Greitens targets state's colleges, universities in latest budget proposal

By Kurt Erickson and Ashley Jost St. Louis Post-Dispatch 1 hr ago

JEFFERSON CITY • Although he says the state’s budget situation is stronger than last year, Gov. Eric Greitens unveiled a spending proposal Monday that will cut funding for Missouri’s public universities.

The $28.7 billion blueprint, which includes $68 million less in state funding to universities and two-year schools, will now become the basis of negotiations between the second-year Republican governor and the GOP-controlled House and Senate.

“The budget we’re introducing today is a common-sense, conservative budget. We’re watching out for the tax dollars of the people of Missouri, making important investments in Missouri’s future, and also making tough decisions,” Greitens said during a press conference in his office.

A key factor behind the cuts is a rise in spending on Medicaid, a health care program for the poor and elderly that will cost the state more than $11 billion next year. Greitens described the rising costs as an “explosion” but said the answer is not to raise taxes.

Immediate reaction, even among the governor’s fellow Republican lawmakers, was harsh.

“We cannot continue to balance the budget on the backs of students; they are the future workers and job creators Missouri desperately needs to cultivate,” said Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia. “Continuing to neglect our public colleges, universities and trade schools seriously hinders Missouri’s ability to compete.”

The outline relies on a projection that revenues will grow by 2.5 percent in the fiscal year beginning July 1.

The budget blueprint was released 12 days after Greitens acknowledged he had an affair with his former hairdresser in 2015. He refused to answer multiple questions about allegations that he took a picture of the woman and told her he would release it if she talked about the affair.

Greitens' lawyer: "No violence. No picture taken. No threat of blackmail.”
Greitens said he had no plans to resign from office and he brushed off questions about whether the scandal could hurt his ability to deliver on the promises outlined in his budget, which includes adding $87 million for elementary and secondary education.

Other initiatives include a $162.8 million increase in funding for roads and bridges and a new $25 million matching grant fund for local communities to build roads and other infrastructure.

Missouri Chamber of Commerce President Dan Mehan praised the matching grant plan, saying the money could help businesses beyond building new roads and bridges.

“Missouri also needs to make key investments in our ports and utility infrastructure — investments that will boost the economies of communities across Missouri,” Mehan said.

The outline would spend about $200 million more than the current budget, but it would not raise taxes. State workers earning under $50,000 would qualify for one-time bonuses of $650 pending further reforms of the state hiring system, Greitens said.

The budget plan would cut about 90 positions from the state workforce of about 54,000.

Greitens also wants to close unused bed space at state juvenile detention facilities, saving about $3 million but add about $29 million in new funding for programs serving foster and adopted children.

The plan calls for the approval of a $250 million short-term loan that could be used to speed up tax returns, which have been chronically delayed in recent years due to cash flow problems.

Democrats said the proposal spreads money thinly around state government, creating the illusion that Greitens is addressing the state’s needs.

“But no amount of budgetary sleight of hand can obscure the reality that years of tax cuts for corporations and special interests have left Missouri without sufficient money for the basics,” said House Minority Leader Gail McCann Beatty, D-Kansas City.

One bargaining chip on the table is a $40 million proposed cut to Medicaid programs.

Neither Greitens nor budget director Dan Haug would provide details of what might be slashed, saying the mechanics were still be worked out.

“We’ll define that as we go along,” Haug said.

Nursing home advocates, who faced a fight last year over cuts to their rates, were disappointed the proposal didn’t include reimbursement rate increases.

“While the governor did not further reduce the Medicaid provider rate, Missouri knows the cost of caring for these citizens and should set its provider rate accordingly,” said Nikki Strong, executive vice president of government affairs and member services for Missouri Health Care Association.

Cutting state aid to public universities has been a theme in Greitens’ first year in office.
He previously reduced spending on universities by $24 million to help balance the current budget, in which universities weathered a 9 percent cut. Those reductions led to hundreds of layoffs at two- and four-year institutions statewide.

Multiple higher education leaders were hopeful the Legislature would restore some core funding.

In addition to the cuts, 10 percent of each school’s funding will be tied to a series of performance standards, such as graduation rates and how many graduates get jobs or enroll in graduate school after they leave campus. One college administrator explained that schools will get that funding, but if they don’t meet all of their measures, they could see cuts.

“We’re at the stage where, to continue to meet community needs, we’ve got to figure out other ways,” St. Louis Community College Chancellor Jeff Pittman told the Post-Dispatch. “We’ve got to consider increasing tuition. That’s where it is for me.”

His college is among several statewide that has endured layoffs and voluntary buyouts in an attempt to save money after year-over-year budget reductions.

Chuck Ambrose, president at the University of Central Missouri, said he’s hopeful higher education advocates in the Legislature will reconsider the “starting point” that is Greitens’ budget.

“These cuts and the divestment of state support is really shifting responsibility to individuals and not the public good,” Ambrose said. “We believe these kinds of funding decisions cause damage that may be hard to repair.”

**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

Central Missouri legislators oppose Greitens’ higher ed cuts

By [Caitlin Campbell](mailto:caitlin.campbell@columbiajournall.com)

JEFFERSON CITY — A bipartisan group of Central Missouri legislators said Monday that another financial hit to higher education in the state would have lasting effects on the economy statewide and hinder Missourians’ ability to compete for jobs.

“After last year, more” cuts “is just pretty hard to swallow in mid-Missouri,” said Rep. Chuck Basye, R—Rocheport. “It’s certainly not going to be something that I support at all.”
While making his first public appearance since details of his extramarital affair and alleged blackmail became public, Gov. Eric Greitens announced a fiscal 2019 budget plan to cut $68 million in core funding from state colleges and universities — more than half of which would come from the University of Missouri. In addition to the cut, the governor is recommending an additional $67.6 million in core funding be set aside, which the schools could earn only if they meet certain performance goals.

Compared to the $419 million appropriated in the fiscal 2018 budget specifically for the University of Missouri System, the governor is recommending a $376 million allocation this coming year — an almost 10 percent reduction. The $42.6 million cut for UM is in addition to $37.6 million which will be withheld unless the university system earns the approval of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education by meeting certain performance measures.

If UM were to completely fail to meet performance goals, about $80 million — or 19 percent — would be cut from the money legislators appropriated last year.

Greitens’ characterization of his proposal as only about 8 percent in higher education cuts is “misleading,” said Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia. He noted the cumulative cuts to education during the past two years amount to closer to 20 percent. The core cuts in addition to performance-based withholdings amounts to “much more than 8 percent,” he said.

Kendrick said he and his colleagues are still trying to understand just how the performance of colleges and universities will be measured to earn additional core funding.

Any additional cuts to higher education are damaging to the entire state of Missouri, and will be felt acutely in Columbia and Boone County, Kendrick said. He said his biggest concern is that the governor wants to cut higher education expenditures when the economy is doing well.

“We need to put Missouri in a place to be successful, with a fully trained and educated workforce,” Kendrick said. “Without that our ability to attract and retain businesses might be affected.”

Also taking issue with the more than $60 million core reduction was Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, who said in a prepared statement that the state cannot continue decreasing allocations to two- and four-year colleges and universities despite legislators’ commitments to increases. Neglecting colleges, universities and trade schools “seriously hinders Missouri’s ability to compete,” and the general assembly should work together to pass a budget that reflect statewide priorities, he wrote.

“We cannot continue to balance the budget on the backs of students,” said Rowden. “They are the future workers and job creators Missouri desperately needs to cultivate.”

Though it would decreases allocations for higher education, the plan would increase funding for elementary and secondary education by $87 million and give about $30 million to programs to support vulnerable children, Greitens said. He said “tough choices” must be made every budget year.
“Now the good news is I really appreciate the cooperation we’ve had from a lot of leaders in higher education,” Greitens said, also repeatedly thanking UM System leaders during his presentation for their “strong leadership.”

University of Missouri System leaders issued a joint statement Monday which states that as the largest public institution in the state, the system will contribute “its share” to statewide budget cuts. The statement was issued by University of Missouri System President Mun Choi, University of Missouri-Columbia Chancellor Alexander Cartwright, University of Missouri-Kansas City interim Chancellor Barbara Bichelmeyer, Missouri University of Science and Technology interim Chancellor Christopher Maples and University of Missouri-St. Louis Chancellor Thomas George.

The response stops short of criticizing the governor’s plan, but notes that the most recent round of cuts to the UM System mean $71 million was cut during the past three years. With Greitens’ proposal, an additional $38 million is at risk through the performance measures, the news release states.

Missouri lawmakers react to Greitens' proposed budget details

By GREG DAILEY

JEFFERSON CITY — Several Missouri lawmakers released statements or posted to social media their reactions Monday afternoon to Gov. Eric Greitens’ proposed FY19 budget details.

Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, spoke strongly against the governor's statement on cutting higher education funding by 7.7 percent.

“We cannot continue to balance the budget on the backs of students; they are the future workers and job creators Missouri desperately needs to cultivate,” said Rowden. “Continuing to neglect our public colleges, universities and trade schools seriously hinders Missouri’s ability to compete. I look forward to working with my colleagues to pass a budget that better reflects
Missourians’ priorities.”

House Minority Leader Gail McCann Beatty said the governor’s proposal failed to address basic funds.

“The governor’s budget would put a lot of drops into a lot of buckets to create the illusion of addressing Missouri’s many vital needs. But no amount of budgetary sleight of hand can obscure the reality that years of tax cuts for corporations and special interests have left Missouri without sufficient money for the basics. Until the Republicans who control state government fix the structural problems they have inflicted on Missouri’s finances, the state will continue to stumble from one budget crisis to the next with no hope for progress in sight.”

To watch Greitens’ address, click here.

University of Missouri leadership also released a statement regarding the higher education funds cut:

“We recognize and appreciate the hard work of our elected leaders in addressing the fiscal challenges facing the state. As the largest public institution of higher learning in Missouri, we’ll also contribute our share to address these fiscal challenges. The latest reductions in state support for the University of Missouri System add up to $71 million during the past three years with an additional $38 million at risk through performance funding. This has required administrative restructuring, efficiency measures, and cuts to academic and support programs. These budget difficulties also underscore the need for Missouri public universities to have relief from Senate Bill 389 to grow our revenue during periods of shrinking state support. Without this relief, the quality of our educational offerings, access to critical services by our students, and the impact of our institution in creating economic and community development will be diminished.

“Our commitment to an affordable education is stronger than ever before, and we look forward to working with elected leaders to keep our investment in higher education a top priority for the state of Missouri because of its significant positive impact for the future of Missouri.”
Gov. Greitens proposes cutting higher education funding to pay for infrastructure, public safety, K-12 education


JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — Governor Eric Greitens outlined his budget proposal at a news conference in the Governor’s Office Monday afternoon.

According to Greitens, his budget proposal includes increases in funding for infrastructure, education, public safety, and programs to protect Missouri’s most vulnerable children.

The increase in funding will mean cuts to higher education funding as will Medicaid spending, and other smaller reductions in government spending.

**Greitens proposed a 7.7 percent decrease in funding for higher education.**

“The budget we’re introducing today is a common-sense, conservative budget. We’re watching out for the tax dollars of the people of Missouri, making important investments in Missouri’s future, and also making tough decisions to make sure we don’t burden our children with debt,” said Governor Greitens in his news release.

“Our budget increases funding for our priorities: infrastructure, education, public safety, and protecting our most vulnerable children. We’re able to afford those investments by making tough choices, protecting every taxpayer dollar, and eliminating wasteful spending.”

Included in the Governor’s proposals are:
– $87 million increase in funding for K-12 education.
– $162.8 million increase in funding for roads and bridges.
– $25 million for a Jobs and Infrastructure fund to pay for key infrastructure projects that will attract jobs.
– More than $29 million in new funding for programs that assist Missouri’s most vulnerable children.
Greitens also fielded questions on his affair with a woman in March 2015. The governor admitted to the affair but denied the woman’s claim to her now ex-husband that Greitens took a partially nude photo of her and threatened to release it if she spoke about their relationship. The ex-husband recorded the conversation. In the recording, the now ex-wife gives her then-husband details of her sexual encounter with Greitens. The unidentified woman did not know her then-husband was recording their conversation when she confessed to him.

“There was no blackmail. There was no violence. There was no photograph for blackmail. There was no threat of using a photograph for blackmail,” said Greitens. “The mistake that I made was that I was engaged in a consensual relationship. It is a mistake for which I am deeply sorry. For Sheena and I that is where the story begins and ends.”

**Statement from University of Missouri-Kansas City about state budget outlook:**

“We recognize and appreciate the hard work of our elected leaders in addressing the fiscal challenges facing the state. As the largest public institution of higher learning in Missouri, we’ll also contribute our share to address these fiscal challenges. The latest reductions in state support for the University of Missouri System add up to $71 million during the past three years with an additional $38 million at risk through performance funding. This has required administrative restructuring, efficiency measures, and cuts to academic and support programs. These budget difficulties also underscore the need for Missouri public universities to have relief from Senate Bill 389 to grow our revenue during periods of shrinking state support. Without this relief, the quality of our educational offerings, access to critical services by our students, and the impact of our institution in creating economic and community development will be diminished.

“Our commitment to an affordable education is stronger than ever before, and we look forward to working with elected leaders to keep our investment in higher education a top priority for the state of Missouri because of its significant positive impact for the future of Missouri.”

**Greitens’ proposed budget cuts higher education funding again**

By Kathryn Hardison and Kaitlin Washburn

JEFFERSON CITY — Higher education is under the chopping block again after Gov. Eric Greitens released his budget plan for the 2019 fiscal year Monday, where he proposed an almost $98 million cut, or 10.8 percent.
While the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will gain almost $55 million in general revenue in Greitens’ proposed budget, the University of Missouri System will be cut by $43 million compared to the appropriation from the previous year.

This news for higher education comes after a $159 million cut the previous fiscal year.

During a press conference unveiling the $28.7 billion budget proposal, Greitens called his budget “common sense” and “conservative.”

“We are not raising taxes on the people of Missouri,” Greitens said. “We told departments to tighten their belts.”

But some lawmakers — who will have final say over the budget — are saying the higher education cuts are too large.

**Higher education**

While it’s only the beginning of a long process for the budget, Budget Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick, R-Shell Knob, said he doesn’t want further cuts to higher education.

“If we can have some ‘aha’ moments in the budget and figure out if we can save money in certain places, I think there would be a lot of people in the legislature who would prefer to not see higher education cuts,” Fitzpatrick said.

Fitzpatrick will be meeting with UM System President Mun Choi next week to discuss how the UM System plans to move forward with the governor’s budget.

Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, R-Cape Girardeau, criticized the governor’s continued attack on higher education.

“Another cut is going to do nothing but hurt our education system,” said Lichtenegger, chairwoman of the House Higher Education Committee. “People are going to start going out of state to colleges because our professors are going to leave — that’s what I fear.”

Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, did not respond to requests for comment, but he said in a **Twitter post** after the budget was released how the state needs prioritize higher education.

“We cannot continue to balance the budget on the backs of students; they are the future workers and job creators Missouri desperately needs to cultivate,” Rowden tweeted.

Rep. Kip Kendrick, D-Columbia, said the proposed cuts to higher education is “very concerning” and that “there’s never been a greater need for a highly skilled, well-educated workforce.”

Greitens said that higher education leaders worked with him in preparing the budget, including Choi, and that the UM System identified more than $70 million in savings. The proposed budget
also includes an increase in scholarship funding, including Access Missouri Scholarship Program and the A+ Scholarship Program.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said it is too soon to tell how the budget cuts will impact MU and the UM System.

“We understand that the state is facing significant fiscal challenges,” he said. “That’s also why we know that there is consideration to provide some relief related to Senate Bill 389.”

Senate Bill 389, passed in 2007, caps tuition increases for Missouri universities at the rate of inflation.

Repealing that bill “would help by giving us some flexibility in our budget,” Basi said. “So that when we have fiscal crises like these in the future we will have a little bit more flexibility.”

“Regardless of the fate of the bill,” Basi added, “we will always be looking for ways to make college more affordable.”

Lichtenegger said she supports raising tuition caps — even as a temporary resource to colleges and universities in the state. Rowden introduced a bill to raise higher education tuition caps last week.

“Let the universities have a waiver this year on being able to raise their tuition,” Lichtenegger said. “As a Republican, I’m for free enterprise, and I think that people are going to go where they can get the best education.”

When Greitens proposed his budget, he described the cut to higher education funding as being 7.7 percent. That’s because he deducted the amount of money he has already withheld from higher education funding this year when making his comparison. The Missourian is comparing all of the governor’s recommendations to the actual amounts appropriated last year.

**K-12 education**

Elementary and secondary schools will receive total funding of $6.1 billion. According to Greitens, this is a record high.

One change Greitens wants to see with these additional funds is an increase in teacher pay.

“Teachers in Missouri are not getting the pay they deserve,” Greitens said. “That’s why the 2019 budget increases pay for teachers in state-run schools, and we’re sending more money than ever to our elementary, middle and high schools, and we want to see that our school districts follow our lead and increase teacher pay.”

An additional $2 million will also go to K-12 transportation.
Brent Ghan, deputy executive director of the Missouri School Boards’ Association, said he was pleased with the governor’s proposed funding increase for K-12 education, but noted a continued trend in cuts for school transportation.

“Over the past few years, we have seen nothing but cuts to school transportation which is a significant cost for school districts,” he said. “It definitely puts a burden on the local budgets for school districts because we’ve got to get the kids to school somehow, so that’s a challenge, but the overall (increase) is a positive.”

Ghan said the overall impact of the proposal will vary across the state depending on how dependent a school district is on state funds.

“For those districts that don’t depend a lot on foundation formula funding, transportation could put a strain on their budgets, so it’s kind of a mixed bag,” he said.

**Other highlights**

The budget also includes funding for programs that support Missouri’s vulnerable children. There is a more than $11.6 million increase in total child welfare spending compared to appropriations from the previous year.

Among other recommendations, Greitens’ proposal includes a $162.8 million in new funding for construction and maintaining state bridges and road systems. The budget also includes $25 million in new funding to establish a Jobs and Infrastructure Fund so local governments can match funding to infrastructure projects.

In April 2017, Greitens proposed a plan to equip every school in Missouri with access to broadband internet with the aid of $6 million in state funding and $39 million in federal funding, according to previous Missourian reporting. Greitens said that this effort will continue this year with another $6 million.

Greitens also proposed a pay increase for some state workers.

If a civil service reform is passed by the end of the session, state employees who make $50,000 a year or less will also get an increase in pay of $650. In addition, “we are going to invest an additional $61.2 million in state employee health care, we are fully funding the contribution to state employee pensions at $14.2 million,” Greitens said.

Among the areas where Greitens believes money can be saved is Medicaid. One of the cuts he is proposing is $40 million in “cost containment initiatives” which he said would not involve cutting services.

“The state of Missouri spends more money on healthcare than we do on K-12 education, community colleges, technical colleges, domestic violence shelters, veterans programs, our judicial system, public safety and our corrections system combined. That massive spending
increase on healthcare means we have to tighten up our other areas of government and spend less money,” Greitens said.

**Embattled Missouri governor proposes $68M in higher ed cuts**

By CHARLES NICHELSON


JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri Republican Gov. Eric Greitens made his first public appearance in nearly two weeks since acknowledging an extramarital affair, announcing a budget plan that would slice at least $68 million from public colleges and universities - a 10 percent cut from what was appropriated for the 2018 fiscal year.

**UM System spokesperson Christian Basi told KOMU 8 News the system understands the state's financial restraints and is watching the budget process closely; however, he stressed the budget is not set in stone.** He said the budget recommendation does give the system an idea of different funding scenarios for which to plan.

Greitens pitched the cut on Monday while outlining his roughly $28.8 billion budget recommendation for the fiscal year that begins in July. He's also asking for about $48 million less than what's called for under state law to fully fund K-12 public schools, though it is $87 million more than what was allocated for Elementary and Secondary Education funding in 2018.

During the budget proposal's unveiling, the Governor said his focus was on "making the tough choices that are necessary to make sure we don't burden Missouri's children with debt."
Greitens’ largest pitches include a more than $11.6 million increase in child welfare spending, an additional $162.8 million in infrastructure funding, and more than $15 million in additional public safety funding. He recommended the additional child welfare spending be used on foster-care programs, while the infrastructure spending would be used on Missouri's bridges, ports and roads. The additional public safety funding would be used on programs ranging from substance-abuse programs to raises for members of the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

The Governor also requested the Department of Social Services find an additional $40 million in savings through Medicaid cost containment initiatives, according to the Governor's budget recommendation pamphlet.

"In our work, we protected every dollar and every cent we could," said the governor of his budget team.

The budget recommendation news conference was also riddled with questions about the governor's affair. To read more about his response to those questions, click here.

**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

**Echoes of fall 2015 apparent at University of Missouri provost forum**

By Waverly Colville

**Issues that dominated discussion at the University of Missouri in the fall of 2015 were still important to many of those making suggestions at a forum Monday to identify qualities important in a new provost.**

University leaders are looking for a chief academic officer to replace Garnett Stokes, who is leaving after Jan. 31 to become University of New Mexico president. Jim Spain, vice provost of graduate studies and a professor of animal science, is filling in as interim provost until a permanent successor to Stokes is hired.

Some comments brought back the concerns that contributed to fall 2015 protests about administrators’ responses to complaints about racial incident and a lack of diversity and graduate student rights. Several speakers emphasized a new provost should promote inclusion and
diversity, have experience in working with graduate students and work to improve communication and staff morale.

Stokes came to MU in February 2015. She also served as interim chancellor after Hank Foley left last summer. A 21-member committee will identify candidates and carry out an open search, MU Chancellor Alexander Cartwright said last month when naming the committee. The group includes 11 faculty members and two students.

The search firm Isaacson Miller is helping to find candidates. The UM System also used the firm in searches that led to the hiring of Cartwright and System President Mun Choi.

The university hopes to interview candidates in April and May.

“It’s a challenging and exciting time and there’s certainly a changing landscape,” Cartwright said during the forum at the Reynolds Alumni Center.

Joi Moore, professor and director of the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies, and Marshall Stewart, vice chancellor for Extension and engagement, are leading the search.

Officials said the committee is looking for someone who has overseen student success and has a commitment to strong research and scholarship, diversity and inclusion and shared governance.

Noor Azizan-Gardner, the assistant deputy chancellor of diversity, said she would like to see candidates who have global awareness.

“It’s a global world and research is global,” she said during the forum.

Two graduate students said they would like a provost who has experience managing graduate education and one who has a background in not just hard sciences such as engineering, but also the humanities or social sciences.

Audience members also said the provost should improve online education and value staff members and recognize them for their contributions.

Moore and Stewart planned to use the feedback at the search committee’s first meeting, which was set for Monday.

“We’re not taking anything lightly,” Moore said.

There will be more forums throughout the semester, Stewart said. “It’s important there’s a lot of community buy-in because we want this person to be successful,” he said.

The search committee will take the university’s history into account while identifying candidates, Stewart said.
“We’ll use 2015 as a time to learn and to inform the way we decide things in the future,” he said. “Any institution that fails to learn from its history is doomed for failure and I think the university learned from that past and we’re going to continue to improve.”

Forum: Diversity awareness key in future MU provost

By Kathryn Palmer

The MU community wants the next provost to prioritize diversity and inclusion. That was the upshot of a forum Monday to gather input on a job description for the No. 2 position on campus.

The current provost, Garnett Stokes, leaves next week to become the president of the University of New Mexico. Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies, will serve in the interim.

Other characteristics sought for Stokes’ successor include working more effectively with graduate students, understanding how the university interacts with the legislative budget process and a desire to strengthen communications across MU’s swath of academic research fields.

Search committee co-chairs Joi Moore and Marshall Stewart spent about an hour fielding questions from about 25 participants, including several others on the 21-member committee, graduate students, faculty and administrative staff.

“We’re here to listen to you, the MU community,” said Moore, director of the School of Information Science and Learning Technologies.

The tumultuous events of fall 2015 weighed heavily in the discussion.

Since the protests about race relations and graduate student rights, there has been almost across-the-board turnover of top MU and UM System administrators. Stokes, who became provost in early 2015, was the last remaining high-ranking administrator from that time.

Eric Scott, a doctoral candidate in the English department, expressed disappointment in the progress made since and hopes a new provost will have ideas to “fix the problems that led to those problems.”

“We need a provost who is going to be able to step in and help make the institution better in that regard,” Scott said.
Moore and Stewart agreed, saying they view the 2015 protests as a learning opportunity.

“I feel like we have the chance to be a leader in taking those mistakes and issues that came up and coming up with very positive activities to make us a much stronger MU,” Moore said after the forum in Reynolds Alumni Center. “I think you have to have someone to look from a different perspective.”

Stewart, vice chancellor for extension and engagement, emphasized the need to “not only bring diversity to the table, but make sure it’s included in the conversation. … I think this next provost will come with a background and grounding in those issues.”

The MU provost directs all academic priorities, activities and policies on campus and is responsible for MU’s 14 colleges and their schools, departments and centers as well several other academic support units.

With such a broad network of academic bodies to direct, many participants, such as Jason Entsminger, a doctoral candidate in the Division of Applied Social Sciences, wants the new provost to work “with the system president to come up with a clear strategy for diversity hiring and retention.”

Stewart said the new hire will “need to bring ideas we haven’t thought about yet. … That will strengthen Chancellor Cartwright, President Choi, it will strengthen the faculty, the staff, the students. … It’s not necessarily just about the fit. It’s about the contribution. … Contribution is where it’s really made.”

Brittany Fults, Title IX education and prevention coordinator, hopes a new provost can provide fresh ideas to change “a culture that allows harm, retaliation to be used against graduate students” and ensure “the academy is a place where people can not only grow academically, but professionally and personally.”

Others raised hopes the new provost would help the STEM and humanities fields work together to strengthen MU as a Research 1 institution. Scott said, “it would be useful to have a provost who has a background in social sciences and humanities. … to ensure that we have a holistic approach.”

Additional concerns included an awareness of how the legislature appropriates higher education funding, a commitment to expanding MU’s online education initiatives and comprehensive communication across all colleges.

The search committee was scheduled to meet after the forum to begin crafting a position description. Moore and Stewart said they expect the position will be advertised in the coming weeks.

UM System Director of Executive Initiatives Tim McIntosh will help facilitate the search. Boston search firm Isaacson Miller, which prides itself on promoting diverse hires and has been involved in numerous other academic searches at MU, soon will identify a pool of candidates.
“We’re going to be as transparent as possible,” Moore said. “Let’s make sure we are picking the best leader for our community.”

Updates on the provost search can be found at chancellor.missouri.edu, and the committee welcomes public nominations for candidates.

University of Missouri officials host open forum to discuss qualifications for new provost

By ELIZABETH DUESENBERG


COLUMBIA, Mo. - UPDATE 6:00 p.m.: The University of Missouri provost is a critical position and officials highlighted its importance at an open forum Monday morning.

"The provost can, I think, set an agenda," said Sandy Davidson, a journalism professor and member of the provost search committee. "Another term we are hearing is help set the excitement, the enthusiasm and help develop opportunities and encourage people to engage in so many different ways."

Marshall Stewart, search committee co-chair and vice chancellor for extension and engagement, said the provost is the chief academic officer who has an eye on campus.

"You make sure there's great teaching, grant research and great engagement and that our faculty are supported in that," said Stewart. "If you have that going, a lot of other things get a lot easier. They really need to be a champion on those fronts."

About a dozen students and faculty members came together Monday morning and had their first
conversation about what they want in the new provost.

The conversation hit on experience and leadership qualities that the provost should have. For instance, many talked about the need for someone with a background in interdisciplinary studies.

"We really need to understand it," said Joi Moore, committee co-chair and professor/director for the school of information science & learning technologies. "We have the opportunity with all the different types of colleges and schools to provide that."

Students and faculty highlighted a person who could stay connected with teaching research and extension service, as well as someone who could bring diverse groups to the table while also seeing multiple sides of the issue.

Another desired trait: someone who could communication well and understands the value of people.

"We heard several times, transparency," said Davidson. "We want the community here to know what we're doing and give us feedback. I think that's so important."

The committee hopes to have a provost chosen by May. The conversation is far from over and anyone can share their opinion on who or what they'd like to see in the provost at the link here.

**ORIGINAL STORY:** University of Missouri officials are hosting an open forum on Monday morning to see what the campus community needs out of a provost.

The forum is scheduled to be held in the Great Room in the Reynolds Alumni Center from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Officials hope to talk about characteristics and qualifications the next provost needs.

ABC17 previously reported that Jim Spain was named the temporary provost in December.

ABC17 crews will be at the meeting to learn more about the provost search.
Free tax assistance available in four NEMO communities

By: Ashley Szatala

HANNIBAL, MO. -- The United Way of the Mark Twain Area, in collaboration with the University of Missouri Extension Center, is providing free assistance in filing 2017 tax returns.

The Volunteer Tax Assistance Program is available to families with incomes of less than $60,000.

VITA volunteers, who are certified by the IRS, are not able to prepare returns that include business, farm, rental or partnership income, complex capital gains and/or losses, the sale of property, or Health Savings Account transactions.

This tax assistance service will be available at:
° Palmyra Public Library, 210 S. Main, Palmyra, Mo.
° Monroe City Nutrition Center, 314 S. Main, Monroe City, Mo.
° Shelbina Nutrition Center, 112 E. Chestnut, Shelbina, Mo.
° Marion County NECAC Office, 3518 Palmyra Road, Hannibal, Mo.

Tax preparation is by appointment only, and appointments can be made by calling:
° Monroe City: 573-735-2131.
° Shelbina: 573-588-4403.
° Hannibal and Palmyra: 573-221-2761.

A list of the required information will be provided when an appointment is made. All information is protected and confidential.

For more information, call the United Way of the Mark Twain Area office at 573-221-2761.
Mizzou research-based program for kids with autism looks to go global

By MEGAN SANCHEZ

Generated from News Bureau Press Release: MU online curriculum helps children with autism develop better social skills

COLUMBIA — One in 68 children in the United States has some form of Autism Spectrum Disorder, which impairs a child's ability to communicate and interact with peers. A program developed by University of Missouri researchers is working to help children navigate social situations through a virtual reality program called iSocial.

iSocial is a classroom curriculum designed to help children on the spectrum form better social skills. The program has been licensed by Nascent Stage Development LLC. Through this company, the program will commercialize in an effort to reach more kids nationally, and eventually, worldwide.

According to a press release from the University of Missouri, in a virtual world, children, parents and teachers will be able to interact using personal avatars.

Janine Stichter, professor of special education and the author of the iSocial curriculum in the MU College of Education, collaborated with Jim Laffey, professor emeritus in the College of Education, to develop the initial online platform. Stichter said a digital platform enhances the ability to reach more students.

The University of Missouri Office of Technology Management and Industry Relations is helping the program to commercialize.
Research, though taken for granted, matters

By David Isaacks

Columbia is a dynamic community with much to offer its residents. Across the state and beyond, our city is regarded for its world-class health care and educational facilities. The University of Missouri, Stephens College and Columbia College are all highly-respected institutions of higher learning. Additionally, this community has significant health care resources that include a Level I trauma center, central Missouri’s only dedicated burn center and an air ambulance service. Columbia also has two academic teaching hospitals, one of which is the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital, or Truman VA.

Deeply rooted in the foundation of academics and health care is research. Columbia is ripe for research growth.

In addition to significant research programs at MU, Truman VA also boasts a mature and nationally-known research department. A core mission of the VA is to improve the lives of Veterans and all Americans through health care discovery and innovation. For more than 92 years, VA-funded research investigators have been engaged in significant breakthroughs in treating cancer and heart disease, developing new diagnostic tools such as the computerized tomography (CT) scan and receiving international acclaim through Nobel Prize awards.

If you believe that VA research does not impact the lives of everyday Americans, just remember the next time you hear about a doctor telling someone to take an aspirin each day for their heart, or you see a barcode used for medication tracking and disbursement, or someone you know receives a shingles vaccination, or you see video of a person with total paralysis control robotic arms using only their thoughts — these examples are the result of VA research.

Another neat fact about Truman VA is that it is known for its number of nationally-recognized career research scientists. Only 30 out of 2,000 researchers from 90 VA sites are nationally recognized. Four of those 30 nationally recognized researchers are at Truman VA.

Truman VA research investigators are national leaders in several core areas such as cardiovascular, neurologic and ophthalmologic medicine. Radiopharmaceutical science also is an area of interest for Truman VA research. Our investigators in this area are developing diagnostic markers and radionuclides that may be used for the diagnosis and management of metastatic bone, breast and prostate cancers, as well as other types of cancers.
Additional oncology research by Truman VA investigators involves the development of radiotherapeutic treatments for prostate and breast cancers. These treatments will utilize conventional chemotherapy to enhance targeted radiotherapy for better outcomes with fewer side effects.

Of course, MU investigators also conduct research. In fact, MU has established nine core research facilities that include a 10-megawatt research reactor, the nation’s largest non-commercial nuclear reactor. This commitment to research is even more evident with the recent announcement by the MU Board of Curators that the university will build a Translational Precision Medicine Complex.

I cannot claim to know specifically what will take place at MU’s proposed complex, but what I do know is that precision medicine is not some far-out, futuristic idea. When a university such as MU is courageous and forward-thinking enough to invest in something like this, it means the community, the state and lives everywhere will be improved.

What is precision medicine? It’s a scientific approach to determining the proper dose of the proper drug. It means no more side effects because of trial and error. Precision medicine also means developing targeted cancer drugs that bind to and kill only cancerous cells with specific surface markers, but not healthy cells. Because these drugs are concentrated near cancer cells, they produce fewer side effects than non-targeted treatments.

Precision medicine can help patients repair and re-grow tissue that the body cannot fix on its own. When a patient is treated with their own cells, there is no risk of rejection by the immune system, as with donor organs and tissues. And there’s no waiting on a list until a matched donor can be found. This is of interest to me because of my service as a United States Marine. Think about how tissue regeneration could return the warfighter back to health faster. Think about our ability to have precise, personalized tissue ready for war fighters who are sent into harm’s way to use immediately if they return injured.

Regenerative medicine becomes even more powerful when it’s combined with advances in material science, engineering and 3-D printing.

The Columbia community should be excited about the idea of precision medicine. This emerging approach to disease prevention and treatment, based on individual variability in genes, environment and lifestyle, promises medical outcomes barely imaginable today. This “customized” care delivery approach to the individual patient is not currently in use for most diseases, but will revolutionize medical treatment in our lifetime.

As we enjoy the educational and health care resources available in Columbia, I encourage everyone to also learn about the research taking place right here in our town.

Take notice of its current value, and the force multiplier value of something like a Translational Precision Medicine Complex, and what that would bring not only to Columbia but also to our national community.

High paying jobs, national researchers, renowned educators and medical professional who all would infuse prestige and talents into our already forward-thinking community.

David Isaacks is a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran and Medical Center Director at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital in Columbia.
Junot Diaz emphasizes optimism in University of Missouri lecture visit

By Claire Colby / For the Tribune
Posted Jan 22, 2018 at 6:50 PM Updated Jan 22, 2018 at 6:50 PM

Junot Diaz isn’t just a Pulitzer Prize winning author, activist and scholar. He also considers himself a staunch optimist.

“It takes a lot of work to be pessimistic,” Diaz said. “It also takes an amount enormous of pride. You really have to be prideful to imagine that you know the future.”

The hubris of pessimism is one of the messages Diaz planned to deliver Monday night at Jesse Hall during the University of Missouri’s annual Martin Luther King Jr. lecture. Diaz spoke to reporters before the event, previewing his address.

The event was sponsored by MU’s Division of Inclusion, Diversity and Equity and was free and open to the public.

“The kind of work that I’m involved in extends directly out of the kind of emancipatory labors that Martin Luther King was involved in,” Diaz said. “For a good portion of this country’s history, people like me were not extended humanity. That we overcame these injustices gives me a boundless amount of hope.”

Diaz is the author of “The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,” which earned him a Pulitzer Prize in 2008. His more recent novel, “This Is How You Lose Her,” was a New York Times bestseller and National Book Award Finalist.

He’s working on his first children’s book, inspired by the stories he would tell to the children of his friends. The book, called “Islandborn,” is due for release in March.

When Diaz isn’t writing, he works as a professor of writing at MIT. He also helped found Voices of Our Nation’s Arts, an organization serving to support writers of color.

Much of Diaz’s writing centers around immigration. Diaz himself immigrated from the Dominican Republic to the United States as a child, and hopes that his perspective will spark discussion.
“I’m not sure that Missouri’s that much different from the rest of baseline America, which tends to be especially hostile toward immigrants and immigration,” Diaz said. “That means that you’re often having to first deal with weird prepackaged preconceptions before you can begin into much more substantial and generative conversations.

“In my experience, these conversations often end up being spaces for folks to work things out that they maybe haven’t had a public space to work out before.”

Diaz considers his writing and work to be inherently political.

“Every intervention that one makes into a public sphere is deeply political,” he said.

Diaz said his talk would focus on inclusion, race, immigration politics and immigrant rights. Though his writing and activism focus on heavy topics, Diaz said he maintains a positive outlook.

“It takes a lot less energy to keep yourself hoping,” he said. “It’s just that we’re so unused to thinking that way.”

Díaz calls on young people to hope in an age of fear

Activist and author Junot Díaz listens to a question from the media at a press conference on Monday in Jesse Hall. Díaz received a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship and co-founded the Voices Of Our Nation Arts Foundation, an organization for writers of color. Díaz was invited to speak at MU about his life and writing in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

In an age in which fear is used to control younger generations, activist and author Junot Díaz referenced Gandalf from “Lord of the Rings” to highlight the need for hope.

”There is a moment in the ‘Lord of the Rings’ when Gandalf says, ‘You have no right to despair,’” Díaz said. “The only person who can despair is he or she who can see all ends. And since all of us cannot see all ends, we cannot despair.”

At a crowded auditorium in Jesse Hall, Díaz led an interactive discussion Monday evening about the function of whiteness and fear in an era of Trump and open racism.
Díaz, who is also a professor of comparative media studies and writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said he tells his students about how fear is mobilized to ensure they don’t resist the status quo or challenge norms.

“When you feel fear nonstop, you can’t think straight,” Díaz said. “When you feel fear you make really bad choices about how you will deal with your future. This guarantees we won’t fight as hard as we need to fight. This guarantees that we will not take risks.”

He listed several fears that control the new generation: the fear that making one mistake or choosing the wrong major in college will ruin their livelihoods.

Díaz was asked to speak at MU by the MLK Committee, co-chaired by Stephanie Shonekan, the chair of Black Studies, and Brian Booton, director of a student diversity initiative for MU’s Undergraduate Research department.

Shonekan said in a phone interview that it was important to bring Díaz to Columbia to “challenge the borders of our thinking” and expand the conversation around MLK’s legacy to include immigration. Shonekan said this conversation is critical to understanding the immigrant experiences of MU students and those in the surrounding community.

Díaz began Monday’s conversation by connecting with audience members through his identities as an immigrant from the Dominican Republic who grew up in New Jersey.

In a talk with members of the media, prior to the event, Diaz said that as a person of African descent who works to battle white supremacy, he sees his work as a small extension of the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.’s radical activism.

“In the United States, if not for the radical struggles of black Americans, I would not have an education nor an arts practice,” Díaz said.

Díaz is an advocate for immigrant rights and is on the board of Freedom University, which works to provide postsecondary education to undocumented immigrants. He is also the co-founder of Voices of Our Nation, which focuses on uplifting the work of people of color.

Using a combination of humor and candor, Díaz urged his audience to recognize the ways whiteness and fear create barriers within communities of color and erase the shared histories of different communities.

In response to a question about what white people could do, Diaz said that it is important to focus the narrative on privilege in general rather than what whiteness can do. Diaz said we all have privilege and that we should use it for the purpose of liberation and building solidarity rather than perpetuating oppression.

“This fight is going to be the worst,” Díaz said. “Even if the light is going out and all hope is lost, we have to keep punching. We must fight and fight and fight.”
JEFFERSON CITY, MO. - A man who embezzled at least $380,500 from a University of Missouri fraternity has been sentenced to two years in prison.

Sixty-three-year-old Burt Beard, of Kirksville, was sentenced Monday and ordered to make restitution to the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity.

The Columbia Tribune reports Beard apologized for his actions before he was sentenced. He pleaded guilty in September to bank fraud for embezzling the money. He was the fraternity Missouri chapter's treasurer for more than a decade.

James Feuerbaher, president of the corporation that owns the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house at Missouri, said the building badly needed repairs during the time Beard was embezzling.

The national Sigma Alpha Epsilon leadership ordered the Missouri chapter to cease all activity in December, citing an investigation into health and safety violations.
With two questions, Facebook is deciding the future of news

Commentary: First it was the Disney Princess quizzes. Then it was Russian propaganda. Now Facebook is going to ask who you trust when it comes to news. That’s dangerous.

By: Ian Sherr

One day soon, Facebook may ask you two seemingly straightforward questions that may decide the future of news on your feed.

1. "Do you recognize the following websites?" (Yes/No)

2. "How much do you trust each of these domains?" (Entirely/A lot/Somewhat/Barely/Not at all).

These are in fact some of the actual questions, written by teams at Facebook.

The questions stem from a decision by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's CEO, who said last week he's going to seek the wisdom of the crowd -- aka the 2 billion monthly users on his service -- to decide which media orgs are writing honest and trustworthy stories worthy of appearing in your feed.

The world's largest social network, with a population larger than any country on Earth, by default won't consider facts, honesty or professionalism when judging news organizations.

Instead, Zuckerberg and his team are going to survey random people, maybe some of your friends, maybe not, who'll decide what publications are most trustworthy. Whatever Facebook
learns from us -- and a Facebook spokesman told me it won't make any of those details public -- will filter down into how often you see my stories in your feed.

Yes, your ranting Uncle Ed may help determine whether you see the next big scoop from The New York Times or Wall Street Journal or CNN or Fox News.

"People who use Facebook have made clear that they want to see accurate, informative and relevant news on Facebook, as well as news from sources they trust," a Facebook spokesman told me. "The question was how to measure that. We could try to make that decision ourselves, but that's not something we were comfortable with. We considered asking outside experts, which would take the decision out of our hands but would likely not solve the objectivity problem. Or we could ask the community, and have their feedback determine the ranking."

So, he added, "We decided that having the community determine which sources are broadly trusted would be most objective."

Welcome to Facebook's vision of journalism in the 21st century. No wonder many people are calling out Zuckerberg and saying, with a strong twang of irony, "what could go wrong?"

With great power...

Why does all this matter? More people than ever get their news from social media sites, with Facebook taking the top ranking in a Pew survey.

So it's probably no surprise that reaction to Zuckerberg's decision by media experts and those who follow tech closely has been largely negative, given that Facebook seems to be abdicating its responsibility as a news distribution service by not vetting the pieces people share.

This isn't that different from how Facebook's acted before. The social network has been criticized for allowing Russian agents, white supremacists and other propagandists to use Facebook to fool readers with real "fake" news stories and create filter bubbles, where Facebook's mysterious algorithm only shows you stories that reinforce a point of view.

This latest move -- to crowd source credibility -- seems like a logical extension of that, said Michael Kearney, an assistant professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. "It feels like Facebook is taking the easy route to please people now," he said. That stands in stark contrast to the work fact checker websites often have to do.
What's odd is that Facebook employs some of the smartest engineers on the planet, all working to "bring the world closer together." Why isn't it smart enough to figure out how to clean up its propaganda and false news problems?

Some people believe Zuckerberg instead may just be playing us. Emily Bell, a professor at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, is going with the "playing us" theory, given that Facebook makes its money (more than $10 billion in 2016) from letting advertisers target users.

"If you really wanted to rank news outlets by credibility and reliability there are many better ways to do it than ask 2 billion people," Emily Bell, founding director of the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, told her Twitter followers after Zuckerberg posted his plan last week. "HOWEVER, if you want to collect personal data from 2 bn people about media preferences to sell to advertisers…"

By the way, Rupert Murdoch, the chairman of News Corp., put out a statement Monday arguing some of Facebook’s ad money should be paid back to news organizations.

"If Facebook wants to recognize 'trusted' publishers then it should pay those publishers a carriage fee similar to the model adopted by cable companies," he wrote.

There's one more theory to consider. Andrew Keen, a tech critic and author, thinks maybe Zuckerberg is responding to souring attitudes. People, he told the tech news site Recode, are realizing that the way social networks operate is "not in their best interests."

"Mark Zuckerberg has been rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic with these latest reforms," Keen said. "I'd like to see him really acknowledge the problem and deal with it directly and come up with radical solutions."

Me too.