University presidents sound alarm to lawmakers over governor's proposed budget cuts

By Sky Chadde

JEFFERSON CITY • The leaders of Missouri's public universities sounded the alarm to lawmakers this week about the governor's proposed budget cuts to higher education.

During hearings Tuesday and Wednesday, presidents of universities that receive state money - from the University of Missouri System to the two-year State Technical College in Linn - told members of the House subcommittee on education funding that they've already cut many programs they didn't want to and, with the additional proposed eliminations, they had to consider firing faculty and staff and raising student tuition.

"They have every right to be gloomy," Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, R-Jackson, said. "They have been hit tremendously hard. We're going to try and find them some money this year. We can't keep going at this rate."

Gov. Eric Greitens' proposed budget called for $68 million in reductions in higher education spending. Senate and House leaders have said they won't cut universities' funding by that amount.

But university leaders told lawmakers they faced a cloudy future if their coffers weren't bolstered soon.

Several presidents said they had been allocated less money this year than in the early 2000s - in actual dollars, not adjusted for inflation. That has led universities to find ways to get older, higher-paid professors out the door and then either hire new ones at a lower cost or not replace the position, they said.

Beyond staffing cuts, school programs have taken a hit, the university leaders said.

On Tuesday, a few university presidents introduced the Capitol interns from their respective schools, but then Clif Smart, the president of Missouri State University, got to the lectern.
"I would like to be able to introduce my interns," he said, "but, unfortunately, that was one of the programs that was cut last year. That was literally the level we were having to make decisions. That program cost $40,000."

Alan Marble, the president of Missouri Southern State University, told lawmakers the school put on hold a planned partnership with the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Dentistry.

That hurts the state because those two schools are the only ones in the state with dental chairs, Lichtenegger said.

"Really, Southern is the only place we can get rural health care in the dental field to flourish," she said, "and we desperately need that."

School administrators might also be considering tuition increases beyond what the state allows. To increase tuition more than the rate of inflation, schools must apply for a waiver from the state.

Smart, the Missouri State president, testified Tuesday two or three schools were considering such a waiver, but he seemed to indicate he thought their chances were slim.

"We have been discouraged from submitting waiver requests," he said. "I believe there are at least two or three schools considering that because their circumstances are such that it's hard to imagine they continue on without going down that path."

Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, introduced a bill this year that would allow universities to raise tuition beyond the rate of inflation.
and that any more budget cuts could result in more layoffs, program eliminations, deferred maintenance and tuition increases.

**University of Missouri System President Mun Choi told the committee Wednesday that the system will continue to focus on improving student success, research and engagement. Budget cuts, though, will hamper those goals.**

“We have been focused on achieving our objectives by becoming more efficient,” Choi said, “but when we look at the opportunities that are available for us to make cuts, we feel that we’ve made dramatic cuts and that further cuts would be very damaging to our core operation.”

Last week, the UM System released a report recommending dozens of academic programs be eliminated, further reviewed or combined. Choi said further cuts will lead to larger class sizes, higher student to faculty ratios, lower graduation rates, faculty layoffs and an exodus of students from the state.

“The current situation of having essentially an $80 million cut to our budget over the past two years presents a situation that is very dire for all of us,” Choi said.

While the UM System still has been achieving success in research, academics and extracurricular areas, Choi said, “our ability to continue these programs is in jeopardy because of the cuts that we’ve experienced.”

Wednesday’s hearing was a continuation from Tuesday’s, when officials from universities including Missouri State, Missouri Western and Northwest Missouri State spoke to how budget cuts have strapped them in recent years.

On Tuesday, Missouri State University President Clif Smart told the committee that budget cuts have resulted in an increase in the student-to-faculty ratio, staff layoffs and termination of student programs.
“I would like to be able to introduce my interns, but unfortunately that was one of the programs that was cut last year,” Smart said to begin his presentation.

Aside from funding cuts, university leaders had reservations about implementing a new performance funding model in fiscal year 2019, and they requested that it be delayed by at least one year.

The new model, approved by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education in early January, ties 10 percent of state universities’ core funding to six performance standards. Under the old model, universities could choose from 11 standards and the core budget was not tied to the standards.

“For the purpose of lifting up higher education in the state of Missouri, we believe that a delay in performance funding — until we are better assured of our core funds for this year — makes the most sense,” Choi said. “All universities should be focused on student success performance metrics, but given the fact that we are facing a 10 percent budget cut, this is not the right time.”

University leaders argued it would be unfair to use performance measures for the upcoming year because they weren’t given enough time to adjust to the new standards.

“If we know what the performance measures are going to be, now we’re going to be actually reacting to it,” Choi said. “But if we look at numbers that are going to be used for a performance that were established three years ago, then we’re just reacting to those numbers.”

Some, including Choi, said performance funding also puts some colleges, like open enrollment colleges, at a greater disadvantage. Lincoln University is one such school, and interim President Mike Middleton said that, while the university expects to meet all six standards, he still has reservations about the model.

“The performance funding model as it is currently constructed seems to be more of a punishment for failure than a reward for success,” Middleton said.
General consensus among the universities testifying over the two-day span was that tuition and fees would need to be increased to offset further cuts. Several mentioned they would like to have the “flexibility” to raise tuition beyond the consumer price index. Tuition increases beyond CPI are prohibited by Missouri law. Lawmakers are considering raising the tuition cap.

Lincoln has a large number of students who rely on financial aid, Middleton said, and increasing tuition would create another barrier for students.

Even with a tuition increase, that still wouldn’t be enough to close about a $7 million funding gap at MSU. Smart said raising tuition would generate only about half of that, and the other half would potentially come from a reduction in positions, no salary increases and a reduction in student services.

“Options are becoming fewer and fewer,” Smart said. “It’s a pretty gloomy picture.”

The message was clear on Tuesday and Wednesday: Universities have cut. And cut. And cut. “We are about as lean as we can be,” Middleton said. “With this additional wave of cuts, we are in a perfect storm, with no clear break in the clouds.”
UM System representatives express concern over higher education cuts

By JENNA PURITZ


JEFFERSON CITY - A week after Governor Greitens proposed another round of cuts for higher education, Missouri college leaders made their case against that move.

UM System President Mun Choi and other system representatives met with the Subcommittee on Appropriations Wednesday. The UM System could see a proposed cut of $43 million compared to the appropriations from the previous budget according to Greitens proposed 2019 budget.

Lincoln University, MCCA, University of Central Missouri, Missouri State and Technical Institution, and Harris-Stowe State University all addressed the committee.

KOMU 8 News spoke with President Choi, who said universities have already suffered from previous budget cuts.

"Some of our class sizes went up, student-to-faculty ratio increased and many of our top faculty members were recruited by other universities," Choi said.

Just last year, Choi said there were 500 staff and faculty separations throughout the UM System, with sixty percent of those separations came from MU.

President Choi also said they're working to add and invest in faculty and staff, not remove faculty and staff.
"We're advocating for this with a lot of conviction and trying to make compelling arguments so that higher education is supported in Missouri," Choi said.

Chairman of the Subcommittee on Appropriations on education Rep. Lyle Rowland, R-Cedar Creek said he knew this was going to be a tough budget year.

"When the governor's budget came out, sure enough there were some cuts, probably more drastic than what we anticipated," Rep. Rowland said.


Earlier this month, the Columbia Missourian reported 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.

President Choi said he's going to keep fighting to get the support higher education needs in Missouri.

"We're continuing to work with legislators and making the case with the public and sharing the message that we are a good investment with the future," he said.

Editorial: Gov. Greitens’ continued budget cuts to higher education are alarming

By THE MANEATER EDITORIAL BOARD

Higher education is vital to the long-term growth of a state’s economy. Highly skilled individuals who undertake studies at state institutions such as MU stimulate job growth in the state of Missouri. A college education is something to be valued, and Gov. Eric Greitens, a Duke University graduate and a Rhodes scholar, should understand this far more than the average individual. Nonetheless, he intends to cut higher education funding in Missouri for the second year in a row.
The overall budget, which has yet to be passed, breaks down the state’s 2019 fiscal year. While the proposed budget does raise the funding for K-12 education to an all-time high, the decision to cut funding to higher education is one step forward and two steps back. If Greitens truly believes that the children of Missouri deserve a better education, then why is he solely concerned with K-12 education? Some of the students he hopes to help by increasing the pay of their teachers will eventually want to attend college. By cutting funding to the University of Missouri System, Greitens is effectively lessening the likelihood of students staying in Missouri after high school.

Student leaders from several Missouri institutions expressed their dissatisfaction toward the governor’s plans to cut the higher education budget in a joint statement:

"Public higher education is an unparalleled economic driver for states like ours. It is not an exaggeration to say that public education paves the way to the American Dream. In addition, it adds value to those who attend institutions of higher education and for those who benefit from the fruits of its labor."

Members of Greitens’ own party also expressed their disapproval of the new budget, one of whom being Rep. Donna Lichtenegger of Cape Girardeau. She told the Columbia Missourian that “another cut is going to do nothing but hurt our education system” and pointed out that “people are going to start going out of state to colleges because our professors are going to leave — that’s what I fear.”

Ultimately, students will more than likely have to help Missouri institutions carry the burden of lost funding through increased tuition rates. While the state passed a law that caps tuition rates at the rate of inflation, the idea of repealing this law is now being openly discussed. Doing so would effectively allow the university to attempt to cover costs that the new budget does not. This could change how out-of-state students view the university from a financial perspective. Students would be paying more for less of an education. The UM System already cut 500 jobs last year in an attempt to deal with less funding. Further cuts would be crippling to Missouri institutions.

Greitens’ plan to cut funding is a short-term solution that attempts to save face as being “conservative” by saving his voting block money while putting the future livelihood of the state at risk. It would be irrational to believe that anything positive will come from underfunding higher education in Missouri.
Choi: Size of tuition hike tied to state funding

By Rudi Keller

JEFFERSON CITY — University of Missouri students will pay only 2.1 percent more in tuition in the fall if lawmakers can find money to prevent cuts to its state allocation, UM System President Mun Choi said Wednesday.

Speaking to the House Appropriations-Education Subcommittee, Choi said Gov. Eric Greitens’ proposed cuts to state funding would impair his ability to implement the strategic plan being developed to promote student success, increase research capacity and engage with the public.

Greitens has recommended cutting 10 percent from this year’s appropriations to support state colleges and universities and making 10 percent of the remainder contingent on meeting six performance measures. On Wednesday morning, Choi testified in favor of a bill allowing tuition increases of 10 percent plus inflation in years when funding is cut.

State law caps tuition increases to the annual change in general prices as measured by the Consumer Price Index. This year, that is 2.1 percent. Schools that wish to exceed the cap must receive a waiver from the Department of Higher Education or lose 5 percent of their state appropriation.

The UM System appropriation for the current year is $418.1 million plus funding for several initiatives, including medical education in Springfield, an engineering expansion and a dental education program at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin. Greitens restricted spending, blocking any of the money for initiatives and reducing spending through the core allocation to $395.8 million.

“If we can get fiscal year ’19 core appropriations at the same level of $428 million instead of $376 million, we would stay at CPI for our tuition increase,” Choi said after the hearing.

Choi spoke during the subcommittee’s second day of testimony from college and university presidents. Along with UM, the panel heard from the leaders of Lincoln University, the University of Central Missouri, Harris Stowe State University, the State Technical College of Missouri and a representative of community colleges.

The subcommittee is the first legislative panel to examine Greitens’ funding recommendations.

During his testimony, Choi described his efforts to balance the university’s budget, which is also suffering from low enrollment, while freeing money for the strategic plan. In June, he ordered a
spending reduction of $101 million and cut almost 500 faculty and staff positions. A review of administrative spending found that $28.5 million to $70 million could be saved with streamlining and changes in benefits.

“We feel we have made some dramatic cuts and further cuts would be very damaging to our core operations,” Choi said.

The university wants to compete for more research grants and Choi wants to build a research lab for interdisciplinary studies in medicine that will cost $150 million to $200 million. State Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, R-Jackson, asked what would happen to the Columbia campus’ position if it lost membership the American Association of Universities, which includes the nation’s premier public and private research universities.

After joking that he would lose his job if that occurred, Choi said budget cuts are hurting the school’s standing in the association.

“Because of cuts in funding, our ability to recruit and retain faculty members who can continue to promote the values of AAU is diminishing,” Choi said.

Many of the leaders who testified over two days asked lawmakers to put off implementation of the new performance funding model that makes a portion of existing state support contingent upon meeting performance goals. Originally established as a way to reward success when new support is available, putting the new model in place during a time of overall cuts is unfair, they said.

“With the state we are all in in higher education, the performance funding model we are in seems to be a punishment for failure rather than a reward for success,” said Lincoln University interim President Mike Middleton.

Many college leaders asked for a delay in implementation of one to three years while schools adjust to the new measures being used and have a chance to stabilize their budgets.

For the UM System, funding initiatives such as medical education in Springfield are important priorities. The program has received as much as $10 million in state support in the past and was slated to receive $5 million in the current year’s budget until Greitens announced his withholding decisions.

The university, Choi said, is using other funds this year to pay for the program, which is designed to complete the education of 32 doctors annually. Whether that will continue without funding from lawmakers is uncertain, he said.

“That’s a decision we are going to have to evaluate very carefully,” Choi said after the hearing. “For us to do it for another year would be very difficult.”
Bill would revise tuition caps at Missouri’s public universities

By Rudi Keller

JEFFEFSION CITY — Students would make up some of the shortfall in state higher education spending under a proposal heard Wednesday morning that would revise the state cap on tuition increases.

Higher education leaders provided unified support for the bill, sponsored by state Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, that would allow tuition to increase by up to 10 percent more than inflation. The Senate Appropriations Committee gave it a friendly hearing, with the chairman, Sen. Dan Brown, R-Rolla, promising a vote next week after some revisions discussed during the hearing.

“We understand higher education is in crisis mode,” Brown said.

Over the past two years, state support for the University of Missouri System has been cut $40 million and Gov. Eric Greitens is proposing to cut 10 percent, or another $41.8 million, for the fiscal year that begins July 1. Greitens withheld 7 percent of appropriations for fiscal 2017 as he came into office and restricted appropriations for the current year to force an additional 9 percent cut.

“That is putting us in a very precarious situation,” UM System President Mun Choi said.

Under a law passed in 2007, tuition increases at public colleges and universities are limited to the annual change in prices measured by the Consumer Price Index. Schools that wish to go beyond that level must apply for a waiver from the Department of Higher Education. If it is not granted, a school exceeding the cap must surrender 5 percent of its state appropriation.

Rowden’s proposal would allow tuition to increase by the rate of inflation plus 10 percent and remove the waiver provision, leaving the penalty for exceeding that higher amount. If it was currently in place, this year’s tuition increase cap would be 12.1 percent.

The intent is that schools would only use the additional authority in case of cuts to state support, Rowden said, and the bill will be revised to reflect that.

“This bill is designed to give them flexibility for long-term vitality and it is my hope that this bill is never used,” Rowden said.
A 10 percent increase in tuition would generate $25 million in new revenue in the UM System.

“This tuition increase relief we are seeking is really tied into how much support we are getting from the state,” Choi said.

From 2008 to 2015, Missouri schools, on average, increased tuition just 7 percent above inflation, the fourth-lowest in the nation, Choi said.

At the same time, state support has declined relative to the number of students and the state population, he said. If Greitens’ proposal for the coming year is approved, the university would receive the lowest appropriation since 1998. UM System enrollment has doubled in that period, he said.

Other states are spending much more per capita on higher education, Choi said, with Nebraska spending $400 and Arkansas spending $335 compared to $170 in Missouri.

“We are also finding many Missouri students are leaving the state to go to other universities in border states because they made the investment in higher education,” Choi said. “That net outflow creates a brain drain that takes away from economic development.”

Choi was joined in his testimony by Alan Marble, president of Missouri Southern State University in Joplin, Chuck Ambrose, president of the University of Central Missouri, and Natalie Butler, assistant legislative director for the Associated Students of the University of Missouri.

Ambrose, who is also chair of the Council on Public Higher Education, said the tuition cap means the only way to respond to state budget cuts is to eliminate jobs or programs.

“It limits our ability to respond to challenges and do what is right for our students and their families,” Ambrose said.

Student government groups support the bill because the alternative is to see layoffs and program cuts that hurt their education, Butler said.

“It may sound a little bit strange for a student and a student group to sit up here and say, ‘raise my tuition,’ ” she said.

Butler asked the committee to expand the definition of capped costs to include supplemental and course fees, which have increased 138 percent since the 2007 law was enacted, she said.

The law currently covers tuition and “required fees” and a state audit last year found that many schools are adding fees tied to enrollment in a particular course as a way around the tuition cap.
Senate bill would raise tuition cap at public universities statewide

BY STEPHANIE SANDOVAL

JEFFERSON CITY — College students could start paying more for school if lawmakers agree to raise tuition caps.

Senate Bill 912, presented by Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, in committee Wednesday would allow public universities to increase tuition by 10 percent above the rate of inflation. The proposal would help higher education institutions make up for losses in state funding.

Under current law, tuition hikes are capped at the rate of inflation, and schools need a waiver to increase tuition above the limit. With Rowden’s proposal, schools would be able to raise tuition up to the new cap without seeking permission.

Public universities take a large hit in Gov. Eric Greitens’ proposed budget, which cuts almost $98 million from higher education, including $43 million from the University of Missouri System. Several senators, including Rowden, have criticized Greitens’ proposal.

If Rowden’s proposed cap were in place, the UM System could bring in as much as $25 million in additional revenue.

UM System President Mun Choi, along with representatives from several other institutions, spoke in favor of the bill. Choi said tuition increased last year by about 2 percent.

“Last year, we received a $40 million cut to our appropriations at (the) University of Missouri System, and as a result we had to have 500 faculty and staff separations, which affected the number of programs that we could offer,” Choi said in the hearing. “These types of cuts led to
higher class sizes and also reduce the ability of our students to meet with success in terms of being career-ready.”

MU student Natalie Butler also spoke in support of the bill on behalf of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri.

“It’s always difficult to see quality advisers and student advocates in the administration being laid off, and ultimately that does undermine students’ success when you lose those quality faculty,” Butler said.

Some MU students on campus Wednesday weren’t as supportive.

“That’s going to hurt a lot of students because, especially if you are an out-of-state student, you’re already paying out-of-state tuition and fees or whatever, and then it’s quite frankly very hard to afford tuition,” senior Ashley Morgan said. “It’s going to make it a lot harder and more difficult for people to attend the school.”

Senior Bilal Siddiqui didn’t feel as strongly.

“I’d feel a little indifferent about it, because the school already brings in a lot of money as it is,” he said. “But at the same time, you have to do what you have to do to maintain the university and get a high standard.”

Rowden said after the hearing that he would support the bill even if budget cut proposals weren’t as high as they are now.

“I think it’s needed policy going forward because there’s going to be up years and down years,” he said. “And so I think that’s what makes it relevant, whether or not we’re at a great higher ed year or not-so-great higher ed year.”

Sen. Jason Holsman, D-Kansas City, wants to see if the Senate Appropriations Committee can find more money for higher education institutions before deciding to support the bill.
“I don’t know if Sen. Rowden’s bill is going to be necessary by the time we get done with the budgeting process,” Holsman said. “But if it is necessary, according to the universities, then I’m not saying that I wouldn’t have that conversation to potentially support it.”

Sen. Dan Brown, R-Rolla, said he could support removing the current cap limit.

“I think colleges and universities are smart enough, and they know what the market is going to bear and what they can accurately charge students,” Brown said. “And if they don’t, then they’re going to pay the price. So, I’m pretty much a free-market guy.”

Rowden’s bill is not tied to the level of funding schools receive, but that could change.

“My assumption is that the final bill will probably only be applicable in years where there are core appropriation cuts, and part of that is the reality of what we can get through the Senate,” he said.

Rowden said more details on any changes to the bill will likely be available next week.
Lawmakers could raise cap on what colleges, universities can charge for students

By LYDIA NUSBAUM

JEFFERSON CITY - State lawmakers are looking into raising the cap on how much universities and colleges can charge students for tuition and classes.

Several Missouri higher education institution presidents, including UM system President Mun Choi, urged the Senate Appropriation Committee Wednesday to allow them to raise tuition amid increasing calls for budget cuts.

Sen. Caleb Rowden, R-Columbia, proposed a bill to give higher education institutions the ability to increase tuition costs up to 10 percent above the consumer price index (CPI), or inflation rate.

Current law says universities and colleges cannot increase tuition by more than the percentage change of the CPI.

Choi said the MU system would be “very mindful” of the impact raising tuition costs would have on students. Choi said this year's proposed budget slices the system's appropriations by about $40 million.

“For us to make up that difference just on tuition for our students will require us to increase tuition by about 17 percent, that is something we would not do to our students,” Choi said.

The UM system is looking at neighboring universities to see how competitive it needs to be.

“Because of the investment that these border states are making, we’re also finding that many Missouri students are leaving the state to go to other universities in the border states because they made investments in higher education,” Choi said.
If the bill does not pass, the UM system will need to look into cutting programs, instead of just cutting administration, said Ryan Rapp, the UM system's vice president for finance and chief financial officer.

“We also need some flexibility in terms of our ability to increase tuition in targeted areas to support the programs that our students in the state need,” Rapp said.

Shawn Strong, the president of State Technical College of Missouri, said if the state continues to cut support, the school will have to get rid of programs. He said the ability to adjust tuition would help the school.

“Ultimately we need the flexibility to do what we need to do to balance our budgets,” Strong said.

Natalie Butler, with the Associated Students of the University of Missouri, supports Rowden’s legislation to increase tuition if necessary, believing it would allow the school to invest in education programs.

“It’s always difficult to see quality advisors and school administrators being laid off, and ultimately that does undermine student success when you do lose those quality faculty,” Butler said.

Sen. Dan Brown, R-Rolla, the chair of the appropriations committee, said he fully supports allowing higher education institutions to set their own tuition costs.

"I think colleges and universities are smart enough and they know what the market is going to bear and what they can accurately charge students, and if they don’t, then they’re going to pay the price,” Brown said. “So, I’m pretty much a free market guy."

Rowden said he assumes the bill will only be applicable in years where there are 'core appropriation cuts.' However, he said he would support the legislation even without the budget cuts.

"It's been an ongoing conversation with the higher education community," Rowden said. "We're going to have conversations about additional provisions that we could put in relating to making sure student fees are kept in check."

Sen. Jason Holsman, D-Kansas City, wants to see if the Senate Appropriations Committee can budget money for the higher education institutions before deciding to support the bill.

“I don’t know if Senator Rowden’s bill is going to be necessary by the time we get done with the budgeting process,” Hoslman said. "But if it is necessary, according to the universities, then I’m not saying that I wouldn’t have that conversation to potentially support it."
The “Task Force on Academic Program Analysis, Enhancement and Opportunities,” appointed last Spring by Provost Garnett Stokes to help deal with the University of Missouri’s budget crisis, is to be commended for their work over the last six months. Composed of very talented and conscientious faculty members and administrators, that body spent an enormous amount of time and effort, including significant consultation with constituent groups, in preparing the report released last week. Unfortunately, their recommendations — even if fully adopted — will not produce a significant impact on MU’s budget deficit.

Last May, Stokes stated that legislative actions and tuition shortfalls created a need for $41 million in cuts to recurring MU budgets. Additionally, just this week Gov. Eric Greitens proposed a budget for next year that calls for an additional $43 million in cuts across the UM system. MU’s proportionate share of that new cut can be expected to be $20 million. Current and forecasted cuts would bring the annual MU budget deficit to $61 million.

The Task Force report identifies 27 graduate-level degree programs and “certificates” that should be eliminated because of zero or near zero enrollments. Twelve other areas of graduate level education are recommended for inactivation because of small (but above zero) enrollments. After discussion, it was decided that undergraduate programs, with enrollments that dwarf their graduate counterparts, would not be considered for elimination. Whether or not specific bachelor degree majors were sufficiently contributing to the overall mission of the university was punted to some future “more extensive review” conducted by some future committee. The report does identify some departments/programs that might be consolidated (three departments in psychology reduced to one, two language departments merged, four management programs reduced to something less than four, six “policy” programs/institutes also reduced in number). Unfortunately, that committee was not asked — and did not explore — the likely financial savings from the proposed inactivation of graduate degree programs and from the possible department consolidations.

Without having the benefit of actual budget allocations, my crude back-of-the-envelope estimate is that salary and benefit savings resulting from the Task Force’s report will make only a $1.1M dent in the annual $61 million shortfall. Moreover, this minor amount may be offset by the reinvestment of savings in seven other areas that the Task Force identifies as desirable “strategic enhancements” that would strengthen existing programs and “position MU well in the future.” Net budget savings from this overall exercise may therefore be zero.
There is a reason that the targeted Task Force recommendations are quite modest. Resistance to change is a near universal characteristic of life in all organizations. Such resistance is magnified in educational institutions because there are many powerful financial and political stakeholders.

Major strategic cuts in universities are so difficult — and therefore avoided — because an announced cut to a specific program elicits enormous political pressure on the institution from affected students, alumni, faculty and legislators. The best historical parallel to the current situation occurred in 1982 after a severe Missouri drought caused an unrivaled state budgetary crisis. At that time, Chancellor Barbara Uehling formed an ad hoc committee similar to Stokes’ task force, both having 16 members. The 1982 recommendations to close and reallocate resources — which, unlike the current report, included the elimination of some undergraduate programs — were met with such vocal opposition that then-chair of Faculty Council, and an advocate for the cuts, was quoted in the New York Times saying: “My advice to other universities is that you may think you are ready for this and everyone may agree in the abstract, but all hell will break loose when you name the specific targets for cutting.” Uehling was faced with a no confidence vote from the faculty, a student occupation of her office, and the mysterious appearance of “For Sale” signs on her lawn. Ultimately, only two of nine curators supported the Uehling cuts.

Now for the elephant in the room. With a state the size of Missouri, there is simply no justification for having 13 public (i.e., state-tax supported) four-year colleges and universities (that is, the four campuses in the UM System – MU, UMSL, UMKC, UMS&T — and the nine additional public colleges scattered around the state). That number of faculties, staff, physical facilities, administrators and overhead is unsustainable in the current environment. The closure of entire campuses is required. Previous budget reductions to the MU flagship campus have resulted in cuts to the bone. Further cuts will produce overwhelming problems for this premier institution, and for our great state, from which it will take decades to recover. Missouri owes its residents — especially its children — an institution that can continue to provide an extraordinary, first-class education now and for years to come. Additionally, the state needs the economic engine that MU’s research and its extension services provide. Our excellent junior college system should not be touched and, indeed, that system is essential to my thinking. However, the state does not need the extensive duplication in four-year degree programs that now exists across the 13 institutions.

I am not naïve. If, as I have argued, there are enormous forces preventing meaningful surgical changes within MU, there are even larger political forces preventing the elimination of an entire regional college (or two, or three). However, all trends suggest that closing institutions will inevitably be a part of our state’s future. Since 2011, the U.S. has seen the number of public colleges and universities decline by 30. Through closure or merger, Georgia has taken the nation’s lead in this trend in downsizing its 14 colleges to 7.

While our legislators chip away at MU’s quality, Missourians need to have an uncomfortable discussion. The state desperately needs MU and the excellence it provides in fulfilling its comprehensive, multifaceted mission. I’m not sure the same can be said with certainty for each of the other 12 four-year colleges and universities.
Missouri AD Jim Sterk faults Dawn Staley for alleged misconduct by South Carolina fans

Missouri athletic director Jim Sterk said Tuesday that members of the Tigers women's basketball team were spit on and called a racial slur by South Carolina fans after the team's game Sunday in Columbia, South Carolina, and he faulted Gamecocks coach Dawn Staley for promoting an atmosphere that allowed for it to allegedly happen.

"It wasn't a great atmosphere. It was really kind of unhealthy if you will," Sterk told "The Big Show" on KTGR radio. "We had players spit on and called the N-word and things like that. It was not a good environment. And unfortunately I think Coach Staley promoted that kind of atmosphere, and it's unfortunate that she felt she had to do that."

No. 9 South Carolina beat No. 11 Missouri 64-54 in a heated contest that included an on-court tussle at Colonial Life Arena -- where fans booed the Tigers throughout the night -- and two Mizzou ejections.

Afterward, a former Missouri player who was with the team in South Carolina tweeted that Tigers players were spit on as they left the court. Asked about what happened Tuesday, Missouri coach Robin Pingeton called it "unfortunate" without detailing what exactly occurred.

"I was really disappointed with some things that transpired," she said, according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. "There's no place in our game for that. Fans got to be better all around. Our side, their side, everybody's side. Fans got to be better. These are daughters playing a game they love to play. There were certainly some things that were really unfortunate that transpired, not only verbally and some other things (spitting) you alluded to. It's really unfortunate. But you've got two fan bases that are passionate and just got to clean it up a little bit."

South Carolina athletic director Ray Tanner said his department conducted a review after learning of the allegations.

"The commitment to a secure environment for everyone at our home games, including fans, student-athletes, coaches and staff from the home and visiting teams is of the utmost importance," Tanner said in a statement. "In anticipation of this rivalry game, the athletics
department provided security for the Missouri basketball team, above its standard operating procedure. Upon hearing the accusations regarding our crowd's behavior towards the Missouri team, the athletics department conducted a review of our operations from the game, including interviews with staff and security personnel. In this review, we received no confirmation of the alleged behavior directed at the visiting team by fans at the game."

The defending national champion Gamecocks and Tigers don't meet again this regular season but could face off in the SEC tournament in Nashville, Tennessee.

*Similar stories ran nationwide*

**ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

**Mizzou accuses South Carolina fans of yelling racial slur at women's team, spitting on players**

By Dave Matter St. Louis Post-Dispatch

COLUMBIA, MO. • *It took six years but Missouri seems to finally have a rival in the Southeastern Conference — at least in the sport of women's basketball.*

*Controversy unfolded in Mizzou’s last two games against South Carolina, especially in Sunday’s showdown in Columbia, S.C., where a first-half scuffle led to multiple fouls, two ejections and more bad blood between the programs.*

After the *Gamecocks held off the Tigers 64-54*, former Mizzou player Sierra Michaelis threw gas on the fire when she tweeted that *South Carolina fans spit on Mizzou players* at Colonial Life Arena. Michaelis traveled to the game and was with her former teammates in the arena. The spitting allegedly happened after the game as MU players ran off the court.

Asked about the allegations Tuesday, Missouri coach Robin Pingeton gave a long pause and appeared to hold back tears.

"Let me choose my words wisely," she said.

From there, Pingeton did not deny the claim that Gamecock fans spit on her players.
“I was really disappointed with some things that transpired,” she said. “There’s no place in our game for that. Fans got to be better all around. Our side, their side, everybody’s side. Fans got to be better. These are daughters playing a game they love to play. There were certainly some things that were really unfortunate that transpired, not only verbally and some other things (spitting) you alluded to. It’s really unfortunate. But you’ve got two fan bases that are passionate and just got to clean it up a little bit.”

What happened? What should be done to fix it?

Missouri athletics director Jim Sterk added to the discussion Tuesday in an interview on Columbia radio station KTGR 1580 AM and accused the South Carolina fans of using a racial slur toward MU’s players. Sterk attended Sunday’s game in Columbia, S.C., and described the atmosphere at Colonial Life Arena as “unhealthy.”

“We had players spit on and called the ‘N’ word and things like that,” Sterk said. “I mean it was not a good environment and unfortunately and I think Coach (Dawn) Staley promoted that kind of atmosphere. And it’s unfortunate that she felt she had to do that.”

There’s no available footage from the ESPN2 broadcast to show if fans indeed spit on the Mizzou players after the game. The final images of MU’s bench came when the teams were exchanging high fives after the final buzzer.

On Tuesday, South Carolina athletics director Ray Tanner released a statement saying his department investigated the claims and didn't find any confirmed reports of the described behavior.

"The commitment to a secure environment for everyone at our home games, including fans, student-athletes, coaches and staff from the home and visiting teams is of the utmost importance," Tanner said in the statement. The State newspaper reported. "In anticipation of this rivalry game, the athletics department provided security for the Missouri basketball team, above its standard operating procedure. Upon hearing the accusations regarding our crowd’s behavior towards the Missouri team, the athletics department conducted a review of our operations from the game, including interviews with staff and security personnel. In this review, we received no confirmation of the alleged behavior directed at the visiting team by fans at the game.”

After Mizzou’s home win over South Carolina three weeks earlier, a local reporter told Pingeton he heard a Mizzou fan call South Carolina coach Dawn Staley and her players “thugs” during the game.

Pingeton didn’t hear that from the crowd that day but said, “First of all that really disappoints me to hear that, and if that came from our fans it’s really disappointing. I haven’t heard that. Ignorance, I guess. I’ve got a lot of respect for Dawn Staley. I think she’s a tremendous coach. She’s got a phenomenal program. I think those girls at South Carolina play with grittiness and toughness and I think they’re really talented. They’ve won at an elite level, so I’ve never looked at them in that regard.”
No. 11 Tigers can't finish season sweep, fall to No. 9 South Carolina 64-54 in Columbia, S.C.

As for the mini-melee during Sunday’s game, Pingeton spoke to an SEC on-site official for clarity on how the penalties were assessed. After a lengthy video review, Mizzou’s Jordan Roundtree (Kirkwood High) and Nadia Green were ejected for leaving the bench. The camera angle the officials used to determine who came off the bench was focused on MU’s sideline, so South Carolina’s Bianca Jackson was not penalized even though she, too, stepped on the floor.

The official “brought up a great point that sometimes the camera angle they go back to isn’t necessarily the live feed from the TV and you’re limited to what that particular camera is looking at,” Pingeton said. “Certainly because it was on our end of the court it shows our bench and doesn’t show their bench. To be honest, the rule is pretty black and white and we probably could have had another two of our players ejected when you look at who was on the court. (South Carolina) had a kid checking in at halfcourt that could have been ejected.”

On a two-game losing streak, the No. 15 Tigers (17-4, 5-3 SEC) next host No. 2 Mississippi State (22-0, 8-0) at 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

Gamecocks respond to Sterk’s claims

By Daniel Jones

The Missouri women’s basketball team will host its biggest game of the season Thursday night when second-ranked Mississippi State (22-0, 8-0 Southeastern Conference) comes to Mizzou Arena.

The biggest story for the Tigers (17-4, 5-3), though, is a swirling controversy over its 64-54 loss Sunday night at South Carolina.

Athletic director Jim Sterk’s assertion that Gamecocks coach Dawn Staley “promoted” an “unhealthy environment” at Colonial Life Arena that included fans spitting on Missouri players and using racial slurs was a national story by Wednesday morning. Sterk made the comments on KTGR’s “The Big Show” on Tuesday night.

“It was not a good environment, and unfortunately I think Coach Staley promoted that atmosphere,” said Sterk, who was sitting courtside at the game. “It’s unfortunate that she felt she had to do that. It wasn’t good.”
ESPN women’s basketball analyst LaChina Robinson called Sterk’s words “slander.” Fellow ESPN reporter Mechelle Voepel said Sterk’s statement was “not leadership, nor does it help in any way.”

Missouri did not respond to a request Wednesday for evidence or corroboration of Sterk’s claims that Staley “promoted” an unhealthy atmosphere.

Staley’s comments before the game weren’t particularly inflammatory. She told reporters Saturday that “I think our fans will give the extra stuff, and we’ll let them feed us the energy that we need to win the game.”

She also said that in the team’s first matchup of the season, an 83-74 Missouri victory, that “there were some things out there that weren’t basketball, that weren’t basketball plays. And if we can clean up those parts of the game, you’ll get a great game from us (on Sunday). ... And I get that you want to take key people out of the game. We want to do that. If we get the opportunity to get Sophie (Cunningham) out of the game, yes, we’re going to try to do that, but within the confines of the rules of the game.”

The assertion that spitting and racial slurs occurred Sunday at Colonial Life Arena remains a disputed claim. Beyond testimony, evidence of the alleged acts, such as video or audio, has not yet surfaced.

South Carolina athletic director Ray Tanner said in a statement Tuesday that the program provided extra security for Missouri during Sunday’s game and that after conducting a review of operations during the game, the school found no confirmation of spitting or racial slurs.

Tanner and Staley doubled down on that stance in a press conference Wednesday, despite claims from Sterk, Missouri play-by-play commentator Brad Tregnago and former player Sierra Michaelis — who was in attendance Sunday — that either spitting or racial slurs came down from the crowd.

“I stand by our fans, I stand by what they represent, I stand by how they cheer, I stand by every single thing that they bring to the building, because it’s appropriate and because it’s well within the game rules,” Staley said Wednesday.

Tanner went to the airwaves himself Wednesday afternoon. Tanner told WNKT-FM in Columbia, S.C., that he spoke with Sterk on Tuesday night before he realized what Sterk said on the radio, but Tanner had not spoken with Sterk since that conversation.

Tanner was baffled by Sterk implicating Staley.

“Comments that were made, we don’t understand that,” he said, “and only Jim Sterk can explain his reasoning.”

Tanner said on the radio that he had spoken with the SEC offices about Sterk’s statement and “it’s being addressed.”
South Carolina has led the nation in women’s basketball attendance for three straight years. More than 13,000 fans were in attendance Sunday night.

“It’s a great environment for young women and women’s basketball,” Tanner said. “It’s obvious that we would disagree with some of the comments that were made about our environment, and some of the comments about Coach Staley are beyond understanding for me.”

At least four women have filed complaints in Mizzou’s Terrence Phillips investigation

BY KATY BERGEN, AARON REISS AND ALEX SCHIFFER
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COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri-Columbia’s Title IX investigation into basketball player Terrence Phillips includes complaints from at least four women, some of whom have made reports of harassment, physical abuse or the filming of a sexual encounter without consent, multiple sources have told The Star.

Two students told The Star they filed complaints this week, after news broke last weekend that the office was already investigating Phillips.

Another student had confirmed earlier that she had already shared information with the university’s Title IX office by Friday, when Phillips was indefinitely suspended from the basketball team. That student showed The Star an email confirming that her information would be included in the investigation. The other two students said they were expecting similar emails from the university but had not yet received them.

The school had already received at least one other complaint that had prompted the university to open an investigation against Phillips, according to the university email sent to the student. The Star was unable to reach that complainant.

The three students spoke to The Star on the condition of anonymity.

One of the students said Phillips had physically abused her on multiple occasions.
Another told The Star she reported Phillips had filmed a sexual encounter without her consent or knowledge a year ago. A friend who said she was with that student on the night of the encounter and walked in on the filming also spoke to The Star. Another person the student told immediately afterward gave The Star the same account of the incident.

A third student told The Star that Phillips repeatedly sent messages of a sexual nature, despite being asked to stop multiple times.

Reached by The Star on Wednesday for comment, Phillips said he was cooperating with the investigation.

“There are two sides to every story,” Phillips said. “Some people really want to say ‘Me too’ because apparently it’s the cool thing to do. I have a side. I am cooperating with Mizzou like I was instructed. Unfortunately I can’t say a lot, but at the end of the investigation, I intend to be cleared from the accusations. People who know me know this isn’t me.”

Story continues: https://www.kansascity.com/sports/college/sec/university-of-missouri/article197735919.html

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

More women file complaints against suspended Mizzou basketball player

By Ashley Jost

COLUMBIA, Mo. • At least three women have filed complaints against University of Missouri-Columbia basketball player Terrence Phillips, alleging physical abuse and a nonconsensual recording of a sexual encounter.

The women spoke to the Post-Dispatch on Wednesday on condition of anonymity.

Phillips, a junior guard, was suspended indefinitely from the basketball team Friday afternoon, hours after one alleged victim received a notice from Mizzou’s Title IX office that her complaint against him was under review.

The alleged victim told the Post-Dispatch that she reported physical abuse against Phillips last year but didn’t want to pursue a formal investigation. The Title IX office had to formally review her previous report after another woman came forward with a separate complaint, she said.
The Title IX office is tasked with investigating issues of sex discrimination and sexual violence on campus.

An email from a Title IX investigator said that “based on additional information received by our office, the university is proceeding with an investigation against Terrence Phillips.”

Two other women told the Post-Dispatch they formally reported their own experiences with Phillips to the Title IX office on Tuesday. Neither had received an email from the office as of Wednesday evening acknowledging their complaints.

One woman said she reported an incident in which Phillips allegedly filmed a sexual encounter between them without her consent. Another outlined multiple allegations of predatory behavior toward her and other women by Phillips.

Two other women shared witness statements they filed this week with the Title IX office to back up a complaint by one of the three accusers. The Post-Dispatch reviewed emails confirming that the additional information had been formally submitted to investigators.

One of the accusers said she didn’t file a formal complaint initially out of fear of what making accusations against an athlete would do to her public image. Similar concerns are why all of the women said they’d speak only on condition of anonymity.

Phillips hasn’t responded to multiple attempts from the Post-Dispatch to contact him. On Wednesday, he told the Kansas City Star that “there are two sides to every story.”

“Some people really want to say ‘Me too’ because apparently it’s the cool thing to do,” he told the Star. “I have a side. I am cooperating with Mizzou like I was instructed. Unfortunately I can’t say a lot, but at the end of the investigation, I intend to be cleared from the accusations. People who know me know this isn’t me.”

Because of privacy laws, the institution is not obligated to share details about open Title IX investigations. Those run independently from any law enforcement investigations. Columbia and Mizzou police said there were no arrest records for Phillips, and have not responded to a request for any incident reports.

Missouri coach Cuonzo Martin said he was unaware of any allegations against Phillips until he was told about the investigation Friday.

Phillips is still on scholarship despite the suspension but can’t practice with the team, appear in games or travel to road games, Martin said.

“I’ve talked to him to see how he’s doing,” Martin said Tuesday. “I can’t speak on particulars on what’s going on, but that is somebody’s son, and it’s my job to make sure you’re OK and then go from there.”
Asked if he was surprised by the allegations against the veteran player, Martin said, “You’re always surprised because that’s somebody’s child, on both sides, whatever the case may be.”

“It was a surprise,” junior guard Cullen VanLeer said Tuesday, “but I really don’t know much about it, just about as much as everyone else.”

More Title IX complaints come forward against Phillips

BY MISSOURIAN STAFF 13 hrs ago (0)

The Kansas City Star reported Wednesday that at least four women have filed complaints to the Title IX office related to Missouri basketball player Terrence Phillips.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which reported at least three women have filed complaints, added that one of the women’s complaints against Phillips involves an incident in which he allegedly filmed a sexual encounter between them without her consent. Another outlined multiple instances of alleged predatory behavior Phillips demonstrated toward her and other women.

A complaint by one of the three accusers was backed by witness statements filed this week by two other women with the Title IX office. The Post-Dispatch confirmed via reviewed emails that the additional information had been formally submitted to investigators.

One of the accusers told the Post-Dispatch she initially didn’t file a formal complaint because of the potential ramifications making said accusations against an athlete would do to her public image. All of the women said they’d speak only on condition of anonymity because of similar concerns.
Phillips was suspended from the team indefinitely last Friday for a violation of team policy. On Sunday, the Missourian reported that one student had previously filed a Title IX complaint but had asked that the office not move forward with her case. The complaint involved allegations of physical abuse.

In the Missourian story, the student said she knew others who had filed complaints, as well. The launching of a new investigation brought her complaint, filed over a year ago, back to light. Privacy laws allow the university to withhold details on open cases, which are independent of investigations by law enforcement. Federal law mandates Title IX offices investigate reports of sexual misconduct on campuses.

MU later released a statement that neither confirmed nor denied the existence of an investigation into Phillips.

“The university takes alleged violations of Title IX very seriously, and any allegations are investigated thoroughly and fairly,” the statement read. “In some cases, interim measures are taken while an investigation is pending.”

Missouri coach Cuonzo Martin confirmed Tuesday that Phillips was under investigation from the Title IX office, and that he was not allowed to practice, travel or be around the team. Martin said he was made aware of the investigation 20 minutes before the team boarded the plane last Friday to face Mississippi State.

“You’re always surprised when you see things,” Martin said Wednesday. “You’re always surprised, because it’s somebody’s child on both sides, whatever the case may be.”

In his first public statement since the team suspended him indefinitely, Phillips told The Star that he was cooperating with the investigation.

“There are two sides to every story,” Phillips told The Star. “Some people really want to say ‘Me too’ because apparently it’s the cool thing to do. I have a side. I am cooperating with Mizzou like
I was instructed. Unfortunately I can’t say a lot, but at the end of the investigation, I intend to be cleared from the accusations. People who know me know this isn’t me.”

Phillips is a junior from Orange County, California. Last year, he served on the SEC’s Men’s Basketball Leadership Council.

**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

**Report: Phillips denies claims**

By Cameron Teague-Robinson

*Wednesday afternoon, Missouri point guard Terrence Phillips made his first comments, in a statement to the Kansas City Star, since being indefinitely suspended Friday.*

Phillips, who is under a Title IX investigation, said that there are “two sides to every story.”

The news broke Sunday afternoon, by the St. Louis Post Dispatch, that Phillips was under investigation. On Sunday, the Tribune obtained an email from a complainant in the case, which was sent Friday morning from the Title IX office, confirming that report. The email said that the Title IX office would be “proceeding with an investigation” against Phillips.

In his statement to the Star, Phillips said, “Some people really want to say, ‘Me too,’ because apparently it’s the cool thing to do. I have a side. I am cooperating with Mizzou like I was instructed. Unfortunately, I can’t say a lot, but at the end of the investigation, I intend to be cleared from the accusations. People who know me know this isn’t me.”

The complainant, who agreed to speak to the Tribune on the condition of anonymity, said that they reported the case to the Title IX office last fall but then chose not to go forward with the investigation. The university chose to proceed with the case because additional women came forward, the complainant said.

On Sunday, the Tribune confirmed that multiple women have made allegations against Phillips. On Tuesday, the Tribune confirmed two other women, speaking to the Tribune on the condition of anonymity, also spoke to the Title IX office to join the investigation. One said her allegations are sexual in nature.
Tuesday afternoon, in his weekly press conference, Missouri coach Cuonzo Martin said that he was informed of the Title IX investigation Friday morning, about 20 to 30 minutes before the team left for Saturday’s game at Mississippi State.

Martin also added that Phillips, who had been playing a backup point-guard role for the Tigers averaging 10.6 minutes, will not take part in any team activities while under investigation.

Phillips will remain under scholarship, but he will not travel, game-plan, play or practice with the team, Martin said.

Suspended Mizzou guard speaks out in response to Title IX investigation

By ANDREW KAUFFMAN


Columbia, Mo - Mizzou guard Terrence Phillips is speaking out for the first time since head coach Cuonzo Martin suspended him indefinitely from the program.

Phillips told the Kansas City Star, “There are two sides to every story,” Phillips said. “Some people really want to say ‘Me too’ because apparently it’s the cool thing to do. I have a side. I am cooperating with Mizzou like I was instructed. Unfortunately I can’t say a lot, but at the end of the investigation, I intend to be cleared from the accusations. People who know me know this isn’t me.”

We reached out to Phillips as well, but he has not returned our message.

On Sunday, ABC 17 news confirmed the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX is investigating Phillips. ABC 17 News received an email from an alleged victim saying "the University is proceeding with an investigation against Terrence Phillips." The email was originally sent by an investigator in the Title IX office.

On Tuesday, Coach Martin told reporters he first learned of the investigation this past Friday about 20 minutes before the team left for Starkville, Miss. for its game against the Bulldogs.
Mizzou initially announced Phillips' suspension this past Friday night. The team released this statement:

"Terrence Phillips has been suspended indefinitely from the Mizzou Men’s Basketball program for a violation of team policy. Phillips’ future status with the program will be determined in coordination with campus and department leadership."

This past Sunday night, Mizzou released a statement saying, "While we cannot confirm or deny any actions from the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX, we are aware of today’s media reports regarding one of the university’s students."

"We want to reiterate that the safety of our students, faculty and staff is paramount. The university takes alleged violations of Title IX very seriously, and any allegations are investigated thoroughly and fairly. In some cases, interim measures are taken while an investigation is pending."

Phillips cannot participate in any team activities while he's suspended, but he is still on scholarship. On Tuesday, Coach Martin said he has spoken to Phillips since his suspension.

Martin said, "You're always surprised, because again, that's somebody's child on both sides, whatever the case may be."

Phillips is averaging 2.5 points per game. The junior guard has played in 20 games for Mizzou this season.

An MUPD spokesperson told ABC 17 News Saturday he does not know of any investigations into Phillips. We contacted the Columbia Police Department to request any reports related to Terrence Phillips. We were told the records are closed.

We will continue to follow this developing story.
COLUMBIA- **Terrence Phillips is being investigated by the University of Missouri-Columbia's Title IX office because of complaints from at least four women according to The Kansas City Star.**

The Star reports that some of the women have made reports of harassment, physical abuse or the filming of a sexual encounter without consent.

The Star was able to reach 3 of the women who filed complaints against Phillips, two of the whom said they filed complaints after the news broke that the office was investigating Phillips.

One of the women told The Star that Phillips had physically abused her on multiple occasions.

Another said that Phillips repeatedly sent messages of a sexual nature, despite being told to stop according to The Star.

In an interview with The Star Phillips said, "There are two sides to every story, some people really want to say ‘Me too’ because apparently it’s the cool thing to do. I have a side. I am cooperating with Mizzou like I was instructed. Unfortunately I can’t say a lot, but at the end of the investigation, I intend to be cleared from the accusations. People who know me know this isn’t me.”
Editorial: Victims need a voice. Lack of evidence shouldn't mean sexual predators automatically walk.

By the Editorial Board

Gut-wrenching stories from 265 women detailing sexual abuse by former USA Gymnastics Dr. Larry Nassar shouldn’t have been the linchpin for taking down this serial predator. The system failed because the voices of individual victims weren’t enough to get the attention of the elite gymnastics organization, the U.S. Olympic Committee or Michigan State University, where he practiced.

As long as it was one victim’s word against Nassar’s, the legal benefit of the doubt always went to him because his accusers lacked evidence of the crimes he committed. That’s how he could continue abusing for decades.

Congress passed legislation on Monday requiring athletic organizations to report sexual abuse allegations within 24 hours to law enforcement and to establish preventive policies. The legislation should be expanded to include colleges and universities, religious institutions, some secular organizations and the military.

When assault is reported decades after it occurred, investigators rarely have forensic evidence to work with, making such cases difficult to prove in court. If authorities had properly recorded and tracked the allegations of Nassar’s child victims in the 1990s, when they began telling adults what the doctor was doing to them, prosecution might have happened much sooner, preventing him from destroying countless other lives.

The nation has been gripped by sexual abuse scandals for years, including cases in the Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts and by assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky at Penn State. The trickle became a torrent last year with men in the media, politics and the entertainment industry stepping down or being fired in the face of allegations. The #MeToo movement expanded the conversation and focused on the best ways to hold perpetrators responsible and to stop the cycle of predatory sexual abuse.

In 2015, the University of Missouri was rocked by a scandal in which a university swimmer alleged Mizzou football players raped her in 2010. The swimmer committed suicide in 2011. The university did not report the case to local law enforcement until 2014. Police said
they lacked forensic and video evidence of the assault and closed their investigation the following year.

Currently, Mizzou’s Title IX office, which investigates sex discrimination and violence on campus, is reviewing allegations against suspended basketball player Terrence Phillips. At St. Louis University, three basketball players have been suspended and one expelled after a sexual assault investigation by the school’s Title IX office.

But Michigan State University’s Title IX office cleared Nassar of wrongdoing after a 2014 investigation. Clearly, Title IX investigations can’t be relied upon to yield consistent justice. Law enforcement must investigate allegations. Elite organizations tend to perpetuate the culture of silence that allows these crimes to continue.

A crime without evidence doesn’t mean no crime has been committed. These cases belong in the hands of properly trained law enforcement investigators, not Title IX officers.

MISSOURIAN

Academic review of MU programs used flawed information, professor association says

BY KACEN J. BAYLESS

A review of academic programs recommending the closure, review or combination of more than two dozen programs included inaccurate conclusions and careless wording that threaten the reputation of MU, according to a statement released by the MU chapter of the American Association of University Professors, or AAUP.

Last week, the Academic Programs Task Force released a report that recommended the closure of 26 MU graduate programs and listed 16 programs where “specific concerns” needed to be addressed. The report also included four possible combinations of MU schools.

The specific concerns in the statement from AAUP, which was released Sunday, addressed the Academic Programs Task Force’s partial reliance on Academic Analytics, a company that provides data on faculty and school productivity. The statement was signed by six MU faculty
members including MU AAUP Chapter President and Associate Professor of Sociology Victoria Johnson.

“Growing evidence suggests that much of the information produced by (Academic Analytics) is incomplete and inaccurate,” the statement said.

The statement provided by the MU chapter of AAUP said the task force’s report failed to include important differences in programs such as faculty to graduate and undergraduate student ratios. The chapter said faculty members should provide full access to the task force’s data and enough time to review the information before the administration makes final decisions.

“Research and scholarship that contributes to the state, society and the world are not assembly line products,” the statement said.

Although the statement clarified that the chapter respected the work performed by the task force, AAUP said it is concerned by the use of a “one size fits all measurement” in the report.

Citing examples from Georgetown University and the University of Texas at Austin, the chapter’s statement questioned the credibility of the report’s use of Academic Analytics. Just last week UT-Austin’s Faculty Council approved a resolution to discontinue the university’s use of Academic Analytics, “especially concerning promotions, tenure, salaries, curriculum, and other faculty issues.”

In a 2016 blog post, Georgetown University Provost Robert Groves said he discovered several flaws in Academic Analytics’ process of identifying underperforming faculty members.

“The quality of (Academic Analytics’) coverage of the scholarly products of those faculty studied are far from perfect,” Groves said in the post. “Even with perfect coverage, the data have differential value across fields that vary in book versus article production and in their cultural supports for citations of others’ work. With inadequate coverage, it seems best for us to seek other ways of comparing Georgetown to other universities. For that reason, we will be dropping our subscription to Academic Analytics.”
After Groves decided to halt Georgetown’s use of the company, Academic Analytics changed its promise of saving universities billions of dollars by identifying low-performing professors.

Groves later posted a follow up blog in July clarifying that some of the flaws described in his initial post were the result of outside factors. Groves concluded that Academic Analytics does a good job of collecting data and making it available.

“For that reason Academic Analytics can be a useful tool for universities, and it has the potential to become even more useful as it expands the nature and types of data it collects,” he wrote.

MU spokesman Christian Basi clarified that the task force’s process included multiple sources of data and information, not just information from Academic Analytics.

“We’ve made it very clear that there are many other data points that were part of the process,” he said. “We won’t be making decisions based on one or two data points. We’re using other data points as well as the feedback that we are receiving from deans and faculty.”

Basi said some of the other sources of data used to review programs include average graduation rates, average number of applications, overall research productivity and grant productivity.

“The end goal is to ensure we have strong academic programs that are responding to the needs of the state and demands of current and prospective students while preparing Missouri’s future doctors, nurses, teachers, musicians, artists, veterinarians and leaders,” he said.

In an interview with reporters after the release of the task force’s report, MU Chancellor Alexander Cartwright admitted the lack of complex MU data available to answer every question examined in the report.

Nicole Monnier, MU faculty and task force member and co-vice president of AAUP’s MU Chapter, said Interim Provost Jim Spain will have to examine the report’s recommendations and make final decisions.
In April, UM System President Mun Choi called for an 8 to 12-percent budget cut and a review of all MU programs. Since the task force’s creation in August, Cooper Drury, Arts & Science associate dean, and Matthew Martens, professor and provost faculty fellow, held multi-hour review sessions twice a week.

The task force reviewed data provided from multiple sources including the student census, Missouri Department of Higher Education and the National Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity. The process also included 39 meetings with campus faculty, staff, administration and students.

“We’re not done evaluating information and will be having discussions with deans and faculty about the programs listed in the report before making any decisions,” Basi said. “Additionally, we’ll be reviewing other programs on campus to see if any changes need to be made.”

MU study: Mental health screenings not accurate enough to help elementary students

Generated from News Bureau press release: Current mental health screenings alone not accurate enough to help elementary students, MU study finds

The Missouri Department of Mental Health reports that more than 80 percent of the 97,000 young Missourians who needed treatment for serious mental health problems in 2015 did not receive public mental health support.
Many educators, counselors and social workers are working to improve practices to identify children who need help through risk assessments such as mental health screenings.

In a recent study, Melissa Maras, a research consultant at the University of Missouri Assessment Resource Center, found a high degree of variance between teacher reports when using these screenings.

Maras says creating a more holistic view of a student’s behavior may be the key to identifying more children who need additional support.

“For many children, one risk assessment completed by a single teacher on any given day may not provide enough insight as to whether or not a child needs additional mental health supports,” Maras said. “But if we can get input from several different sources, such as teachers, counselors, parents and other adults involved in a young person’s life, we may have a better understanding of their overall needs and resources.”

Maras says that building the capacity of schools’ mental health programs and investigating the accuracy of screening processes is crucial because many states, including Missouri, depend heavily on schools to meet the mental health needs of students.

The ratio of school-employed mental health professionals to students in Missouri presents significant challenges.

The ideal ratio is one social worker for every 250 students; the ratio for the 2016-2017 school year was one social worker for every 2,065 students.

Statewide data show Missouri also does not meet the recommended student-to-professional ratio for school counselors or school psychologists.

Data from three different risk assessments were collected from three samples of elementary schools in different states.
Maras and her colleagues found as much as 20 percent of the variance in universal risk assessments is due to teacher and classroom factors rather than student-level differences.

Teacher factors include possible biases and personality differences. Classroom factors include how students are grouped in classrooms and the number of students with greater academic, behavioral and social-emotional needs.

“More research on best practices for identifying children with mental health needs must be done,” Maras said. “While it’s important to look further into what teacher and classroom factors are causing these discrepancies, it’s equally as valuable to devote time to honing multi-faceted ways to identify young people in need.”

Maras suggests schools might be able to strengthen current identification practices by supplementing assessments with other data, such as a student’s discipline referrals, attendance and academic performance over time.

“Strengthening school mental health programs to be as effective and efficient as possible increases the likelihood that young people will get the additional mental health supports they need to be successful,” Maras said.

“Differences between teacher reports on universal risk assessments,” was published in Advances in School Mental Health Promotion.

The Assessment Resource Center is an outreach unit within the MU College of Education.

Co-authors of the study include Joni Williams Splett, assistant professor at the University of Florida; and Kristy Brann, assistant professor at Miami University. Splett and Brann are MU alumnae.

Other authors of the study are Marissa K. Smith-Millman, doctoral candidate at Miami University; Paul D. Flaspohler, associate professor at Miami University; Aaron Luebbe, assistant professor at Miami University; and Hannah Dinnen, doctoral candidate at Miami University.
Missouri professor says Trump’s lengthy address lacked key items

JANUARY 31, 2018 BY ALISA NELSON

University of Missouri political communications professor Mitchell McKinney says the tone of President Donald Trump’s State of the Union address last night was not uplifting. Early on in Trump’s speech, he mentioned some of the recent natural disasters the nation has faced, including hurricanes, flooding and wildfires. Special guests attending the event, like first responders and military members, had heart-wrenching stories about struggles they’ve endured.

“It didn’t seem like he was conveying any expression of excitement. Even his sincerity sometimes seemed a bit strange. In terms of its content, which I found very striking, we were hearing throughout the day from his handlers and aids that he was going to try to strike a bipartisan tone and try to unify,” says McKinney. “There was very little of that in the speech.”

However, he says discussion about addressing the nation’s crippling infrastructure, the importance of helping former prisoners find jobs, and the need for paid family leave drew bipartisan applause.

Trump’s speech celebrated job creation over the past year and the passage of his tax cut plan. He said 2.4 million new jobs have been created since he was elected president, including 200,000 additional manufacturing positions.

Trump also mentioned that 3 million American workers have received tax cut bonuses since changes have been made to the federal tax policy. A search yielding information about any of Trump’s businesses giving tax cuts to its employees turned up no information.

The president is urging Congress to invest in workforce development, job training and the creation of additional vocational schools to spur the economy and further job creation.

Trump said one of his greatest priorities this year is to reduce the price of prescription drugs. He promises that pharmaceutical drug prices “will come down substantially”. Eastern Missouri Congressman Lacy Clay, a Democrat, says he wants to work with Trump to drop drug prices.

The president used broad strokes to touch upon immigration policy and infrastructure.
“Oftentimes presidents don’t wish to dictate to Congress the specific policies they should enact, but rather suggest in broad terms the direction of policy they should take up. We saw some of that in the second half,” says McKinney.

He says the president’s speech was geared toward shoring up support from his core supporters instead of fashioning a governing agenda for Congress.

Trump’s $1.7 trillion infrastructure plan reportedly includes 25% of the total funding being used in rural areas with less than 50,000 people. He’s proposing that

the federal government pays $200 billion of the plan – leaving state and local governments to compete for federal funding and possibly create toll roads.

The president says he wants Congress to fund the construction of extending the wall at the U.S.-Mexico border. He says he supports citizenship for 1.8 million immigrants who came to the U.S. illegally as children.

Critics say Trump shifting last night from discussion about the need to strengthen the nation’s immigration policies to talking about crime committed by a Hispanic gang suggests that immigrants are gang members.

“That did seem to be the connections that he was making somewhat not just implicitly but explicitly,” says McKinney.

U.S. Senator Marco Rubio, R-Florida, defends Trump by saying the gang – called MS-13 – is an evil, horrifying organization that’s killing and hurting people.

McKinney thinks Trump’s address should have mentioned the recent federal shutdown.

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McKinney thinks Trump’s address should have mentioned the recent federal shutdown.

“Of course, this is not something that those in the chamber would be particularly proud of – the government shutdown. Certainly, for the American people, as we’ve just come off of that, to ensure us that our government can function,” says McKinney.

The controversy surrounding Russia meddling in America’s 2016 election cycle made McKinney hoping to hear the president speak about America’s relationship with Russia.

According to McKinney, Trump’s 80-minute speech might be one of the longest of its kind in history. He recalls former President Bill Clinton, D, having several long speeches. McKinney says Trump’s was right up there with the length of some of Clinton’s.
COLUMBIA – The Black Studies department at the University of Missouri has a full month of events planned to celebrate Black History Month, and the first event centers on music.

Tammy Kernodle, a professor of musicology at Miami University in Ohio, is performing a series of songs created and performed by various African-American females throughout history in Memorial Union on MU’s campus on Thursday.

“It’s a way of reinforcing the ideas and ideals of black liberation and equality in America,” said MU Black Studies Department Chair Stephanie Shonekan.

Steering away from the traditional question and answer panel, Shonekan said messages about liberation and oppression sometimes are more digestible in different formats.

“It is an opportunity for us to sort of sit back and let the music speak for itself,” Shonekan said.

The secretary for the Legion of Black Collegians, Kierra Jones, said the event will be more approachable for some audiences.

“Some people would prefer to go and listen to music and actually watch people dance than listen to someone talk about it, so I think this is more accessible, it’s easier to listen to and learn,” Jones said.

Jones said after the musical event, “She Sang Freedom,” is over people can still experience the messages of female artists.

“Learning other things and experiencing different cultures and lifestyles isn’t a bad thing.” Jones said. “It’s something you can probably incorporate into your lifestyle.”
Shonekan said aside from enjoying the music, she wants attendees to walk out with more than a catchy tune playing in their head.

“I always hope that people go away thinking,” Shonekan said. “I hope that they go away with a renewed sense of responsibility to themselves as life-long learners, but also to their communities.”

The founder of the #metoo movement, Tarana Burke, is the keynote speaker for MU’s Black History Month and will be at Tate Hall on Feb. 20.

**Randolph Co. restores extension funding**

By: Pat Pratt

**While the 2018 budget released last week had slashed two-thirds of the county’s annual contribution, presiding commissioner John Truesdell said Tuesday that Randolph County will now fully fund the local University of Missouri Extension for another year.**

Truesdell on Wednesday said the cuts – about $20,000 of the county’s $30,000 contribution – were not something the commission wanted to begin with. He cited the value of the organization and said it was only because of reductions in state funding, and rising costs in other areas, the county had to trim costs.

“We absolutely went back in and did restore the $20,000,” Truesdell said. “We did not go into reserve or push the budget out any more than where it’s at. Right now we have some issues in our funding and are trying to control the spending so we can balance those things out.”

“But we certainly did not want to lose our extension in Randolph County. That never was a goal or idea to any of us.”

Extension officials held a public meeting on Tuesday evening to discuss a response to the loss of a major portion of its budget. However, the meeting, which drew a packed house, struck a more pleasant tone as extension personnel announced funding had been restored.

Still, the funding restoration would only apply for the upcoming year and a more permanent solution must be explored, extension council president Marla Stegall said.
“It is good news, but it is temporary news,” Stegall said. “Basically what it boils down to is they gave us the money for this year, but they can not guarantee they are going to be able to keep doing that. We meet again next Thursday and are going to see what direction we are going to go.”

Stegall said a partial solution may lie in forming an extension district. The extension, which enjoys tremendous community support in mostly rural Randolph County, also has ideas for fundraisers and other events.

And an idea is being touted to move the office to a county facility, saving $9,000 annually in rent.

According to the county 2018 budget, the general fund, the main operating budget, projected revenues of $4.5 million with equal expenditures. The county enters, and per the budget will end the year, with a $1.7 million balance.

Presiding Commissioner John Truesdell, who along with Western District Associate Commissioner John Hobbs voted for the budget in its current form, said despite opposition, in the wake of rising costs and funding decreases that some cuts had to be made.

“You could go on and on about extension and the wonderful things it does,” Truesdell said. “It has never been a target or considered for any reason amongst the commission as an organization that did not have value or purpose.”

“Our reasons for cutting were strictly a business decision. We said hey look, we have got to cut everything we can inside these programs out to get our budgets in line,” he said.

Truesdell said a failure by the Missouri Department of Corrections to compensate the county as agreed for prisoner housing in the amount of about $239,000 had a tremendous impact. He said the county also has to plan for two upcoming jury trials and expenses across the board are rising.

A mandate by the Missouri Supreme Court to consolidate municipal justice agencies has also taken a toll on the county budget, as Moberly Municipal County recently consolidated with the 14th Judicial Circuit.

“We have some issues with unfunded state mandates,” Truesdell said. “What I am talking about are programs the State of Missouri wants to see us run and operate, via rules and edicts passed down to the county, and the funding is coming from the county itself.”
Hallie Thompson makes bid for Vicky Hartzler's seat

By JUSTIN KOLLAR AND ETHAN ILLERS

CALIFORNIA - Moniteau County resident Hallie Thompson is running for to represent Missouri's Fourth Congressional District. She announced Wednesday evening surrounded by family and local supporters.

Thompson, a 28 year old grad-student at the University of Missouri, is finishing up her doctorate in plant science. If elected she would become the youngest representative by five years.

Thompson will be fighting for the Democratic nomination against Renee Hoagenson, a Columbia business woman who announced her candidacy in March.

The pair will face off in the Democratic primaries in mid-August. Thompson said her real opponent is Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Missouri, who has represented the Fourth District since 2011.

Hartzler has openly discredited climate change theories, while Thompson believes they are extremely important to the district's constituency.

"Vicky Hartzler has gone out of her way to make fun of climate change," Thompson said. "To ignore science, her decisions will affect Missouri long after she is voted out of office."

Moniteau County is statistically a red county. Thompson said she is not afraid of failure, and as a scientist she has come to embrace it.
"I realize that it is going to be an uphill battle," she said. "You learn some things when you're getting a PhD., you learn tenacity and how to fail. But I am not afraid to pick it all up again and give my best try."

The chair of the Central Committee of Moniteau County, Gail Hughes, said Democrats nationwide are encouraged by the new young faces emerging within the party.

"We have gone through a dry time, seeing the same of old faces," Hughes said. "The party is in an upswing, with all these new people coming out and filing for election. It should make Democrats optimistic.

Thompson told her supporters she would not waste their time with empty campaign promises. She laid out five key objectives if she is elected.

She said she would invest in Missouri communities, create a fair economy, keep government accountable, help Missourian's live healthy lives and support education, innovation and science.

"I love Missouri, I love my Missouri roots," Thompson said. "While I think Washington D.C. can help Missouri, I think Missouri can help Washington D.C. a little bit too."

Missouri is split into eight congressional districts, only two of which are represented by Democrats. The Fourth District has been represented by a Republican for the past seven years.
MU student throws hat in ring for Missouri 4th

By DAN CLAXTON

COLUMBIA — A doctoral student at the University of Missouri in Columbia was the latest candidate to announce an intention to unseat fourth district representative Vicky Hartzler.

Hallie Thompson is a Democrat studying for her doctorate in plant science at MU. She is a native of Moniteau County, near California. She announced her candidacy from the Moniteau County Courthouse Wednesday afternoon.

At MU, Thompson was active in leading the fight for graduate student insurance, served as the Director of Legislative Affairs for the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students. She also founded the Missouri Science and Technology Fellowship, a program to place scientists in the Missouri Legislature.

Thompson joins fellow Democrat Renee Hoagenson, Republicans Jenna Marie Bourgeois and John Webb, and third-party candidate Mark Bliss in announcing her intention to unseat Hartzler.
MU’s Rural Track Pipeline Program places focus on expanding rural health care

By LAUREN CLERC

The MU School of Medicine is expanding health care access in rural areas. Research from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services shows only 18 percent of Missouri doctors practice in rural areas, despite 40 percent of the population living there. Ninety-nine Missouri counties are experiencing a shortage of health care professionals, leading MU to create the Rural Track Pipeline Program.

The Rural Track Pipeline Program recruits, trains and exposes the next wave of health care professionals to rural areas. This program encompasses four different community and curricular components, including the Lester R. Bryant Pre-Admissions Program, Summer Community Program, MU Rural Track Clerkship Program and Rural Track Elective Program.

“We preadmit students from rural communities so we get the best and brightest from areas of need for medical school,” said Kathleen Quinn, associate dean for rural health at the School of Medicine. “These students are the most likely to return to rural areas to practice. We offer them three rural clinical programs throughout medical school. Any student can do the programs; it is competitive, but any student can apply. [Participants] have longitudinal experience in the rural communities over the course of their medical school careers, so any of their misconceptions or fears are addressed; they are prepared to practice in a rural community where there might be fewer specialists or they’re caring for their neighbor.”

This program hopes to dispel misconceptions about working in a rural environment such as having a lack of available resources. Additionally, the pipeline program encourages medical students to move to these areas, Quinn said. Though this program has been in place for 20 years, a new element was recently added. Michelle Kenney, a participant in the rural medicine program, said the school has also started a new program for resident physicians that includes a lecture series and complete residency rotations within rural Missouri clinics and hospitals.

The presence of a physician creates an economic impact worth about $1.3 million for a rural community, Quinn said. A physician signals other health professionals to join them, hopefully allowing for full-range health care to be established in the future. It makes businesses more likely to locate to these areas as well, as there will be health care for their employees. Potential lack of amenities may dissuade rural pipeline candidates. Urban students may also shy away from an environment they are not familiar with, Quinn said.
“You have to experience rural medicine to learn what it is and really want to go there,” Quinn said. “I have had urban background students be pleasantly surprised. They go and they think, ‘Oh my gosh, I can go to work in five to 10 minutes instead of 40 minutes; I don’t have to deal with traffic; I can work with generations of families; I can really know my patients; I can be a leader in the community.’”

In recent years, interest in the program has increased, showing that progress is attainable, Quinn said.

“Between academic year 2014 and 2018, we had 17-19 student participants,” Quinn said. “This year, starting in June, we had 26 students who want to participate in the Rural Track for six months of their third year of medical school. That’s almost 25 percent of the class. We’re absolutely thrilled, and the communities and hospitals hosting the students will have the opportunity to recruit their practice partners or their replacement if they are nearing retirement. The MU School of Medicine could not offer these opportunities without our community partners. These nine hospitals and related clinics are key to our success.”

The Rural Track Pipeline Program will expand as class sizes expand, with goals for the future including expanding residency opportunities to new sites and aiding in loan repayment, Quinn said.

the maneater

‘Gradualism’ gives graduate art students a platform to display work

By SIENA DEBOLT

Coming together to create a collective show, graduate students at the MU art department created “Gradualism”, an art show and reception from Jan. 16-25 that displayed their work as MFA candidates.

“Every year, we do an exhibition of all of our work and just about all of us participate,” said Zach Nutt, a third-year graduate student and president of the Association of Graduate Art Students. “Everybody was allowed two works to display, whatever they wanted to choose. It gets to show the diversity of the program.”

Paying homage to the wide range of art materials used in this exhibit, Erin King used pieces of pianos to recreate the idea of music and art in coexistence. King displayed three pieces in the exhibit, including “Performance of Etude 1, Opus 2,” a structure created from a music box, a music program and piano parts, “Manuscript for Etude 1, Opus 2,” a wooden piano panel with intricate weavings of white cotton thread dispersed inside the wooden frame, and “Piano Descending a Staircase,” a loosely structured cube composed of piano action parts and string.
“I’m kind of finding my way back to making music into a part of my art, with the end goal of trying to figure out how would one go about interpreting a weaving into music,” King said. “I ended up plotting out the points where I wove on the piano keyboard based on the idea that the openings within the weaving structure would serve as where the hole punches on my music box scroll would go. In that respect, the weaving is actually the source of the song in the music box.”

Using her resources, King found a nonprofit that would donate the supplies she needed to build this series.

“So, I actually got two pianos from a nonprofit in St. Louis called Pianos for People this summer,” King said. “I sent them an email and said, ‘Hey, I’m thinking about doing artwork on pianos. Could I have a piano?’ And they said, ‘We’ll give you two!’ I decided to find some people within my network who could get trailers and drove to St. Louis and hauled the pianos back.”

Another artist using unconventional materials to design xyr project, Nessi Alexander-Barnes, created a spiral-shaped installation made entirely of quilting fabric. Inside the installation, Alexander-Barnes featured a quilted storybook with laser-etched drawings.

“Quilting fabric is something that makes up beds, and it’s brightly-colored and reflective of individual people, and so it’s the material I’ve chosen to tie into the concept of identity,” Alexander-Barnes said. “[The storybook is] based on my experiences with internal mythology, so I am literally burning my internal mythology onto fabric that means ‘people’.”

Alexander-Barnes, who created the book with the intention of telling xyr stories as a queer person, used the structure itself to represent xyr queer culture.

“I wanted to create a space that you could enter, a space where you could confront a culture that is not your own,” Alexander-Barnes said. “It’s my personal queer experience. So I made a little spiral-ish where you could walk in and be alone with the story.”

After receiving xyr MFA, Alexander-Barnes desires to continue telling xyr story and inspiring others to tell their own.

“I would like to teach college,” Alexander-Barnes said. “Specifically, painting and drawing. I intend to keep making my own work separately and involving [my stories], but the more important thing is that I want to enable students to tell their own stories.”

The Maneater used the gender-neutral pronoun ‘xyr’ at the request of Nessi Alexander-Barnes.