

APR 15 2011



## Emails press same-sex benefits issue

By Janese Silvey

The University of Missouri's Board of Curators email inbox has been inundated recently with messages from people across the globe urging the UM System to expand employee benefits to same-sex couples.

Since March 31, the messages have been coming daily, with more than 20 on some days. The campaign stems from Change.org, which allows users to advance specific causes. On one day earlier this month, emails came from writers in Sweden, Canada, Hungary, the United Kingdom and about 10 states.

The message says curators are considering the issue this month, but that's not the case. There's no proposal on the table, and Betsy Rodriguez, vice president of human resources, doesn't expect a vote any time soon.

Faculty members on three of UM's four campuses have passed resolutions supporting benefits for same-sex couples. Although the Rolla campus doesn't consider the issue a priority, faculty members aren't necessarily opposed to it, said spokesman Andrew Careaga. Rodriguez said she has not heard any vocal opposition to expanding benefits to gays and lesbians.

So what's the holdup? Money, Rodriguez said.

Providing insurance packages to same-sex families is expected to add 1 percent to 2 percent to the system's benefits costs, which amounts to between \$1 million and \$3 million.

"Some might say that's not a lot of money, but, frankly, anything is a lot of money at this point," she said. "Any time you expand benefits, it comes with a cost, so it's something you really have to think about. We have a significant budget gap right now."

That gap — last estimated at \$53.2 million — takes into account a 2 percent increase in the salary pool at a cost of about \$12 million. Rodriguez said getting that expenditure approved is her top priority.

Some on the MU campus have said the university has lost top-notch job candidates because MU doesn't provide domestic-partner benefits. And MU is one of only a handful of Association of American University institutes that don't offer the plans.

“It tells faculty and staff who may have same-sex partners that their families aren’t welcome or recognized on campus, and it sends a message to students that the UM system fails to recognize a diverse and broad definition of family,” says the message, which is a form letter.

California resident Mike Lipsitz, a 1983 graduate of the Missouri School of Journalism, added a personal note to his message, saying MU discriminated against him during his time on campus and is continuing to do so now. “That’s why when writing my checks of support, they go elsewhere,” he wrote.

In a phone interview, Lipsitz said he experienced discrimination and anti-gay sentiments when he was an MU student, and he hasn’t been back to visit campus since.

“I hate to admit it because I’ve done reasonably well in my career, but I’ve never sent money back to Missouri,” said Lipsitz, the editor of several publications in California, including an LGBTQ magazine.

As a campus, MU has made efforts to become more inclusive. Last week, students and administrators launched the One Mizzou campaign to promote diversity. This month is Pride Month on campus, which included a prom for same-sex couples. MU does extend recreation center and library privileges to same-sex partners of employees.

Asked if adopting benefits for same-sex couples would have political ramifications, Rodriguez said: “Yes, of course. But I’m not the best one to talk to about that.”

Other UM administrators declined to speculate on what might happen politically. Missouri is controlled by a majority of conservative Republicans, and there are plenty of alumni in that camp as well.

At least one alumnus would be willing to support UM if the board were to approve domestic-partner benefits.

“If I knew about that,” Lipsitz said, “yeah, I’d write a check.”

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## Dorm rooms at MU could go co-ed

Some students are asking the University of Missouri to allow co-ed dorm rooms on campus.

The Residence Hall Association, a student group, has passed a resolution asking the Department of Residential Life to provide “gender-neutral” options starting in 2012. The goal is to provide a friendly housing option for gay, lesbian and transgendered students and those more comfortable with the opposite sex, RHA member Taylor Dukes said. The co-ed option would be restricted to suite-style rooms and would be voluntary: MU would not randomly pair men with women.

Frankie Minor, director of Residential Life, isn’t opposed to the idea but is waiting to receive the official petition before proceeding. “It’s been a topic of discussion on the national scene for a while,” he said.

Co-ed dorm rooms have, for the past few years, been cropping up on other campuses, including Washington University in St. Louis. The university implemented co-ed rooms primarily for safety reasons, said Tim Lempfert, associate director of Residential Life. “Housing arrangements solely based on students’ biological sex may be unsafe for some students,” he said in an email. “Supportive to transgender students, gender-neutral housing does not force students to come forward and self-identify as transgender, since this may be uncomfortable for some.”

Rutgers University in New Jersey is offering co-ed options next year after a freshman killed himself in the fall. His suicide came shortly after his roommate allegedly secretly filmed him having sexual relations with another male and posted the video online. The MU proposal isn’t directly in response to that incident, but offering co-ed rooms now “is a good example of what we could be doing to be proactive rather than reactive,” Dukes said.

Off campus, it’s not uncommon for men and women to share apartments. Senior Andrew Lang, a Columbia native, has only roomed with females and this year lives with senior Stephanie Sander. Lang’s girlfriend, Katherine Holleman, doesn’t mind: She, too, has lived with a male roommate in the past. Both said they could think of dozens of other students sharing apartments with someone of the opposite sex.

For Lang, it’s a matter of cleanliness. He likes things tidy and has found that his female friends fit the bill.

And Sander said living with a guy isn’t that different from living with women, other than the fact she can’t borrow hairspray, lipstick or clothing. Oh, and Lang tends to get a little overprotective when she wants to bring home a date.

“I turn into her father,” he joked.

Speaking of Sander’s father, Dad wasn’t thrilled about the idea when she considered living with another male friend. But he’s OK with the current arrangement.

“Obviously, I’m a girl, so Dad’s going to have an opinion,” she said. “But he knows Andrew and trusts him.”

Lempfert said he hasn’t had much feedback from parents about co-ed rooms at Washington University. The school treats students as adults, he said, and “we expect them to discuss their housing choices with those who pay the bills.”

MU isn’t expected to ask parents for permission when considering co-ed rooms.

“Our students are the ones living with us,” Minor said, “so we consider student needs and interests.”

Some colleges request that students not share rooms with boyfriends or girlfriends, but Dukes doesn’t see that as an issue.

“They don’t ask that question now for LGBT students, so if you are in the queer community, you can sign up to live with your respective girlfriend or boyfriend,” she said.

And some students recognize the potential pitfalls. Holleman, for instance, has no interest in rooming with Lang.

“It puts unnecessary stress on a relationship,” she said.

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## Colleges price out middle class: Even best and brightest can afford it

By BARBARA SHELLY

The wildest college admissions story of the year involves a 4-year-old.

The tyke's mother sued a New York City preschool, claiming it hadn't lived up to advertising claims that the \$19,000-a-year tuition would set her child on the path to the promised land.

Instead of drilling for the intelligence test needed for admittance to a prestigious elementary school, it seems the girl spent most of her time — believe it, folks — playing.

"It is no secret that getting a child into the Ivy League starts in nursery school," the mom said in a legal brief.

Well, Harvard admitted only 6.2 percent of its applicants this year, so perhaps this mother is on to something.

In other news, waiting lists for selective schools are at an all-time high. And being raised by a tiger mother paid off. The daughter of Amy Chua — the Chinese mom who recounted her stern childrearing methods in a controversial book — was accepted by Harvard and Yale.

These are the stories we hear this time of year, as the acceptance and rejection notices from top-flight colleges roll in.

It's an entertaining exercise to watch. But from a public policy perspective, it's almost irrelevant.

Dips in endowments aside, the Ivies and their students will be fine. Even their rejects will get by. Kids who aspire to the Ivy League usually have plenty of other choices.

Here are some more meaningful higher education stories to keep an eye on:

•**Students at all four campuses of the University of Missouri system will pay higher tuition next year.** Increases also may be in store at some Kansas universities. A report last year by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni warned that if tuition at Big 12 universities continues

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to increase at the rate seen in the last five years, the average family with a middle school student can expect to spend a quarter of its annual household income on that child's college tuition.

- In a milestone moment last year, the total amount of debt owed on student loans moved ahead of the nation's collective credit card debt. Students who borrowed money left college last year with an average debt of \$24,000. And many are asking whether a college degree still carries enough weight in the job market to make the cost worthwhile.

- Every autumn, on community college campuses, students and teachers alike weep over test results that show too many high school graduates lack the reading and math skills to enroll in college courses. These students are channeled into remedial classes — an expense they hadn't budgeted for. Lack of preparedness is a big reason that less than a third of the students who enroll in a community college with the goal of attaining a two-year degree ever receive one.

Four-year colleges also struggle with completion rates. Four of 10 students who enroll at a college or university don't earn a bachelor's degree within six years.

For too long, we've been focused on the campus entrance. "Go to college," we've told our young men and women, holding out a degree as the key to the American dream. We've offered them scholarships and grants and loans and applauded them as they've walked through the front gate. But no one pays much attention when they slip quietly out the back door with no degree and tons of debt.

That's starting to change. The Obama administration has asked states to come up with new approaches for improving college completion rates. The Gates Foundation is offering incentives to community colleges to work on the problem.

Those are good moves, but they confine themselves to the conventional wisdom that at least some college is good for everyone. A growing number of counselors, economists and, yes, academics, are questioning that wisdom, and instead recommending more apprenticeships and vocational training to prepare students for middle-skills jobs.

The solution isn't one approach or another. Students need options other than college and those who opt for college need support once they get there.

College admissions dramas make for good reading. Jobs and financial security make for happier endings.

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## **MU's race team experiments with hydrogen as alternative fuel**

By Matthew Busch

April 14, 2011 | 6:31 p.m. CDT

**COLUMBIA – MU's Hydrogen Car Team is counting on a hydrogen fuel cell to power its car to the finish line in Shell's Eco-marathon this weekend in Houston.**

**MU entered the race in the fuel-efficiency category – the car that uses the least energy to complete a six-mile course wins.**

**The fuel powering MU's race car has a use rate of 480 miles per gallon.**

Under adviser Richard Whelove, MU teams have experimented with alternative fuels since first entering the race in 1993 with a solar-powered car. This year's team designed Tigergen II, a second-generation hydrogen car that incorporates hydrogen fuel-cell technology.

The team's reliance on hydrogen comes at a time when gas prices are inching closer to record highs.

According to the government's Energy Information Administration, the nationwide average price this week for a gallon of regular gasoline reached \$3.79. [GasBuddy.com](http://GasBuddy.com) put the Missouri average on Thursday at about \$3.73.

That's the closest the U.S. has been to the 2008 peak cost of \$4.11.

But as an alternative to fossil fuels, hydrogen remains a question mark. A hydrogen-powered car combines hydrogen gas and oxygen to make electricity. The only byproduct is water, making hydrogen a zero-emission fuel source – and an attractive substitute for the world's decreasing stock of fossil fuels.

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The design for hydrogen-powered cars on a commercial scale is still in the experimental stage. The gas that powers a hydrogen fuel cell must be separated from compounds such as water in order to store it and release it later as energy.

Right now, it is not cost-effective to produce hydrogen gas for commercial use in vehicles.

The president of the MU Hydrogen Car Team, Jonathan Lavalley, said the team switched from solar panels to hydrogen in order to work on projects that have real-world applications.

“We weren’t creating anything that would impact the future,” he said.

Victoria Hezel, team spokeswoman, said this type of alternative fuel research needs to continue. “We’re going to need something soon, especially with gas prices the way it is,” she said.

Whelove, a resident instructor in MU’s mechanical and aerospace engineering department, said it is important for his students to take what they’re learning to future jobs.

“If they go to work in the automotive industry, they will already have experience working with alternative energy,” he said.

Last year technical difficulties left the team with a less than stellar finish. This year, Tigergen II has been optimized in order to meet the competition’s “urban” requirements. Each entry must have four wheels, a horn, brake lights, headlights and a trunk to simulate a typical driving experience.

The car’s frame has been molded from carbon fiber similar to that used on the new 787 Dreamliner series from Boeing, Lavalley said. Boeing donated material for the team’s next version of the hydrogen car, Tigergen III, already being virtually designed.

MU’s team drove to Houston on Wednesday. Teams practice on Friday, and the race trials begin Saturday and Sunday.

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To learn more and follow the team, go to the website, [Tigergen](#). Click on team's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages for live updates from the event.

# COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

## Maya Angelou stirs crowd with speech at Jesse Hall

By Andrea Braxton

April 14, 2011 | 10:22 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — The lights dimmed, the curtains parted and everyone in the packed auditorium at Jesse Hall rose to their feet cheering. Maya Angelou leaned back in a wooden chair, singing “And the walls came tumbling down” in a low, raspy voice.

**Angelou spoke for about an hour and a half Thursday night at Jesse Hall, primarily about college students and how they should use the knowledge they receive to tear down the “walls of ignorance.”**

“When the walls come tumbling down, you are the ones who will ascend,” she said.

Angelou, 83, also centered her speech around a quote from an African playwright named Terence Afer who wrote in Rome in 154 B.C. He said, “I am a human being. Nothing human can be alien to me.”

Angelou encouraged college students to take the quote to heart. She said it would give them the courage to accomplish great things and to start tearing down the walls of ignorance.

Angelou stressed the importance of poetry. She said poetry helps a person realize he or she is a human being. She wanted students to go to the library and read some poetry that related to what they needed that day.

“If you need to cry, find the poetry,” she said. “If you need to be brave, find the poetry.”

Angelou read two of her poems, “The Health Food Diner” and “Brave and Startling Truth.” She said she attached special significance to “Brave and Startling Truth” because she delivered it to the United Nations on its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

She said she was 16, 6 feet tall and pregnant when the United Nations was founded. She never imagined she would be able to deliver a poem in front of the members.

Angelou also talked about receiving the 2010 Medal of Freedom from President Obama. She said she thought of all the different races of people who came to the United States.

“I accepted the Medal of Freedom for all of us,” she said.

Angelou said she wanted to represent all types of people whenever she speaks and warned the audience to be intolerant of racial or sexual slurs. She said she never lets anyone use any type of slur in her presence.

“It’s poison,” she said. “It was created to dehumanize people.”

Angelou’s speech was laden with stories from her past. She talked about her childhood and imitated her family members. She talked about people’s reactions to her on planes and how she now takes buses everywhere. She reminisced about the times she spent out of the country and talked about her son.

The audience reacted to Angelou’s speech with a range of emotion. They laughed at the stories of her past. They gasped as she retold her account of being raped as a young girl. They fell into reverent silence as she read some of her poetry.

“I was just so blown away, just to be in her presence,” Columbia resident Armine Cuber said. “It was a beautiful experience.”

MU student Bridgit Bowden was pleasantly surprised by Angelou’s speech because it was conversational. She said she would always remember how much Angelou stressed knowledge and the quote from Terence.

“That’ll probably stick with me the most,” she said.

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# THE MANEATER

## Angelou's message: 'You're here to make a difference'

*The renowned poet returned to MU for the first time since 2007.*

By Marie Mandelberg

Published April 14, 2011

When the curtains of Jesse Auditorium opened Thursday night, 83-year-old Maya Angelou received a standing ovation from the crowd before she said a word.

Angelou, a renowned poet, actress, author, civil rights activist, director and playwright, is most well known for writing "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." She has received three Grammy awards, has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and was asked to write a poem for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.

The last time Angelou was scheduled to speak at MU, four years ago, she had to postpone the visit to receive the Medal of Freedom.

"I accepted the Medal of Freedom for all of us," Angelou said. "My intention is to represent all of us."

Amanda Gastler, Speakers Committee chairwoman for the Missouri Students Association Department of Student Activities, said MSA wanted to bring her back because of her message and accomplishments.

"There aren't very many people who have experienced all the things she has done in her lifetime," Gastler said. "She has so many accomplishments. The students can see that anyone is capable of doing the things she has done. They can truly believe that they can do anything."

Before 2007, it had been 20 years since Angelou came to MU.

"I did my best, but it was 20-odd years before I was invited again," Angelou said to start her speech.

For the rest of the night, Angelou shared stories of hardship, stories of enlightenment and words of encouragement.

“I’m hoping to gain a little more inspiration,” freshman Joycelynn Granderson said. “Just a little glimmer of hope.”

When Angelou was 7 years old, her mother’s boyfriend raped her. Three days after telling her brother about the rape, the man was killed. Angelou said she believed that it was her words that killed him, and because of that, she stopped talking for more than six years.

“I thought that if I spoke, my voice would go out and kill anybody,” Angelou said.

She said there is one central theme in all of her poetry, theater writings and work.

“I am a human being,” Angelou said. “Nothing human can be alien to me.”

This theme came up often in her speech, usually to offer advice to the college students in the audience.

“You are here in Missouri to make this country more than it is today,” Angelou said.

The poet said students are not at MU just to meet a future partner or work hard to get the right job. Rather, students are at school to make a difference.

“Maya Angelou is very inspirational and remarkable,” freshman Chasney Jenkins said. “This is like a once in a lifetime opportunity to go and see her speak. I think she has an awesome story.”

Angelou said students not only need to see themselves as people who can help bring the walls of ignorance down, but also as people who have the potential to do anything.

“You need someone to say, ‘Not only are you alright, you’re just right,’” Angelou said.

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

## Mo. House targets sentencing guidelines

BY VIRGINIA YOUNG • [vyoung@post-dispatch.com](mailto:vyoung@post-dispatch.com) > 573-635-6178 | Posted: Friday, April 15, 2011 7:30 am

### MU mention page 2

**JEFFERSON CITY** • An obscure state agency has worked for years to devise a statistical model that helps judges decide which criminals to send to prison and which ones to place in community programs.

The Missouri Sentencing Advisory Commission trumpets those criminal sentencing guidelines as a way to reserve prison space for the most violent offenders and to use community alternatives when they would best keep an offender from committing new crimes.

But prosecutors have long criticized the guidelines as cookie-cutter justice, and on Thursday, they scored a victory when the Missouri House voted to abolish the commission.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Stanley Cox, R-Sedalia, said the agency's methodology was flawed and had the effect of promoting an agenda to reduce the prison population.

"The end of this commission will, in fact, remove the inaccurate information that is communicated to our sentencing judges in the state of Missouri, whereby liberal judges are given cover to release from prison or reduce the sentence and give lighter sentences to the worst offenders, second offenders and violent offenders," Cox said.

The House passed the bill on a vote of 100-57. It now moves to the Senate, which has until May 13, the Legislature's mandatory adjournment, to decide whether to pass it.

The commission's supporters said that its guidelines weren't perfect but that they should be fixed rather than scrapped.

The sentencing commission "does a lot of good and makes mistakes," said Rep. Chris Kelly, D-Columbia, chairman of the subcommittee that oversees the budget of the state's prisons. "It's bad to start throwing out tools" that can help manage the prison population, he said.

At issue is the state's development of "evidence-based" sentencing guidelines, which try to assess a criminal's risk of reoffending as an element in whether to send the person to prison.

Legislators established the commission in 1993 to study sentencing practices, then amended the law in 2003 to ask the group to establish a system for sentencing recommendations.

Since 2005, judges have received reports that suggest a sentence, taking into account information such as the offender's age, work history, education and criminal history. The judges have discretion in whether to follow the guidelines or ignore them.

Missouri is among about 20 states that have such commissions. Supporters say sentencing guidelines help achieve consistency and control discrimination. Opponents say they ignore the circumstances of individual crimes and misrepresent data to arrive at "average" sentences.

The push to get rid of the commission — and the guidelines — comes from the Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.

Platte County Prosecuting Attorney Eric Zahnd told a House committee that the guidelines had "no scientific foundation" and had resulted in "outrageously lenient sentencing recommendations."

He cited several cases he had prosecuted, such as a registered sex offender who had previously served 8½ years for abusing five children. When the man was caught collecting child pornography, the sentencing guidelines suggested a 120-day "shock" incarceration, Zahnd said.

**Jasper County Prosecuting Attorney Dean Dankelson branded the guidelines as unreliable, pointing to a study by Jeff Milyo, a social sciences professor at the University of Missouri.**

**Milyo argued that the guidelines had the potential to mislead judges about the costs and benefits of alternative sentences. He said the formula ignored the cost to society when a convicted criminal on probation committed another crime.**

However, other studies have credited the system with helping keep Missouri's prison population steady at about 30,500 inmates since 2005.

In fact, the House's action came a day after a nonprofit group released a national study that singled out Missouri for "dramatic" progress in reducing the number of repeat offenders.

The percentage of Missouri offenders who returned to prison within two years dropped to 36.4 percent for those released in 2009, down from nearly half of those released in 2004, according to the study by the Pew Center on the States.

The study gave credit to Missouri for mapping out "a meticulous plan for managing all but the most serious violators in the community" and for extensive training of probation and parole officers in how to use the new "risk assessment" tool.

"The fact is, it's being effective," said Mike Wolff, a Missouri Supreme Court judge who is also the longtime chairman of the state's sentencing commission.

"The prosecutors don't like this because they have been traditionally the major if not the only source of information at sentencing time," Wolff said. "Having statistical information available doesn't particularly suit them."

Attorney General Chris Koster, the state's top law enforcement official, was asked his opinion of the commission's work as he left a crime victims' rights ceremony on the steps of the Capitol Thursday. In a response emailed later, Koster struck a middle-of-the road stance.

He said that while "indefensible recommendations" had sometimes resulted from the system, he supported its goals of bringing consistency to punishment and focusing on imprisoning violent offenders over nonviolent ones.

"For these reasons, I hope opportunities to fix the system have been exhausted before we scrap the system," Koster said.

The bill is HB257.

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

## La Russa, Pujols and McGwire on agenda for Thompson Center gala

BY DEB PETERSON • [dpeterson@post-dispatch.com](mailto:dpeterson@post-dispatch.com) > 314-340-8276 | Posted: Thursday, April 14, 2011 6:29 pm

**ALL HANDS:** Look for the skipper -- **Tony La Russa** -- to be on deck as honorary chair of the fifth annual Thompson Center dinner gala and auction to benefit children with autism on April 21.

The event, "It's In the Cards," will be at the Four Seasons Hotel.

KMOX (1120 AM) personality and KETC's (Channel 9) "Donnybrook" host, **Charlie Brennan**, will do the honors as emcee.

A couple of our town's heavy hitters, **Albert Pujols** and **Mark McGwire**, are expected to put in an appearance.

**Patty Arnold, Tim Ney, Jack Reis, John Sondag** and **Scott Zajac** are event co-chairs. **Donna Wilkinson, Kitty Ratcliffe, Mike Shanahan Jr.** and the center's founders, **Nancy** and **Bill Thompson**, are the steering committee members.

**Tony Bommarito** will oversee the silent wine auction of select and premium vintages.

**The Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders, which is located at the University of Missouri-Columbia, is recognized as a leader in autism research, training and clinical services.**

For event information call 314-367-8118.