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Confucius Institute comes to University of Missouri as Chinese-backed campus outreach grows

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — The University of Missouri has become the latest U.S. campus to embrace a Chinese language and cultural exchange program financed by the Beijing government.

Campus leaders recently welcomed a parade of Chinese dignitaries who came to Columbia to unveil the university's Confucius Institute. The institute will offer Mandarin language courses, teacher training, business collaborations and more.

The program began at the University of Maryland in 2004 and has expanded to 83 American universities and hundreds worldwide. Missouri will receive \$250,000 annually over the next three years in a partnership with Shanghai Normal University in China.

Some critics have called the efforts a thinly-veiled propaganda tool of the Communist Chinese government. Missouri officials say the program will remain independent and builds on Asian outreach efforts begun more than a century ago.



Cattle research wins \$14 million from USDA

By **JANESE SILVEY**

University of Missouri researchers are studying a way to determine at birth whether a calf has the right genetic makeup to best convert feed into muscle growth.

The study is part of a project MU is working on with several other institutions. The group has received two grants totaling more than \$14 million from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, awards announced today at MU's Beef Research and Teaching Farm south of Columbia.

At MU, the work will primarily focus on cattle feeding, the most expensive part of the beef industry, said Jerry Taylor, an animal genomics professor in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

Here's the problem: Some cattle can eat 22 pounds of feed a day and gain 4 pounds. Others, though, require more like 35 pounds to gain the same amount. Cattlemen usually can't tell which is which because the cattle are eating in groups out of the same trough.

Taylor and his team will study thousands of cattle and determine how DNA sequences might be affecting the need to eat more. Taylor proposes the development of a technology that would let cattlemen determine at birth whether a newborn calf has the right genetic combination to be an efficient eater. Taylor and others developed similar DNA-detection devices, known as SNP chips, in 2007 for the dairy industry, and now the technology is used in 21 countries. He hopes to develop a similar chip for the beef industry in five years.

If successful, a cattle farmer would be able to send away a few hairs from a calf's hide or tail, and a scientist would study the DNA for particular feeding markers and report back the results. That's mostly going to be important for male calves that can either be used for meat or for breeding. Calves with the right genetic makeup would be raised into bulls to breed, while male calves with bum genes would be castrated into steers for beef. Ultimately, that should lead to more efficient herds, which would save cattlemen on feed costs or allow cattle farmers to increase their herds using the same amount of feed. And that should help farmers meet current and future demands.

Right now, more people than ever are in the position to buy beef, U.S. Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said during this morning's remarks.

"More people want that steak and can afford that steak and think they deserve that steak, and they probably do," he said.

But the challenges are greater than that. Food production will have to dramatically increase to meet expected population growth in the coming decades, said Roger Beachy, director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture at USDA.

"The production of animal protein, not only in the U.S. but worldwide, is increasingly important as countries like India and China rocket into becoming more developed wealthy regions," Taylor said.

There are other benefits expected from the work. Preliminary data suggest animals that eat more efficiently produce less manure, which leads to less groundwater contaminants, and produce less methane from the process of turning food into energy.

Taylor's work also will include a study on microbes common to cattle stomachs. It's possible, he said, some microbes actually help animals eat less while still growing at a desired rate.

The second grant will be led by James Womack, a professor from Texas A&M University. With Taylor's assistance, Womack will study bovine respiratory disease, a problem in the beef and dairy industries. In that study, scientists will be looking at genetic markers that make some cattle more susceptible to BRD than others.

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COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU, Texas A&M receive grants for cattle research

By [Victoria Guida](#)

April 15, 2011 | 2:16 p.m. CDT

COLUMBIA — Research teams at MU and Texas A&M University received two agricultural grants Friday morning worth a total of \$14.2 million.

Jerry Taylor, chairman of animal genomics in the MU agriculture department, will be project director for a five-year, \$5 million grant to study feed efficiency in cattle. James Womack, a professor of veterinary medicine at Texas A&M, will be the project director for a \$9.2 million grant to study bovine respiratory disease.

The two universities will work together on the grant projects, which they were selected for by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Taylor said the grants were competitive, and MU and Texas A&M were chosen because of the quality of the scientists chosen for the project and the quality of the science, which involves cutting-edge technology.

Taylor's project will involve studying how genetic differences in cows affect their food intake, as well as identifying bacteria and microbes that help cows in digesting their food, according to a news release from MU.

"Based upon the work we've done with (gene technology) in the last two years, we firmly believe ... that we will be able to translate technology to the beef and dairy industries in the United States and worldwide within the span of this grant," Taylor said.

Roger Beachy, the director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, said the Food and Agriculture Organization predicts that food production needs to be increased by 100 percent in the next year to avoid problems in food security.

Another way of doing that is by combating diseases in cattle, he said.

Cattle with bovine respiratory disease stop eating, lose weight and require treatment, according to the release. The agricultural industry loses almost \$700 million a year because of the disease.

Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo., who is the ranking Republican member of the Senate Agricultural Appropriations Committee, also stressed the importance of meeting the challenges of the agricultural industry, from remaining competitive in a global economy to providing enough food.

"These projects and others are saying, 'Let's see what we can do that makes the most sense for the country, and let's have the scientific basis that proves that,'" Blunt said.

About 30 to 40 beef industry stakeholders and university stakeholders gathered inside the MU Beef Research and Teaching Farm to hear the announcement.



MU researchers send message to stepparents, children: 'Hang in there'

By **JILL RENAE HICKS**

Frequently milled for sitcom material, and a ubiquitous trend of modern American society, stepfamilies are typically fraught with new emotions and tensions. Why do some step-relationships thrive and others turn hostile — or, perhaps even worse, apathetic? These questions have been the latest subject of study for **University of Missouri human development experts Lawrence Ganong and Marilyn Coleman**

"In some ways, we've been working on stepfamily research for 30 years," Coleman, curators professor in the College of Human Environmental Sciences, said in a joint phone interview. The pair began collecting qualitative research over a couple of years for their newest study, "Patterns of Stepchild-Stepparent Relationship Development," but have been looking for "new ways to collect data; new questions to ask" for much longer than that, she said. Coleman and Ganong, an MU professor of human development, published a previous study about how stepparents attempt to develop relationships with their stepchildren. This newest study, published in the April issue of the Journal of Marriage and Family, focuses on the stepchild's perspective.

The main finding of the study, according to its press file, is "stepchildren relate with stepparents based on the stepparents' treatment of them and their evaluations, or judgments, of the stepparents' behaviors." In other words: "Children don't really think that it's up to them to forge relationships," Ganong said. "So really, it depends on the stepparents" to begin to make efforts to build a relationship. He explained children and adolescents respond to their stepparent at least partly based on how they evaluate the adult's efforts to connect

Some stepparents "who made a purposeful effort to build a close relationship ... from the start of the relationship were still doing it when we studied them," Ganong said. But others who only worked at the relationship before they were fully tied to the stepchild's biological parent simply stopped making efforts once they moved in or once marriage was official. "Sadly, a third group never did anything to build a close relationship," Ganong finished, adding children usually could intuit whether the new adult actually cared about building a relationship with them.

The two professors gathered their research primarily through in-depth interviews with MU students who have had stepparents — many students had more than one — and identifying common patterns within the interviews. Thirty-two stepdaughters and 17 stepsons were interviewed, and the study is "at least a 'Part 2' — maybe a 'Part 10,' " of a longer-term study of stepfamilies, Coleman said with a chuckle.

Gradually, Coleman and Ganong began to identify common patterns of relationship development between stepparents and stepchildren. Coleman, especially, was surprised that six patterns of relationship development emerged: accepting as a parent, liking from the start, accepting with

ambivalence, changing trajectory, rejecting the stepparent and coexisting. Factors that influenced these patterns included the child's age and whether the adult and child shared common interests.

"One of the most interesting patterns, to me, was the 'changing trajectory' group — hating the stepparent at first, to becoming very close to them," Ganong said. "The take-home message for stepparents is, 'Hang in there.'" He explained that many stepchildren, especially adolescents, reject their stepparents' efforts to connect at first. But after a period of time, many begin to respond positively. "There's some indication that stepparents give up" too soon, Ganong said. "Americans are pretty impatient."

Coleman's advice to stepchildren: "Don't make a snap decision about your stepparents. Give them a chance," she said. She also pointed to the study's findings that, initially, the stepparent should try to participate in activities the kids enjoy, even if it's not what the stepparent would naturally like. "You don't do things with friends that only you like to do," she said. The two advise adults to think about how they would build a friendship with another adult — then build a relationship with their stepchild in a similar way.

Ganong also noted that no parent begins to discipline his or her biological child right away. Instead, parents first develop a bond with their child. Stepparents should do the same. "If you have a bond with a child, then that child will do what you ask them to do," Ganong said. But he added it often still is very difficult for some stepparents to use this kind of bonding-first principle with their stepchildren.

On the other side of the equation, biological parents outside the new relationship might need to allow their children the opportunity to connect with stepparents. Those children most often are happier all around, Ganong said, because they feel freedom to have relationships with both their biological parents and their stepparents. Children can accumulate affection for more family members instead of dividing affections, he explained.

Coleman and Ganong are hopeful their study will influence marriage and family therapy and counseling practices for stepfamilies. But they also hope it will encourage stepparents and stepchildren in a personal way — especially because the number of stepfamilies has increased so rapidly in the United States in recent years. "So it's really important that we understand this," Coleman said.

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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Local news briefs

COLUMBIA, MO. > Campaign urges benefits for same-sex couples • The University of Missouri Board of Curators has been receiving emails from around the world urging the UM system to extend employee benefits to same-sex couples.

The messages are part of a campaign organized by Change.org, which allows users to advance specific causes. The Columbia Daily Tribune reported that emails have come from Sweden, Canada, Hungary and several states.

But Betsy Rodriguez, vice president of human resources, says there's no proposal for extending benefits to same-sex couples before the curators. Rodriguez said the holdup for extending benefits could be the cost. (AP)



Change to curator rules heads to Nixon

By Jeffery M. Leach

JEFFERSON CITY — The bill to fit the **University of Missouri Board of Curators** to the new political landscape in Missouri went to Gov. Jay Nixon without a dissenting vote yesterday in the Missouri House.

The bill changes how UM curators, members of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education and the Missouri State University Board of Governors are distributed regionally in the state. Each nine-member board would have one member from each of the state's eight congressional districts, with one district having two members.

The bill, passed on a 151-0 vote, is heading to Nixon after attempts failed earlier in the session to give the student representative on the Board of Curators the ninth voting slot on the board.

The measure includes a provision that no current board members will lose their post even if there are three members living in a single congressional district after the district boundaries are finalized.



THE TRIBUNE'S VIEW

Sen. Schaefer

Statehouse statesmanship

By **HENRY J. WATERS III**

April 11, 2011

Sen. Kurt Schaefer, the Republican chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, is doing a very good job in his important role.

He is acting like the kind of reasonable, conservative Republican the state sorely needs in a position like his at a time when handling public money is particularly challenging. He is presiding over a prospective 2012 budget calling for substantial spending cuts while favoring important categories such as higher education.

He has been working hard to make package deals, finding a million here and \$2 million there, as he puts it, finding support in a cantankerous Senate for education at all levels. As an example, he got committee approval to add \$20 million for public school transportation to Gov. Jay Nixon's proposal, restoring an earlier budget cut school officials strongly support as a way to preserve local budgets. He also is able to increase funding for the University of Missouri beyond original proposals by the governor.

An excellent report by Tribune reporter Rudi Keller outlined how Schaefer has juggled many budget items. Not only is he showing a lot of creativity, he collaborates well with members of both parties, including some of the most recalcitrant in his own party. We here in Little Dixie can be pleased with his efforts, and so should people in all parts of the state.

HJW III



Your dog as personal trainer

Study finds that people who walked their dogs walked about an hour longer per week than people who owned dogs but didn't walk them.

By JACK KELLY

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

People who own and walk dogs are 34 percent more likely to meet federal benchmarks for physical activity, according to a study led by Michigan State University that was published recently in the Journal of Physical Activity and Health.

The study indicated that people who walked their dogs walked about an hour longer per week than people who owned dogs but didn't walk them.

"We found people who walked their dog also had higher overall levels of both moderate and vigorous physical activities," said Mathew Reeves, an epidemiologist at Michigan State.

A study at the University of Missouri in 2009 found that senior citizens go for longer walks, and walk faster, when their companion is canine rather than human.

Dr. Charles Sturm, a family-medicine practitioner at West Penn Hospital, Forbes Regional Campus, in Monroeville, Pa., owned and walked a dog for 13 years.

"We walked 20 to 25 minutes in the morning and up to an hour in the evening," Sturm said. "Even longer on weekends."

"It's a very easy and convenient way to exercise," he said. "No special equipment is needed. You don't have to drive somewhere or go to a sports field to participate."

Dr. Dawn Marcus, a neurologist and pain researcher at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, has written a book, "Fit as Fido," which asserts that dogs can teach us a lot about healthy living.

"Dogs really are nature's personal trainers," Marcus told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. "They model fitness behaviors, and behaviors for eating and socializing, too."

Dogs are always eager to go for walks, she said. "Unlike your human exercise buddies, dogs are not going to beg off" if the weather is bad.

In addition to an eagerness to exercise regardless of weather, "dogs love sleep," Marcus said. "People who don't sleep are more likely to have diabetes, high blood pressure."

And when dogs are on their walks, they stop to socialize with other dogs, she said.

"Stopping and saying hello to other people is important to human health as well," Marcus said. "Research shows social interactions are essential to human health."

In addition to benefiting from following the example of dogs, we'd be healthier if we treated ourselves the way we treat our dogs, she said. Most dog owners feed their pets healthy food, and see to it that they don't overeat.

"The other thing we learn from our dogs is an attitude for approaching life," Marcus said. "The dog is always wagging his tail and is eager to go out."

The Michigan State study indicated that younger and older people are more likely than middle-aged people to walk their dogs, and that larger-breed dogs are taken for longer walks than are smaller dogs.



Writer urges crowd to embrace poetry

Angelou gives 'history in action' to audience.

By **JANESE SILVEY**

Maya Angelou urged a sold-out crowd on the University of Missouri campus last night to tear down walls of ignorance, embrace humanity and find comfort in poetry.

The 83-year-old writer had audience members on their feet before she even began. She received a second standing ovation at the end of the program.

"It's an opportunity to see history in action," said Jonathan Watson, there with his wife, Daryle. "I grew up reading her stories and poems. This is an opportunity to witness what I've been reading about."

Angelou began her talk by apologizing for having to postpone her MU visit from a February date: She was busy receiving the Medal of Freedom, which, she said, she accepted "for all of us."

"My intention is to represent all of us," Angelou said from a wooden chair in the middle of the Jesse Auditorium stage. "I am black. That is obvious. But I am also white, Asian, Spanish American, Native American. I am fat and thin, pretty and plain, rich and poor, old and young, gay and straight. I am American."

And if you don't like that? "Too bad," Angelou said. "I stand up as an American to represent all of us."

Angelou's 90-minute talk included a snippet from her childhood, captured in her popular memoir, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings." At age 7, Angelou was raped by her mom's live-in boyfriend. He spent one night in jail and was found murdered a few days later. A young Angelou blamed herself, thinking her words had killed him, and she stopped talking for about six years. Eventually, after returning to her grandmother's house in Stamps, Ark., she broke her silence.

The experience didn't hold her back. Best known for her poetry, Angelou spent her younger years studying dance and acting, editing a weekly publication in Egypt and writing screenplays. She composed a poem for President Bill Clinton's inauguration in 1993 and later wrote a poem for the United Nations. Angelou concluded last night's presentation reading that poem, a career milestone, she said: She was 16, pregnant and unmarried when the United Nations was formed.

Angelou also apologized for the world to young people in the audience.

"I'm sorry," she said, after saying her generation is handing them a world full of racism and sexism. "Some of us don't have the courage to tell you that, but here it is."

She charged them with making it better. "You're here to make this country more than it is today, and this world. We need you much more than people tell you," she said.

Angelou encouraged audience members to find guidance in poetry.

"Poetry will remind you you're a human being, and somebody has been there before you," she said. Others have been lonely and confused, and "miraculously, someone has come through and survived and thrived and done better than that."

Several times during the night, Angelou repeated key themes, such as tearing down walls and being human.

"Young men and women, if I have one theme in all of my books and music lyrics and children's books, it's I am a human being," she said. "Young men and women, please internalize that."

Those who do, she said, can "not only liberate yourself from ignorance; you can liberate other people from your ignorance."

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MU takes part in course redesign project

More effective teaching is goal.

By **JANESE SILVEY**

The **University of Missouri** plans to redesign a popular undergraduate course as part of a new statewide plan to make large lecture classes more efficient while improving student performance.

The UM System is leading the initiative, which is funded with a \$250,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Next Generation Learning Challenges funds will pay for a consultant to work with all 13 public four-year universities in the state to each redesign a specific course. Under the proposed process, each university would test that class on its own campus before sharing ideas and results with one another.

"Instead of 27 instructors coming up with their own ways of teaching algebra, there could be one master course," said Chris Weisbrook, a faculty fellow at the UM System who is coordinating the initiative. "We could figure out what's the most effective way to teach algebra, build a course and adopt that for an entire institution."

All 13 institutions have agreed to share their information with other campuses. That doesn't mean all schools will use the same class, Weisbrook said, but each could tailor the ideas.

At MU, Larry Ries, an associate teaching professor, is starting to rethink how he delivers Statistics 1200. Ries lectures two sections of the class, both of which have 500 students, twice a week. Students also meet weekly with a teaching assistant in smaller groups.

The class works fine, but capacity is an issue, Ries said. It's a popular class because it meets a general education requirement and, for many majors, a degree requirement.

"I thought it would be a good candidate" for redesign "because a lot of what I do could effectively be accomplished online," he said.

Lecturing large groups is passive, he said, because students aren't likely to ask questions in classes that large. Plus, he already records his lectures and posts them online, so students don't have to come to class.

Details have yet to be worked out, but Ries envisions posting lectures online only and using one class period a week to provide a more interactive learning session.

"My thought is: If I'm going to make you actually show up and be in the room, it should be something worth your while, something to give you a deeper understanding of the discussion," he said.

Additionally, small group discussions would move to a computer lab, where students could do online assignments and ask questions at their own pace.

Ries is working with a team of instructional designers to hash out specifics. A proposal is due this summer for possible implementation by spring 2012. If successful, MU would share ideas from the repackaged class with other universities to consider for their own statistics courses.

Ries has been teaching for 14 years. "It's a lot easier to do things the same way you've always done them," he said. "The course works well, but it could be better."

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Science event brings teens to university

Competition is statewide affair.

By **BRENNAN DAVID**

High school sophomore Alex Watson could only describe his axial scorpion as highly modified.

It needed more power for yesterday's Missouri Science Olympiad, and that's exactly what his homemade remote-controlled vehicle brought to the sumobot competition. So much power, his wheel flew off.

"The motor is stock, but that is pretty much it," said Watson, who attends Platt County High School. "But even it has been over-volted for more power."

More than 3,000 eighth- through 12th-grade students, coaches and parents were on the MU campus yesterday for the annual competition. Events included a bottle rocket competition, tower building, sumobots and other events.

Watson's vehicle completed most of the day as a tri-bot because of the loss of its wheel early on in the competition. He competed against students from across the state in the sumobot competition, where the homemade bots battled head-to-head in their attempt to push the other outside of the ring. The bots had two minutes to complete the task, and tie-breakers were settled by a measure of the bot's weight. The lightest bot wins.

"I did well considering I only had three wheels," Watson said. "The key is to get low."

Next year, Watson, 16, said he plans to start from scratch and build the bot entirely out of lightweight metals around the house. Parts of yesterday's bot included metal from a screen door and a shower

The competition molds engineers of the future, said Michael Orlando. A volunteer who kept score for the sumobot competition, Orlando is an engineering student at Missouri University of Science and Technology working toward his master's degree. He said such competitions confirmed his interest in the science at a young age and nurtured it.

"This competition defined me more than any other event in high school," he said. "I knew while and after doing this that I wanted to be an engineer."

Orlando said the level of competition prepared him for many of his entry-level classes in college.

The colleges of Education, Engineering, Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and the Master's in Public Health program awarded \$500 scholarships to first-place winners in the nine events hosted yesterday. Winners will advance to the National Science Olympiad to be held May 20-21 at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.

Results should be posted sometime today on the event's website, www.moscioly.org.



Students share adventures

MU hosts event for community.

By **JACOB BARKER**

Six-year-old Sunday Crane loved making slime and bouncy balls at the **University of Missouri's Adventures in Education event** yesterday at Jesse Hall. But the dairy cow standing outside on the lawn was hard to beat.

"Milking the cow was my favorite," Sunday said.

Sunday and her sister, Amelie, 4, joined hundreds of other children on the MU campus to learn some of the basics of science from the university's graduate students. About 85 graduate students set up 24 exhibits for the free event for area families as part of Graduate Education Week. "They may just be having fun, but I hope they're picking up a little education from it," said Heather Crane, Sunday and Amelie's mother.

The cows, part of an exhibit put on by graduate students from the Division of Animal Sciences, were definitely popular. Even Anne Deaton, who was there with her husband, Chancellor Brady Deaton, said she learned something. "I grew up in Brooklyn," Deaton said. "But they taught me how to milk a cow."

Anne Deaton was there to present three exhibits with the Chancellor's Award for Public Outreach, which recognized students for their efforts turning research into understandable concepts for young children.

"This is so important in terms of the outreach of the university to the community," Deaton said. "You can begin that informational process and that enthusiasm for learning at a very young age."

The Animal Sciences team took second place in the outreach award, and the kids flocking around the baby chickens at the booth explained its success.

"The big thing is to know where food comes from," said the team's leader, Kizzi Roberts. But like all of the exhibits, the message has to be tweaked for a young audience. "These chickens are actually for meat, but we can talk about them growing up and laying eggs."

Public outreach is an important factor in determining grants and other research funding awards, said Graduate School Dean George Justice. That's one of the reasons the graduate school has put on the event for the past five years. But it's also important for kids, and even their parents, to see how research affects their daily lives.

"The most important mission is to plant the seed for advanced education in elementary school children," Justice said. "We also want parents to come and see if they want to pursue further education."

The event has remained popular with the public. By 10:30 a.m. yesterday, about 100 kids were in Jesse Hall, said Robin Walker, who helps organize the event. "It has been a steady stream, so we're easily going to have 200 to 300 again this year," she said.

Many of those kids ended up standing around the Chemistry Is Cool booth, which took first place. The students there taught children how to make bouncy balls, and they asked kids whether a mixture of corn starch and water was liquid or solid.

"Their favorite seems to be the bouncy balls," said team leader Marjorie Hoffman. "The ones who like to get messy like to play with the corn starch."

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Kaleidoscope shares voices

NAACP chapter is the inspiration.

By **JACOB BARKER**

Pausing between poems, Jasmine Mans reminded the standing-room only audience that filled the MU Student Center last night why they were there.

"You all came out on a Saturday night to get fly for activism, to get fly for truth," she told them. "I wouldn't say I'm a preacher, I wouldn't say I'm an activist, but a lot of people didn't wake up today and have the ability to go to college. ... We have an opportunity to raise awareness."

That was the idea behind Kaleidoscope: Art as Activism, hosted by the MU student chapter of the NAACP. Student poets and artists sought to share some truth with the nearly 200 people that attended the event.

Mans, a Newark, N.J., native and a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was the keynote speaker. The young poet already has quite a resume: She has been featured on the HBO Series "Brave New Voices," worked as a spokeswoman for the New York area's largest literacy program and penned a play. Her friendship with one of the event's organizers brought her to Columbia, but so did her passion for her art.

"Part of my job is to travel around the world and perform spoken-word poetry," she said.

Kaleidoscope is the brainchild of Kiara Lanier, an MU sophomore studying English. The Chicago native sings and writes poetry, and she, too, has performed on "Brave New Voices."

Lanier said she is used to an environment that encourages "using your voice and art as activism." But in Columbia, she said she struggled to find a forum that encouraged it. So last semester, she put together the first Kaleidoscope event herself, writing sponsorship proposals, organizing events and spreading the word. This time, she recruited a Kaleidoscope board to help organize the event, and the turnout proved the effort paid off.

"I want people to think about expanding their perspectives and being conscious outside of yourself and using your art for purposes outside yourself," Lanier said.

Malik Saaka, one of the event's organizers, used the forum to showcase his art. The paintings he displayed last night focused on the objectification of women, he said, by representing them in ornate clothing while emphasizing the discomfort in their expressions. "Any type of 'ism is what we strive to bring to the forefront," he said.

The diversity the event fostered is really needed on campus, said audience member Melissa Tarantola.

"I feel like there's not a lot of it here, especially with all the stuff that's happened on campus, like that cotton ball and spray paint thing," she said.

"More people know about that than know about this," her boyfriend Sam Niehaus chimed in.

Kaleidoscope board member Mickey Moulder said the group plans to put on the event regularly, and the hope is to keep it going even after the current organizers graduate.

"I would love to come back here when I'm older, in my 30s, and see Kaleidoscope still going," Moulder said.

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Do public employees get a better deal? It depends

By MICHAEL HILL

MU MENTION PAGE 3

A prosecutor in California collects \$118,000 in unused sick days. A police officer in New York rings up \$125,000 in overtime the year before retiring and "spikes" his pension payments. An Ohio school superintendent is hired for the same job from which he just retired and takes in more than \$100,000 annually in salary and pension.

The headlines feed a stereotype of fat-cat public workers with the kind of cushy benefits that most private-sector workers can only dream about. With the economy still wobbly, governors are looking hard at employee pay and benefits, and taxpayers are asking whether state and local governments can remain so generous to public workers.

The issue has risen to national prominence as Republican governors in Wisconsin and Ohio have sought not only to make public employees pay more for their benefits but also prohibit many aspects of collective bargaining for the unions that represent them.

EDITOR'S NOTE - This story is the latest installment in a joint initiative by The Associated Press and Associated Press Managing Editors on the fiscal crisis facing U.S. states and cities, how state and local governments are dealing with severe budget cuts, and how American lives will change because of it.

Just how accurate is the portrayal of lavish compensation and benefits for public workers?

Researchers disagree over whether public workers in different states do better when it comes to the larger picture of total compensation - that is, earnings plus benefits. But there's little debate that when it comes to benefits alone, it's better on the public side.

"Because of the economic problems, we've suddenly hit upon the fact that public workers have better benefits. But they've always had them, even previous to collective bargaining. That was one of the reasons people took a government job," said Jeffrey Keefe, a labor and employment relations associate professor at Rutgers University in New Jersey, who argues that state and local workers are generally undercompensated.

The workers cashing in on excessive benefits are not the norm, and average annual benefits for the nation's rank-and-file public work force are relatively modest. Public safety employees, who risk their lives or can be seriously injured on the job, can make a persuasive argument for top-notch benefits. It's one reason Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker exempted them from his crackdown on public employee unions.

Still, most state and local government workers are not engaged in arresting criminals or saving people from burning buildings and generally receive better benefits than their counterparts in the private sector. They typically receive better pensions, better health care insurance deals and are much more likely to get retiree health benefits.

They also receive other perks not typically matched in the private sector, such as more paid holidays and the ability to cash out accrued sick time.

For every dollar the average private employer pays in benefits per hour, state and local governments pay \$1.71, according to federal Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

However, those national averages don't show how public worker benefits vary from job to job and from state to state. And benefits are only part of the compensation picture, along with salary. There is disagreement over whether the public-private benefit gap is offset by higher private-sector salaries.

The most politically combustible public benefits are the ones that have drawn so much attention as states' budget deficits have widened - lifetime pensions and retiree health care. Many states face tens of billions of dollars in unfunded liabilities because they have contractually promised retiree benefits they now cannot afford.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie became a Republican star last year by taking on teachers unions over benefits. This year, a new crop of governors has followed his lead.

Pension payments account for roughly 3.8 percent of state and local expenditures, but that share is expected to grow, according to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College.

In California alone, an independent government watchdog agency published a report this year that estimated a \$240 billion shortfall for the state's 10 largest public employee pension plans.

Some cities will have to devote from one-third to one-half of their budgets to support retiree benefits in the near future.

Most public workers get "defined benefit" pensions from the time they retire until the day they die, along with health care. By comparison, only about one in five private-sector workers has a defined benefit pension plan. More have 401(k)-style "defined contribution" plans, which put the burden of saving and investing entirely on the employee.

Public employees can receive more than twice the pension benefits of their private-sector counterparts. The Little Hoover Commission, the California watchdog agency that issued the recent pension report, found that retirees with more than 30 years in the state's public employees' retirement system average almost \$67,000 a year in benefits, or more than double the state's per-capita income.

It's notably better on the public side for health care benefits, too.

Some states cover the full tab for at least some of their workers' health plans, although that number appears to be shrinking. Governments are more likely to provide health care coverage for dependent grandchildren and part-time employees, and are three times more likely to provide retiree health care coverage, according to the latest employee benefit survey by the Society for Human Resource Management.

Very few private workers get employer-paid health care once they retire.

Retirement and health insurance can account for more than half the value of benefits received by state and local workers. But public employees hold an edge in some other perks, too.

- Researchers peg the U.S. retirement age around 63. Meanwhile, the average teacher retirement age is 58, according to Michael Podgursky, a professor of economics at the University of Missouri-Columbia who studies teacher quality issues. It's common for police officers and firefighters to be able to retire after 20 years of service, although those jobs can be among the most demanding and dangerous. Some states are considering higher retirement ages or have negotiated that change for future employees.

- State and local workers average 11 sick days after a year on the job, compared to private workers' eight, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Some public workers can "cash out" unused sick days, a rarity in the private sector.

- State and local workers average 11 paid holidays a year, compared to eight in the private sector, according to the bureau. The holiday mix varies. Louisiana gives a day off for Mardi Gras, Massachusetts celebrates Patriots Day as a state holiday, and Georgia is among the states that mark Confederate Memorial Day.

- State and local workers also are less likely than private-sector workers to be fired or laid off, according to federal data.

Private workers do hold an edge in overtime pay and bonuses. The public-private benefit gap also narrows when looking at larger companies - think of benefits for a clerk at a mom-and-pop store versus an engineer at Google. The largest private companies actually pay more per worker for vacation and holiday time, according to the latest per-hour Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

Also, public employees in some states - including teachers in California - are not in the Social Security system, meaning they rely more heavily on their government pensions for retirement security.

While the benefit packages are being targeted in many statehouses, pro-union voices counter that the government employees society relies upon to patrol the streets, rush into burning buildings, teach the next generation or issue driver's licenses deserve to be decently compensated. They say public employees are being unfairly scapegoated for the fiscal crisis afflicting most states.

In New York City, Patrolmen's Benevolent Association President Patrick J. Lynch said police officers' hard-fought benefits are earned, given the perilous nature of their jobs.

"The reality is that when they take that last step off their stoop in the morning, they may not return in the evening," Lynch said. "So we're different, and we need to be treated differently. And that's the thin line that keeps everything working."

Talkin' 'bout a revolution

University ignores its faculty grievance rules at its own peril.

BY EDDIE ADELSTEIN

What does the faculty at the University of Missouri have in common with the citizens of Yemen, Syria and Egypt? We all live under a repressive, undemocratic system.



E. Adelstein

We, like they do, deserve better.

The university operates under our constitution, "the collected rules and regulations" that provide the governance for this institution. The administration consistently ignores these rules unless they serve in its interest.

To have academic freedom, the university must provide for certain protections that allow critical thinking and freedom from punishment when new ideas conflict with old. This is the basis of a viable and creative university. There are two mechanisms by which this is achieved. Some faculty members, by virtue of tenure, have some limited protection. Both tenured and non-tenured faculty, however, depend upon the university grievance process for academic freedom and freedom of speech.

A complicated grievance process, which in the past has been peer-group-driven, allows all faculty members to present perceived injustices to peers. In designing this process, time after time, administrative officers and their legal minions have refused to allow a process where the faculty member could win.

Think about that. After well-thought-out arguments based on facts are presented, the deans, chancellor and their legal advisers can summarily rule against the faculty. What kind of Third World dictatorship is

any more ruthless than the process here? In a country based on democratic principles, how is it possible a judicial system can be summarily overruled?

This leads to a lack of academic freedom and, for many, limits freedom of speech. Most non-tenured faculty members serve on a year-by-year contract, and three-year contracts are reserved for the highest-qualified, highest-performing non-tenured faculty. These yearly contracts create a giant fear factor that limits academic freedom as well as freedom of speech.

Each department is like a small feudal kingdom run by a chairperson with vast powers. The only recourse faculty members have when they believe they are wronged is the grievance process. However, because this process is so corrupted, some tyrants rule and the best faculty members leave. No wonder we continue to rank low in national surveys of comparable universities.

Clearly in many cases, ruthless leadership is considered an institutional asset and plays a role in the selection of high-level administrative positions. With his background in the corporate world, former UM System President Gary Forsee was considered a prize because he would support a ruthless, highly paid administration that rarely rewarded staff and faculty and made their welfare the lowest priority.

Most successful grievances are in reality a judgment that the collected rules and regulations are the law of the land. Why is the university administration willing to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars through expensive delays, outsourcing to highly paid attorneys and legal threats? It does this because if a faculty member wins, MU administrators would have to adhere to the rules and regulations. They would be culpable for their actions and might actually be fired for breaking the rules.

Currently, most fiscal problems are solved by raising tuition. We are slowly excluding the very population of students this university was created for: smart, hard-working but not wealthy. MU was to serve as a leveling ground for rural Missourians who were not given the advantage of being born rich. Until we become a real democracy where justice is the rule of law and education is available to all who can benefit, we will continue on an intellectual and creative downward course.

We deserve better.

Eddie Adelstein is an associate professor of pathology at MU's School of Medicine.