for increases if revenue growth exceeds 3.1 percent. Lawmakers added $5 million to a $5.4 million pool of funds to increase per-pupil aid to community colleges and boosted funding for Linn State Technical College by $373,000.

The spending plan also adds $2 million to expand engineering programs operated collaboratively by Missouri State University and Missouri University of Science and Technology.

Lawmakers defeated an attempt to lift a restriction requiring colleges and universities to charge international rates for Missouri students who are in the country illegally.

The major portion of the debate, however, focused on the UM System and the Columbia campus.

“What I learned is that if it doesn’t deal with a dollar bill, you really don’t get their attention,” state Rep. Mike Lair, R-Chillicothe, said.

Webber did not prepare any amendments to mitigate the cuts. It would have been futile, he said, pointing to Rowden’s inability to win Republican votes for his proposals.
“It is hard to restore money when at every single point they are actively taking money and I am fighting them continually taking money,” Webber said. “I was disappointed that he failed twice with members of his own party.”

Proposal to cut funding to $1 leads legislative labors against University of Missouri

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at 11:04 am

JEFFERSON CITY — The amendments prepared for debate on the state budget included one to cut the allocation for the University of Missouri’s Columbia campus to $1.

Sponsoring state Rep. Rocky Miller, R-Lake Ozark, on Tuesday morning said he had several reasons for writing the amendment and that he would explain on the House floor. But he said one reason stands out:

“My district is very disappointed with the University of Missouri System, and they want change,” Miller said.

After debate began, Miller said he is an American Indian and was mistreated by administrators who ran minority programs when he was a student in the 1980s. He also said he had decided not to offer the amendment to slash MU’s state appropriation.

“Not because I am afraid it won’t be adopted,” Miller said. “I am afraid it might.”

The amendment to eliminate $189.7 million from the MU budget is just one of several instances of legislative efforts to reduce the university’s status, independence and funding. Animosity toward the university has developed as a result of campus protests, the dispute over Assistant Professor Melissa Click’s job status, administrative turmoil and a plethora of other issues.

In the House Higher Education Committee on Tuesday, House Assistant Majority Leader Kevin Austin, R-Springfield, presented a bill to repeal a key element of the legislation granting Missouri State University a name change in 2005. An all-night filibuster in the Senate delayed a hearing on a resolution from Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, setting up an outside review commission for the UM system.
The Higher Education Committee was also scheduled to vote on bills barring schools from requiring that students purchase meal plans, as MU does for students who live on campus, and providing refunds for students when the assigned professor teaches fewer than 75 percent of scheduled classes. The House went into session an hour early to debate the state budget, upsetting the committee schedule.

Budget committee Chairman Steve Cookson, R-Poplar Bluff, ended the hearing on Austin’s bill after an hour and said it would resume next week.

Austin’s bill would eliminate a provision that requires Missouri State University to seek collaboration with UM before offering standalone graduate and professional programs. If UM declines a request for a partnership, MSU could seek approval for its own program from the Coordinating Board for Higher Education.

The bill also opens up an opportunity for other state four-year universities to apply to the coordinating board for new graduate programs. Under questioning, Austin denied that his bill was intended to damage UM. The problem is centralized control that limits what universities can offer, Austin said.

State Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, R-Jackson, said no collaborative program proposed by Missouri State has been denied by UM.

“’I think these are things that need to be brought up so people here and in the audience understand there are great partnerships with the University of Missouri and it is saving the state great sums,” Lichtenegger said.

The presidents and chancellors of state colleges and universities collaborate on legislative and budget issues through the Council on Public Higher Education. A newly formed organization called the Missouri Foundation for Equity in Higher Education, created Feb. 15 by lobbyist Jay Hahn, brings seven four-year universities together in support of Austin’s bill, Hahn told the committee.

He said Missouri State, Missouri Southern State University, Southeast Missouri State University, the University of Central Missouri, Northwest Missouri State University, Missouri Western State University and Truman State University are working with the new foundation. “I am concerned about one university having a veto power over all other universities as it relates to degree programs,” Hahn said.

Steve Graham, UM senior associate vice president for academic affairs, said Hahn overstated the university’s role. The university does not have veto power over other schools’ degree programs. Instead, he said, it is a restriction that requires schools to talk to avoid duplication.

“It refers to doctoral or professional degree programs where they must first seek collaboration with us before moving ahead,” he said.

The committee did not vote on the bill, but Cookson seemed ready to support it.
“We’re not trying to create a fight for money,” Cookson said. “I think it is very important that we look at this. I don’t think any one area of the state has a monopoly on intelligence, knowledge or research.”

### MU Still on Track to Lose $8 Million in Funding


### Missouri educator fired over role in protests files appeal

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A former University of Missouri assistant communications professor is appealing her firing last month over her role last year in a race-related student protest, suggesting that her ouster was political.

Melissa Click, in a statement Tuesday, insisted her Feb. 25 dismissal by the university system's governing curators was unfair by failing to follow the normal, on-campus procedures for reacting
to faculty misconduct. More than 100 state lawmakers, mostly Republican, had called for her removal.

"In their decision to terminate my employment, the curators bowed to conservative voices that seek to tarnish my stellar 12-year record at MU," Click wrote. "Instead of disciplining me for conduct that does not 'meet expectations for a university faculty member,' the curators are punishing me for standing with students who have drawn attention to the issue of overt racism at the University of Missouri."

Click, whose firing followed her suspension in January, added that the governing board "is using me as a scapegoat to distract from larger campus issues, but their termination of my employment will not remedy the environment of injustice that persists at MU."

A spokesman for the curators, John Fougere, said Tuesday that board had no comment.

Click's statement came a day after the American Association of University Professors announced that three members would visit the Columbia campus later this month to investigate the process leading to Click's firing and whether it violated her right to due process and "whether conditions for academic freedom and tenure at the institution are sound."

Click's supporters have questioned the curators' move, by a 4-2 vote, to decide Click's fate rather than allowing the school to use its normal, on-campus procedures for reacting to faculty misconduct.

"The AAUP's action underscores my belief that the curators have overstepped their authority," Click said Tuesday.

In voicing support of 45-year-old Click's firing, top university administrators cited her run-ins with police during October protests in Columbia and with two student journalists weeks later on the Columbia campus, including a videotaped confrontation where she called for "some muscle" to remove a videographer from the protest area.

During the October matter, Click was recorded telling police to get their hands off students during a protest, then hugging the students and cursing at an officer who grabbed her.

The protests, spurred by what activists said was administrators' indifference to racial issues on campus, prompted the Columbia chancellor and system president to resign after the protests escalated, with one student's hunger strike and an announcement by members of the football team that they would refuse to play.

Click has said she regretted her actions, claiming her actions were meant to safeguard protesters from retaliation. But in Tuesday's statement, she wrote that "I will not apologize for my support of black students who experience racism at the University of Missouri."
Missouri professor who called for 'some muscle' to stop student journalist covering a campus protest claims her sacking was 'political'

A former University of Missouri academic who was sacked after clashing with police and a journalist at a Black Lives Matter protest claimed her dismissal was 'political'.

Melissa Click, 45, who was an assistant communications professor called for 'some muscle' to remove student journalist Mark Schierbecker from the protest area on the campus in Columbia.

She was also accused of verbally abusing a police officer during another incident in October.

University administrators faced considerable political pressure to sack Click after more than 100, mostly Republican legislators called for her dismissal.

She was suspended from her post in January before the decision to terminate her employment was made late last month.

Now Click has said she will appeal the decision, claiming the process used to fire her was unfair.

In a statement released today, she said: 'In their decision to terminate my employment, the curators bowed to conservative voices that seek to tarnish my stellar 12-year record at MU. 'Instead of disciplining me for conduct that does not "meet expectations for a university faculty member", the curators are punishing me for standing with students who have drawn attention to the issue of overt racism at the University of Missouri.'

She accused the governing board 'is using me as a scapegoat to distract from larger campus issues, but their termination of my employment will not remedy the environment of injustice that persists at MU'.

A spokesman for the curators, John Fougere, said Tuesday that board had no comment.

Click's statement came a day after the American Association of University Professors announced that three members would visit the Columbia campus later this month to investigate the process
leading to Click's firing and whether it violated her right to due process and 'whether conditions for academic freedom and tenure at the institution are sound'.

Click's supporters have questioned the curators' move, by a 4-2 vote, to decide Click's fate rather than allowing the school to use its normal, on-campus procedures for reacting to faculty misconduct.

'The AAUP's action underscores my belief that the curators have overstepped their authority,' Click said Tuesday.

In voicing support of 45-year-old Click's firing, top university administrators cited her run-ins with police during October protests in Columbia and with two student journalists weeks later on the Columbia campus, including a videotaped confrontation where she called for 'some muscle' to remove a videographer from the protest area.

During the October matter, Click was recorded telling police to get their hands off students during a protest, then hugging the students and cursing at an officer who grabbed her.

The protests, spurred by what activists said was administrators' indifference to racial issues on campus, prompted the Columbia chancellor and system president to resign after the protests escalated, with one student's hunger strike and an announcement by members of the football team that they would refuse to play.

Click has said she regretted her actions, claiming her actions were meant to safeguard protesters from retaliation. But in Tuesday's statement, she wrote that 'I will not apologize for my support of black students who experience racism at the University of Missouri.'

Interim Chancellor Hank Foley said some of the footage featuring click showed a 'pattern of misconduct'.

He added: 'Her conduct and behavior are appalling, and I am not only disappointed, I am angry, that a member of our faculty acted this way.'
AUSTIN, Texas (Reuters) - The University of Missouri professor fired after being caught on video calling for "some muscle" to have a student journalist removed from a campus protest, appealed her dismissal on Tuesday, saying school governors overstepped their authority.

"In their decision to terminate my employment, the Curators bowed to conservative voices that seek to tarnish my stellar 12-year record at MU," Melissa Click, formerly an assistant professor in the school's communications department, said of the Board of Curators who are the university's governing body.

She added in the statement that the curators were punishing her "for standing with students who have drawn attention to the issue of overt racism at the University of Missouri."

University officials were not immediately available for comment.

Click was fired in February for the incident that took place in November.

In the video, she can be seen calling on protesters during an anti-racism demonstration to remove the reporter and a student photographer from a spot in the school quad that demonstrators had claimed as private space.

"Who wants to help me get this reporter out of here?" Click yells on camera. "I need some muscle over here." Click's hand can be seen blocking the video image at least twice.

The curators have said that while they respected Click's rights to her views, she was not entitled to interfere with the rights of others, confront members of law enforcement or encourage potential physical intimidation against a student.

Prior to her termination, she had been suspended from her position and charged by police with misdemeanor assault.

Under a deferred prosecution agreement in January, she must complete 20 hours of community service work.

**ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

**Melissa Click appeals her firing by the University of Missouri**

Melissa Click, the former University of Missouri-Columbia assistant professor, has appealed her firing last month by the university's board of curators.
“While I have taken the Curators’ offer to appeal their decision to terminate me, I do not believe that the process they used to come to their decision was fair,” Click said in a statement.

“In their decision to terminate my employment, the Curators bowed to conservative voices that seek to tarnish my stellar 12-year record at MU,” she added.

A university spokesman declined to comment Tuesday, saying Click’s appeal is a personnel issue.

Click’s complaints follows those of faculty who criticized the board for not following university procedures last month, before firing her.

Typically, the board would make a decision to fire someone after a formal complaint has been filed from a party within the university.

That did not happen in Click’s case. The board fired Click in a closed-door meeting after she became the focus of state lawmakers, who repeatedly called for her ouster.

Click’s notoriety sprung up after she was twice caught on video protesting with students angered over the university’s perceived indifference to a number of racist incidents on campus.

In one video, she was seen calling for “muscle” to prevent student-journalists from covering a campus demonstration. In another video, Click was captured cursing at a police officer during a protest of Mizzou’s homecoming parade.

In her statement, Click said the university’s punishment was disproportionate to her actions.

The board has said Click’s behavior did not “meet expectations for a university faculty member.”
“Instead of disciplining me for conduct” that didn’t meet those expectations, “the Curators are punishing me for standing with students who have drawn attention to the issue of overt racism at the University of Missouri,” Click said.

“While I have apologized on numerous occasions to numerous parties for my actions on October 10, 2015 and November 9, 2015, I will not apologize for my support of black students who experience racism at the University of Missouri,” she continued.

Click further said she is happy that a national faculty organization, the American Association for University Professors, is investigating her dismissal.

The AAUP frequently investigates instances of conflict between faculty and university leadership.

Schools that are found to have violated what the organization describes as “generally recognized principles of academic freedom and tenure,” are formally reprimanded by being placed on the AAUP censure list.

While there is some debate in higher education circles how much bite an AAUP censure carries, being placed on the list is intended to be a black eye to an institution.

There are currently more than 50 schools nationwide on the censure list.

Melissa Click says she was a 'scapegoat,' fired to appease conservatives

By Rudi Keller

Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at 11:40 am
The University of Missouri Board of Curators is attempting to silence black protesters, fired Assistant Professor Melissa Click said Tuesday after the American Association of University Professors moved to investigate her dismissal.

The association announced Monday that three tenured faculty members would visit the Columbia campus March 22 and 23 to conduct interviews and hold meetings on the firing. If the investigation finds the board violated standards of due process, the association could censure the university.

The investigation will consider whether the firing violated association standards and the university’s established policies as well as “whether conditions for academic freedom and tenure at the institution are sound,” the association said in a statement.

Click released a statement saying she had appealed the decision — effectively asking the curators to reconsider her dismissal — but that she thought the process so far had been unfair.

“The Board of Curators is using me as a scapegoat to distract from larger campus issues,” Click wrote. “But their termination of my employment will not remedy the environment of injustice that persists at MU.”

Click’s employment became a political problem for the university because of reaction to her attempts to block journalists from covering protests on Carnahan Quadrangle in November. In December, 117 Republican lawmakers signed letters calling for her termination. The curators voted 4-2 to fire Click on Feb. 24.

“The Curators bowed to conservative voices that seek to tarnish my stellar 12-year record at MU,” Click wrote.

The association could vote to place MU on a censure list during its annual convention in June.

“Censure thus serves as a warning to prospective faculty members that their rights may not be respected at the university,” association spokeswoman Laura Markwardt wrote.

Click to Appeal Her Firing from MU

Watch story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=34c7df22-77b7-42d7-88d1-0fe567876515
Melissa Click firing to be investigated by national professors group

The American Association of University Professors on Tuesday announced it will investigate MU

She blasts University of Missouri curators for firing her last month

Click formally appealed her dismissal last week

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
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A national organization representing college professors is launching an investigation into the firing of Melissa Click, the University of Missouri professor caught on video calling for “muscle” to block a student journalist.

The American Association of University Professors on Tuesday announced representatives will be on the Columbia campus on March 22-23 to investigate the process used to fire Click last month.

This announcement comes after Click met last Friday’s deadline to appeal her dismissal to the University of Missouri Board of Curators.

The AAUP, which represents about 50,000 university professors and staff in 500 chapters, last month urged University of Missouri interim chancellor Hank Foley to rehire Click because the university had not followed its own policies for due process in dealing with faculty and questions of misconduct.

Click, who was an assistant professor of communications at MU, was let go by the Board of Curators after it received the results of an external investigation commissioned by the board.
The investigation looked into Click’s behavior at a homecoming parade last fall during which she confronted and cursed at police and at a student protest in November led by a predominantly black student group seeking diversity and inclusion on campus. The protest led to a student hunger strike, Mizzou football players threatening a boycott and the resignation of the president of the four-campus university system.

More than 100 state lawmakers had called for Click’s ouster, although curators have said political pressure played no part in the firing.

In a statement Tuesday in response to the AAUP announcement, Click said, “instead of disciplining me for conduct that does not meet expectations for a university faculty member, the curators are punishing me for standing with students who have drawn attention to the issue of overt racism at the University of Missouri.”

Click added that curators are “using me as a scapegoat to distract from larger campus issues, but their termination of my employment will not remedy the environment of injustice that persists at MU.

“Instead of seeking to silence black students and their allies, MU must acknowledge the concerns of marginalized students on our campus, address the racial problems that shape the campus community, and ensure fair treatment of all students, staff, and faculty.”

The Board of Curators and university system leaders declined to comment on Click’s statement or the AAUP investigation.

The AAUP investigation committee will consist of three AAUP members from other institutions who will visit the Columbia campus to meet with administrators, board members, faculty leaders and Click.

Findings won’t be available for several weeks. If the organization finds fault with the way Click was fired, the University of Missouri would be added to a censure list.

The list “serves as a warning to prospective faculty members that their rights may not be respected at the university,” said Laura Markwardt, AAUP spokeswoman.
Kathryn Chval named dean of MU College of Education
PAYTON LIMING, 14 hrs ago

Kathryn Chval will be the new dean of MU's College of Education starting July 1, MU Provost Garnett Stokes and Interim Chancellor Hank Foley announced in a press release Tuesday.

Chval has been serving as acting dean of MU's College of Education since last year when former Dean Dan Clay was on special assignment. Clay announced in early February that he had accepted the position of dean of the College of Education at the University of Iowa.

"I come from a background of solving problems to enhance the lives of the people who work here," Chval said in an interview. "The College of Education is an amazing opportunity to work with faculty and staff that do research, and work with teachers and students through the online high school ... Our impact and potential outreach across the globe is incredible."

Before joining MU, Chval was Acting Section Head for the Teacher Professional Continuum Program at the National Science Foundation, according to the release. Chval has directed or co-directed research teams with NSF since 1995.

Chval started at MU in 2003, and she has recently led inclusion and diversity initiatives, according to the release. Last semester in Stotler Lounge in Memorial Union, she organized discussions to talk about these topics. She said over 250 people came to the different sessions and called the conversations her "most proud" moment last semester.

One of the programs started after the discussions was The Bridge. The initiative is designed as a safe space in Townsend Hall where students can go to discuss their experiences, according to previous Missourian reporting.
Kathryn Chval named College of Education dean

Chval has served as acting dean since September 2015.

Kathryn Chval was named dean of the College of Education by Provost Garnett Stokes and interim Chancellor Hank Foley in a news release Tuesday afternoon. Her new position is effective July 1.

Chval was named acting dean of the college following former Dean Dan Clay’s temporary departure in September 2015. Clay’s departure became permanent after he announced he would become the College of Education dean at the University of Iowa on Feb. 8. Stokes said that Chval, who was previously an associate dean in the college, would continue in her role of acting dean.

“In her short time as acting dean, Kathryn Chval has proven that she has the leadership qualities and vision needed to guide the College of Education into the future,” Foley said in the news release. “Her scholarship and record of embracing diversity comes at a critical time at Mizzou.”

Chval, who has worked at MU since 2003, is a professor of mathematics education. She has led several diversity initiatives within the college, such as helping education students learn how to teach children with diverse backgrounds, according to the release. Chval also helped initiate The Bridge, a program that provides a safe space for students to discuss discrimination.

“Her work to open the conversation among her faculty, students and staff while simultaneously improving the curriculum will ensure that our education students become the best teachers for students from all backgrounds in schools throughout the nation,” interim Vice Chancellor for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Chuck Henson said in the news release.
MU names new dean of education

COLUMBIA – MU Provost Garnett Stokes and Interim Chancellor Hank Foley announced Tuesday Kathryn Chval was named dean of the College of Education.

“Dr. Kathryn Chval has done an exceptional job as a member of the MU faculty since 2003,” Stokes said. “I have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the Mizzou education community.”

Chval will begin her role on July 1. She has been serving as acting dean of the college since 2015. Dan Clay announced earlier this year he was leaving as dean and had accepted a position at the University of Iowa.

“In her short time as acting dean, Kathryn Chval has proven that she has the leadership qualities and vision needed to guide the College of Education into the future,” said Foley. "Her scholarship and record of embracing diversity comes at a critical time at Mizzou.”

“Kathryn Chval has been a strong leader for the College of Education, especially in the areas of inclusion and diversity,” said Chuck Henson, interim vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity and equity.

Chval also has a strong national reputation as a researcher. Prior to joining MU, she was Acting Section Head for the Teacher Professional Continuum Program at the National Science Foundation (NSF). Chval has directed or co-directed research teams that received nearly $21 million in funding, and has been funded continuously by the NSF since 1995.

Mark McIntosh, interim vice chancellor for research, graduate studies and economic development, said, “As a former program director and section head at the National Science Foundation and recipient of several large grants, Kathryn Chval understands the importance and responsibility we have as scholars to study the latest technology and discover the best methods to help our teachers educate the future leaders of our state and nation.”

Opinion: MU athletics

Future of basketball and race relations

By Henry J. Waters III
Much of the local news this past weekend had to do with University of Missouri sports.

Would men’s basketball Coach Kim Anderson get to keep his job, and what has recent racial confrontation told us about how black athletes feel on a predominantly white campus?

Anderson does not yet know his future. His boss, Athletic Director Mack Rhoades, has not yet assured the coach he will be back next year, but Anderson has a five-year contract and hopes he can continue. He ought to have that chance.

Everyone knows Anderson regards his current gig as his dream job. If love of the institution and desire to meet expectations are important criteria for a coach, Anderson qualifies. His teams have failed to perform well in his first two seasons, but can one imagine a more difficult row to hoe for a new coach, particularly one moving from NCAA Division II to I?

Surely Rhoades realizes all this, but he also will take into account factors we outsiders can’t see from his perspective. He will have to evaluate Anderson’s basic ability to coach and otherwise run a successful program. Will Anderson be able to recruit in competition with superstars like Frank Martin, Rick Barnes and John Calipari? Does Anderson deserve time for his own learning curve?

One thing I’ve noticed that might or might not be an advantage: During the heat-of-game battles, Anderson is among the most composed coaches in any league. Basketball coaches generally show more animated courtside gymnastics and histrionics than Anderson displays. Personally, I like Anderson’s demeanor, and he seems engaged enough, but I can’t know whether his relative calm does enough to crank up his players. Rhoades will assess that sort of thing.

Anderson should have at least one more year to show his ability to attract good players. From the depths of the current pit, any coach at Missouri would need a bit more time to make the sale to the nation’s better recruits. One of Anderson’s big selling points should be a promise of playing time. His high-class personality and character should be another.

Another thing — several of Anderson’s young players showed palpable progress this year. Not enough to craft a winning season against more seasoned and talented squads, but enough to provide some hope for next year and beyond. The road ahead is rough, but a few good recruits and continuing progress from current players can fill some potholes. Kim Anderson deserves more time to shovel.

MUPD reports stolen catalytic converters
Maj. Brian Weimer asked the MU community to report any suspicious activity.

The MU Police Department has received seven reports of catalytic converters being stolen from vehicles in various parking lots around MU, according to a news release Tuesday. The thefts are believed to have occurred last Thursday and Friday.

The catalytic converter is part of a car’s exhaust system that helps reduce the amount of greenhouse gases released while driving. Catalytic converters include small amounts of precious metals such as platinum, palladium and gold, which can be melted down and sold, making them a prime target for thieves.

Malachi Owens, owner of K&M Auto Salvage, said large parking lots with many cars and few bystanders are often targeted.

“They’re hard to track when they are stolen because there’s no identifying marks,” Owens said. “If you’re not caught in the act of actually stealing it off of the car, it’s near impossible to prove which car (a catalytic converter) came off of.”

Owens said that catalytic converters can be sold for anywhere between $5 and $300, depending on the amount of precious metal the converter contains. He said that more expensive models and larger vehicles such as trucks and SUVs are typically equipped with more expensive catalytic converters.

In order to steal a catalytic converter, thieves must get under the car and cut it loose from the vehicle. According to the news release, any suspicious activity, such as a person loitering in a parking lot, carrying a “cutting device” or getting under a parked car, should be reported to MUPD.

Maj. Brian Weimer said this crime is not unheard of on campus. He encouraged the MU community to “keep their eyes open” and let MUPD know if they see anything suspicious.

“The number one thing is just informing the community so you have that many more eyes and ears out there to help,” Weimer said.

MU police investigating catalytic converter thefts
COLUMBIA, Mo. - **Police at Mizzou are looking into the thefts of seven catalytic converters from vehicles parked in university lots.**

"It appears in the past that we'll have a rash of these that come through and then they're gone again," said Major Brian Weimer with the university police department.

The thefts apparently happened between the evening of Thursday, March 3, and noon on Friday, March 4.

Car technician Brian Fobes at Walt's Service, Inc. in Columbia says they got a call on Monday about a stolen catalytic converter that they assume was due to last week's thefts.

But he says it is not something they hear about every day.

Catalytic converters are made with precious metals such as platinum and can be sold for upwards of $100 each.

While many legitimate people buy and sell the converters to scrap metal yards, others steal them off cars to make a profit.

Police say the thief or thieves would have had to use some kind of cutting tool and get underneath the vehicles to remove the converters.

"If you had battery powered equipment and weren't really worried about the damage you did to the vehicle, you could extract one between 15 minutes or a half hour," said Fobes.

MUPD says anyone loitering in or wandering around parking lots, or going in between and looking into or at multiple vehicles, could be considered suspicious.

If you see anyone in a parking lot with a cutting tool or trying to get under a vehicle, call MU police and report the sighting.

"People might walk by and think 'oh, they're working on their car', but with this, especially with all this going on, we're asking that people call the police department so we can check on that," said Weimer.

MUPD also asks faculty, staff, and students to check their vehicles for any theft or tampering. You can report thefts or suspicious incidents to the department by calling (573) 882-7201.

If you are a victim and your catalytic converter is stolen, it could cost you upwards of $1,000 to replace. But many insurance companies cover it. You can ask your company or local mechanic.
MUPD investigates stolen catalytic converters

COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri Police Department announced Tuesday it received reports of seven catalytic converters being stolen from vehicles.

Officials said these thefts are believed to have occurred between Thursday evening and Friday noon in various parking lots around campus.

The suspect(s) typically got underneath the vehicles and used a cutting tool to steal the catalytic converters, according to MUPD.

MUPD asks that faculty, staff and students check their vehicle for potential thefts.

Anyone with any information about the thefts can contact Sergeant Shawn Spalding at (573) 882-5928 or CRIME STOPPERS at (573) 875-8477. Individuals may remain anonymous and may be eligible for a reward of up to $1,500 if the information leads to an arrest.

MISSOURIAN

Event aims to dispel myths about women in Islam

IDA SOPHIE WINTER, 10 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — When Fatma El-Walid was a second-grader, a recess supervisor tore off the child's hijab in reaction to 9/11. Now, said El-Walid, a biology major at MU, many Muslim women who cover feel pressure to take off the hijab, a voluntary form of worship
and privatization of individual sexuality, as fears among Muslim communities in America increase due to rising hate crimes and the political climate.

El-Walid said that although politicians and others often speak about Muslim women, they know little about Islam and women's lives. This ignorance extends throughout the general population, with many seeing the religion as oppressive to women instead of understanding women's Islamic rights. El-Walid said these misconceptions about Islam are not being addressed.

To spread knowledge on women in Islam, El-Walid, in partnership with MU's Feminist Student Union and Muslim Student Organization, spoke Monday evening at the Women's Center. Before an audience of about 45 people, El-Walid discussed Islamic teachings on men and women, religious and present-day "sheroes" (female heroes) and the significance of wearing the hijab.

El-Walid said that Islam, a roughly 1,400-year-old religion founded by the Prophet Muhammad, does not cast women as inferior to men in its creation story. She said the Bible's teaching, in which Eve eats the forbidden apple and thereby casts humankind out of Heaven, is different in the Quran. The Islamic version of Adam and Eve's temptation story, El-Walid said, casts both the man and woman as perpetrators of the crime and recipients of forgiveness. She also said that Islam instructs both men and women to seek knowledge as a religious duty.

El-Walid spoke of Islamic property rights for women as well as teachings against female infanticide and forced marriage, practices common in the Arabian Gulf when Islam formed. She also mentioned women's rights to divorce, seek office and participate in public affairs.

El-Walid covered important figures in Islam and present-day Muslim leaders. She spoke of Khadija, an elite businesswoman and the Prophet Muhammad's first wife. El-Walid also mentioned Muhammad's wife Aisha, one of the most well-known scholars of Islam and a military leader. El-Walid also pointed to female heads of majority-Muslim states, such as Bangladesh and Turkey, and activists such as Alaa Murabit and Linda Sarsour.
Mallory Brown, who is part of the Feminist Student Union and the Women's Center, enjoyed the talk, saying feminist and other social justice groups rarely talk about how Islam can empower women. She said this silence can leave Muslim participants feeling invalidated.

Student Jack Miller said his knowledge of female religious scholars in Islam expanded.

"We're never taught that Muslim women have power and have enfranchisement throughout their religion's history," Miller said. "Then, you have the royal family of Saudi Arabia or the Ayatollahs, and that's not representative of Islam."

He said he wished people would seek out knowledge on cultures different from their own, saying this would limit global conflict.

The Muslim Student Organization will host further sessions on Islam next week, including a talk on Islamophobia by Islamic scholar Suhaib Webb at 6 p.m. on Tuesday at the Columns Room in MU’s Reynolds Alumni Center.