



MU News Bureau

Daily Clips Packet

July 3, 2017

Moody's downgrades University of Missouri financial outlook

**Generated from Joint Office of Strategic Communication press release:
Moody's Investors Service affirms UM System's credit rating**

BY RUDI KELLER

The University of Missouri System has a negative financial outlook but its overall credit rating remains unchanged, Moody's Investor Services reported Thursday in a new credit opinion.

UM remained in the top 10 percent of higher education institutions with a Aa1 rating, the second highest on Moody's scale. The outlook was changed from stable to negative due to enrollment declines and reduced state funding, Moody's stated in a release accompanying the opinion report.

"While the system has identified material cost reductions, some alternative revenue growth prospects, and internal reallocations, management's ability to successfully execute plans and meet financial targets is yet to be proven," Moody's stated.

In a news release, the system stated it was pleased with the report because it maintained the high credit rating. President Mun Choi said he recognizes the fiscal problems identified by Moody's.

"The University of Missouri is already putting effective plans into action to increase revenues and lower costs throughout the UM System," Choi said. "Strategic investments in student and faculty success are top priorities on each of our four campuses as we remain focused on our mission of teaching, research and engagement."

First-time freshmen enrollment for the fall semester on the Columbia campus is expected to be about 4,000 students, more than 2,000 below the record set in 2015. Overall enrollment on the campus is expected to be about 30,800, almost 5,000 fewer than in 2015.

In the same period, the university has seen reductions in its state support, including \$31.4 million cut from the budget for the fiscal year that ends Friday and another reduction of at least 6.7 percent in the coming year.

"The negative outlook reflects potential credit pressure should identified (sic) initiatives to reduce expenses and grow revenues fail to result in sustained at least break-even operating performance," Moody's stated.

The university's strengths are a \$3.2 billion revenue stream, \$3.6 billion in cash and investments and a health system that is performing well, Moody's stated. The university is also doing well with fundraising, Moody's statement reported.

MU's Athletics Department reported a [record fundraising year](#). Figures are not complete for the Columbia campus as a whole, but it raised \$177.1 million in the year ending June 30, 2016, a record for the campus.

The strengths are potentially offset by weak enrollment and a growing pension liability, Moody's stated.

MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: Moody's downgrades UM's credit outlook to 'negative'

GABRIELA VELASQUEZ AND ANNA BRETT, Jun 30, 2017

COLUMBIA — Moody's Investors Service lowered the University of Missouri System's credit rating outlook from stable to negative, the service announced Friday morning. The system retained its Aa1 grade, which means obligations are high-quality and low-risk, according to Moody's website.

An Aa1 rating is the second-highest rating an institution can receive from Moody's. A negative outlook, however, indicates the rating might fall in the future.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said the credit outlook downgrade was based on challenges UM is already working to address, specifically the decline in enrollment and reduction in funding. Basi said the Aa1 rating "shows investors that the University of Missouri is a good investment, is on good ground when we want to borrow money."

"The University of Missouri has taken significant steps over the last six to 12 months to put ourselves on a solid financial footing," Basi said. "We have new leadership. We have a clearly identified plan to address our enrollment as well as our funding challenges."

The UM System can improve its outlook by strengthening student demand and its research profile, according to Moody's. However, reductions in liquidity and failure to strengthen operating performance can lead to a rating downgrade.

“We are pleased with the Aa1 rating from Moody’s but also recognize the financial challenges that need to be addressed with respect to enrollment declines and cuts in state funding,” UM System President Mun Choi said in a news release sent out by the system Friday.

According to Moody's guidelines, "the next rating action subsequent to the assignment of a negative rating outlook has historically been downgrade or review for possible downgrade about one half of the time."

A Moody's spokesperson said in an email Friday that the negative outlook "connotes some downward pressure at the university and the chance of a downgrade over the next 12-24 months."

"The negative outlook was because of specific and current challenges with enrollment and funding," Basi said. "However, they did not drop the bond rating."

The UM Board of Curators [recently passed the system budget for fiscal year 2018](#). The board discussed MU's significant decline in enrollment — the projected first-year class is 4,009, down 763 from last year's 4,772 — and introduced plans to rent out residence halls to visitors as well as requests for state appropriations [that might never come](#).

The UM System received an AA+ rating from Standard & Poor's in March.



ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

University of Missouri Credit Outlook Downgraded to Negative

A major financial ratings agency has downgraded the University of Missouri system's credit outlook from stable to negative, citing enrollment declines on the flagship campus in Columbia and declining state revenue.

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — **A major financial ratings agency has downgraded the University of Missouri system's credit outlook from stable to negative, citing enrollment declines on the flagship campus in Columbia and declining state revenue.**

Moody's Investor Services on Thursday also affirmed the university's Aa1 credit rating, the second highest rating possible. Moody's said the university's revenue and overall financial health give it the flexibility to deal with year-to-year financial challenges.

System President Mun Choi said in a news release Friday that the university recognizes the financial challenges presented by declining enrollment and state funding cuts.

Moody's acknowledges that the university has planned options for revenue growth and cost reductions, but said the new management's ability to deliver on those plans is not yet proven. Choi has been president since March 1.

Similar stories ran nationwide



Moody's Investors Service gives UM System high rating, but outlook negative

By: Marie Bowman

COLUMBIA, Mo. - **According to Moody's Investors Service, a credit rating services company, the University of Missouri System holds a high-grade Aa1 credit rating, keeping the University among an elite group of institutions. Moody's has also revised the rating outlook to negative from stable.**

“We are pleased with the Aa1 rating from Moody's but also recognize the financial challenges that need to be addressed with respect to enrollment declines and cuts in state funding,” UM System President Mun Choi said in the announcement. “The University of Missouri is already putting effective plans into action to increase revenues and lower costs throughout the UM System. Strategic investments in student and faculty success are top priorities on each of our four campuses as we remain focused on our mission of teaching, research and engagement.”

According to the announcement, Moody's said that the UM System strengths include:

- New leadership with clearly identified plan to address enrollment and state funding challenges;
- Essential provider of education and health care services for State of Missouri;
- Broad diversification of revenues;
- Strong liquidity profile;
- Strong UM Health Care performance; and
- Continued successful fundraising efforts.

T COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

University of Missouri takes \$22 million hit as Greitens acts on state budget

BY RUDI KELLER

Gov. Eric Greitens cut \$11 million appropriated by lawmakers out of the University of Missouri System's core budget and withheld more than \$11 million dedicated to system initiatives Friday as he finalized action on the \$27 billion state budget for the year beginning Saturday.

The cut was part of \$251 million in spending restrictions — \$36 million from higher education — that were needed to balance spending with expected state revenues. Greitens also vetoed three spending items, including \$1 appropriated to show the General Assembly's commitment to the UMKC downtown arts campus. Greitens vetoed the legislation authorizing bonds for the \$96 million project.

Greitens also withheld \$15 million from public school transportation costs. He left the increase to basic foundation formula spending unchanged, which means it is fully funded after changes last year intended to lower the legally required cost of supporting schools.

Greitens did not speak publicly about his budget decisions, instead issuing a news release describing his actions. Revenues for the fiscal year that ended Friday were well below projections, leaving the budget underfunded as the year began.

The cuts to higher education set spending to support colleges and universities at the levels Greitens initially recommended. He did not recommend the money allocated to system initiatives and cooperative programs with other universities.

“We were sent here to make tough decisions” Greitens said in the news release. “That’s what we’re doing. Politicians were trying to spend money we don’t have.”

The UM System received an appropriation of \$419.2 million from lawmakers. After the standard withholding set by law, UM would have received about \$406.7 million. With the additional withholding, UM will receive about \$396 million. The restricted funds could be released by Greitens if state revenues improve or lawmakers vote to force the spending during the veto session in September.

The initiatives cut by Greitens included \$5 million to support medical student training in Springfield, \$3 million for cooperative dental program between UMKC and Missouri Southern State University and \$1 million for a cooperative engineering program involving Missouri State University and Missouri University of Science and Technology in Rolla.

“This eliminates state support for non-essential higher education initiatives outside of core state funding,” a budget document posted on the Office of Administration website states. “This also eliminates state support of duplicate training programs offered at multiple campuses.”

The new University of Missouri administration of President Mun Choi based the system’s budget on a state appropriation of \$419.2 million and receiving the money set aside for cooperative programs.

“We are reviewing the latest information,” spokeswoman Kelly Wiemann wrote in an email to the Tribune. The university will have more reaction next week, she wrote.

Paul Wagner, director of the Council on Public Higher Education, said Greitens was cutting important programs needed to support the state’s workforce needs. The council is an advocacy group for all four-year state universities.

“I only know what those words say,” Wagner said. “Does that mean he doesn’t want us to do these cooperative programs anymore? I don’t know what to make of that. The engineering programs are full and the Springfield area is growing quickly, with high paying jobs and the students ready to train. We need to build capacity in those STEM areas.”

The reduction in the basic allocation for higher education was expected given the poor performance of state revenues, Wagner said.

“It is unfortunate and I don’t think it is the right direction for our state but these are the realities we have got to live with sometimes,” Wagner said.

State support for public schools will be \$3.39 billion in the coming year, up \$48 million. The transportation funding, set at \$105.3 million by lawmakers, will be cut by \$15 million. That will

allow for an increase of \$6.6 million in actual spending from the fund, the Office of Administration document stated.

State transportation support provided about \$100,000 of the \$700,000 spent by Southern Boone Public Schools on student transport, Superintendent Chris Felmlee said Friday.

In many districts, the value of state support is eroding due to inflation and the increasing number of students, Felmlee said. He noted that Columbia and Hallsville have asked voters for levy increases in recent elections and that Centralia Public Schools are asking for a levy increase at the Aug. 8 special election.

His district had six kindergarten classes in the 2016-17 school year and will have seven in the coming year, Felmlee said.

The cuts to transportation were expected, Felmlee said.

“It is typically the first place the governor goes,” he said. “I appreciate he has protected the formula, which is important for overall school funding. If the formula is funded, it is easier to pay for transportation and early childhood education.

MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: Greitens withholds \$251 million from fiscal 2018 budget, \$11 million from UM System

MISSOURIAN STAFF, Jun 30, 2017

COLUMBIA — The UM System faces an additional \$11 million in cuts to core funding as Gov. Eric Greitens announced Friday that he was withholding \$251 million from the state budget for fiscal year 2018.

Greitens blamed lagging tax revenue and rising costs of health care for the cuts. Overall, the restrictions include \$24 million in core funding for higher education.

Parker Briden, Greitens' spokesperson, said UM System administrators would decide how the \$11 million will be cut across its four campuses.

The governor made the announcement after signing several budget appropriations bills approved by the Missouri General Assembly in the spring. Greitens, on the eve of the new fiscal year that begins Saturday, said the legislators' budget was irresponsible.

"We were sent here to make tough decisions," he said. "That's what we're doing. Politicians were trying to spend money we don't have. So we're left with two choices: raise taxes or cut spending. I will not raise your taxes."

The Office of Administration earlier this week projected that state tax collections would fall \$150 million short of expectations. House Budget Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick, R-Shell Knob, predicted at the time that the situation would trigger \$250 million to \$300 million in withholdings.

In the budget he unveiled in February, Greitens proposed a 9 percent cut to higher education, [according to previous Missourian reporting](#). The Senate, which has feuded with Greitens, restored some funding during the regular legislative session so the cut was only 6.5 percent.

With Friday's announcement, the cuts to higher education are now back to 9 percent, [according to the governor's office](#).

Rep. Donna Lichtenegger, R-Cape Girardeau, who is the chairman of the [House Higher Education Committee](#), said she had not yet talked with the governor's office about the cuts or how they may be distributed among the state's higher education institutions. But she said the UM System and other colleges across the state that have been "cutting to the bone" in recent weeks were likely projecting Greitens' 9 percent cuts.

Restrictions affect not just the universities but also community college and trade schools, she said.

"You don't get a good workforce if you don't have good higher education," Lichtenegger said. "If we don't have a good workforce, our welfare rolls keep going up — it's almost like this vicious cycle."

Greitens also cut \$12 million from the state's "[non-essential](#)" cooperative higher education initiatives, which will mostly affect the UM System. Although the information the governor's office released on Friday does not specify which programs will be cut, those making up the bulk of previously funded initiatives are part of the UM System.

According to House Bill 3, an appropriations bill, some of the UM system initiatives funded this year include:

- \$5 million to increase the medical student class size at MU and support a cooperative medical student training program with two hospitals in Springfield.
- \$3 million for a satellite program at Missouri Southern State University for the University of Missouri, Kansas City School of Dentistry.

- \$1 million for a UMKC pharmacy doctorate program in collaboration with Missouri State University.
- \$1 million for an MU engineering program expansion in collaboration with Missouri State University and Missouri University of Science and Technology.

The restrictions were detailed on [the Office of Administration website](#). The largest chunk, \$60 million, came as a reduction in the Department of Social Services' supplemental need appropriation.

"Based on current Medicaid data, DSS will need less funds than they expected for the FY 18 supplemental," the explanation reads.

Greitens cut the Medicaid reimbursement rate that will be paid to health care providers by 1.5 percent, a move he said would save \$12 million. He withheld \$47 million from state building maintenance, \$15 million from public school transportation, \$10 million from the tourism promotion budget and \$4 million in reimbursements to biodiesel producers.

He also withheld \$30 million more from the Department of Social Services, saying it is identifying "efficiencies" that will allow it do more with less money.

Greitens signed several other bills Friday, including Senate Bill 139, which will extend the MORx program until 2022. MORx helps low-income Missourians pay for prescription drugs. It was scheduled to expire.

The governor vetoed House Committee Bill 3, though. It would have provided financial aid to low-income seniors, veterans and people with disabilities who need home health care assistance. State Rep. Deb Lavender, D-Kirkwood, is a member of the House Budget Committee. She said in an email statement Friday that she was "deeply saddened and disappointed" that Greitens did so.

"HCB 3 was designed to extend community-based services for people living at home who need just a little bit of help to be able to stay in their homes," Lavender said. "HCB 3 would transfer extra money from some of the 469 different state funds that contain unspent, excess revenue. Some of these fund balances have as much as \$85 million in reserve. The \$34 million cost of HCB 3 is less than 1 percent of the \$3.6 billion that's just sitting in these funds.

"In the long run, this decision will cost Missouri taxpayers more as people receiving these services will turn towards emergency rooms for the care they are no longer receiving and end up in nursing homes sooner than they would have if community-based services were left in place."

Greitens, however, called HCB 3 "a one-time gimmick" and a "fake fix to a real problem." He said it would have taken money from the Children's Trust, Workers Compensation, Second Injury, Highway Patrol Academy and Fire Education funds while protecting funds for tattoo artists, interior designers, embalmers, acupuncturists, massage therapists and realtors.

“This bill was pushed through in the middle of the night with no public hearing. ... Politicians cherry-picked their desired funds to protect while the most vulnerable Missourians were left holding the bag.”

Stephen Webber, chair of the Missouri Democratic Party, scolded Greitens for a "lack of leadership and self-serving priorities." He noted in a news release that the new restrictions on higher education funding reflect a total cut of about 9 percent from the previous year.

Also on the local front, Greitens eliminated \$63,000 in funding for Missouri Task Force 1, which is headquartered at the Boone County Fire Protection District and provides search and rescue services during disasters.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

Mizzou putting restrictions on personal purchases using ‘student charge’

BY LILY O’NEILL
loneill@kcstar.com

The students at the University of Missouri in Columbia have reached their limits.

University administrators have decided to restrict students’ personal purchases using their university accounts. The restrictions go into effect Aug.1

At the university, students can use their Mizzou TigerCard ID to make what’s called a “student charge” to pay for various items or services.

They can use their student charge at, among other locations, the [Mizzou Store](#), at Campus Dining Services and at the MizzouRec, the campus recreation center and gym. They can buy new clothes from the Mizzou Store, grab some sushi from the Student Center or get a massage in the MizzouRec spa.

The university has found, however, that the student charge has allowed too many students to spend money they didn’t have and go into debt.

If the balance of a student charge is not paid on time, a hold can be placed on a student’s account. That can eventually lead to a student being unable to re-enroll the following semester. The university says that financial problems are a big reason students who are academically eligible don’t return to Mizzou.

The student charges are capped at \$1,250 per student per semester, and that cap will remain. The main effect of the new limit will be to restrict what students can buy. They will no longer be able to use their student charge payments for non-educational items.

The Mizzou Store will restrict purchases to textbooks and academic materials. Students will be unable to charge clothing, food, cosmetics or personal hygiene items to their accounts.

Students can no longer use student charge services at the MizzouRec or use that form of payment at Campus Dining Services locations.

“Goodbye to the days I would student charge spray tans, food and clothes, meanwhile, having my mom think it was ‘books.’ Thanks, @Mizzou,” junior Madison Pfleiderer wrote on Twitter.

The Missouri Students Association Senate issued a [Twitter poll](#) June 22 asking students if they supported the decision to limit the student charge. With 499 participants, 80 percent voted no.

“Initially I was bummed out, kind of at the fact that there was no more of me just going to the Student Center and grabbing a smoothie or something, but although it was a bummer for me, I knew it was kind of what Mizzou needed,” said Annie Merrill, a junior at the university.

“I think that they could have maybe taken a different approach to it, maybe set better limits. I know that my parents set limits for me personally, but there was never a way for Mizzou to set limits with certain people.”

Jim Spain, the university’s vice provost of undergraduate studies, said that after analyzing data on student debt and the excessive use of student charge, this is the university’s way to help combat debt and encourage students to properly manage their finances.

“This effort is all directed toward helping support students in their pursuit of making good progress in completing their academic program and successfully graduating from MU,” Spain said. “This is not intended to be punitive, and that’s why making sure that students have other options and being able to cover other expenses associated with being a student at MU are still in place.”

The university will be promoting its other payment form, E.Z. Charge, which is a prepaid option applied to an account that students can access with their Mizzou TigerCard ID. Unlike student charge, students cannot exceed a selected balance.

Student charge is not a form of payment for other colleges in the region. Instead they use prepaid options similar to E.Z. Charge, like the University of Kansas’ [Beak ‘Em Bucks](#) and Kansas State University’s [Cat Cash](#).

Campus Dining Services, the MizzouRec and the Mizzou Store are the only locations that have placed restrictions on student charge beginning Aug. 1.

But a working group of Mizzou administrators and staff along with a Mizzou student representative in the upcoming school year will be sifting through 150 other campus locations to eliminate purchases that are not academic related.

“Ultimately, why is Mizzou here? To provide us with education,” Missouri Students Association president Nathan Willett said. “Anything that doesn’t really add to that educational value, you know, that’s where they’re coming from. “

The university will promote its free resources for those who used student charge but won’t be able to cover certain costs once the restrictions on purchases begin. For example, Tiger Pantry provides free food for students and faculty.

The university is also encouraging faculty to use resources in the public domain to create free materials so students won’t necessarily have to purchase books for every class.

Christian Basi, director of the university’s news bureau, said the university is trying to ease student finances so they can get off to a good start once they graduate.

“A student who is not burdened with debt contributes more to the economy and is likely to be less stressed than those who do,” he said.

While the university is trying help students financially, it’s being forced to make some [budget cuts](#) themselves. The Mizzou Store is a big attraction for generating revenue for the school, and the restrictions could erode profits.

“This is not in response to our budget situation. This is in response to doing the very best we can for our students,” Spain said. “In some ways, it might very well diminish the income to the Mizzou Store, but if that allows us to help students be more successful at Mizzou, that’s an expense we are willing to incur.”

San Francisco Chronicle

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH



Missouri scientists create technology to track buzzing bees

Story generated by MU News Bureau release: [Bee Buzzes Could Help Determine How to Save their Decreasing Population](#)

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Researchers trying to track bee activity to find areas where the bee population is declining could soon be using an acoustic system developed by a research team that includes scientists from Missouri universities.

Scientists developed an acoustic listening system to monitor bee activity in a specific area, The Columbia Missourian reported (<http://bit.ly/2sqWb9i>). The system's small microphone records the pitch and frequency of a bee's buzzing and sends that information to data storage devices such as an iPad or USB drive.

The goal is to analyze bee activity for several years and give warnings if bee populations are declining in a specific area, said University of Missouri biology professor Candace Galen.

"Which then could be a diagnostic or a warning sign that these are places where we need boots on the ground, people to go out and survey bees and see who's there and who isn't," Galen said.

The team also includes scientists from Webster University in St. Louis, Lincoln University in Jefferson City and Appalachian State University in North Carolina.

The research comes amid reports that bee populations have been declining in North America and Europe since the 1970s. The "colony collapse disorder" is related to mites, viruses, pesticides and other factors, according to the Missouri Department of Conservation. The decline of bees is important because bees pollinate a large percentage of the world's food supply.

"We as humans are very dependent on (bees and other pollinators)," she said.

The system is cheaper than hiring observers to count and track bees. One device can pick up sound from roughly 9 to 16 feet away, which is more sensitive than the average human ear. The system also can record buzzing for about 96 hours before needing a recharge.

"If I had a lot of money to spend on my field team, I could hire a lot of observers and send each of those observers out to different locations, but that's not nearly as efficient as having the little USB drives do this for us," Galen said.

The system can differentiate bees of different sizes and shapes in the same area, which is important for farmers because different crops rely on different bee pollination methods.

The team conducted its research in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, which has a relatively controlled environment with little urban noise, traffic or farm equipment.

The scientists published their study, "Flight of the bumble bee: Buzzes predict pollination services," in PLOS One on June 7.

Because the team now knows the system works in simple condition, it will be used at more complex situations with more noise and several types of plants that require different pollination methods.

The acoustic listening system also allows scientists to track bees without using trap studies or destructive sampling methods, which are more accurate but that kill bees. Galen said destructive sampling is more of an issue because of the decline in some bee populations, with some being including on the endangered species list.



MU study shows emotional support animal certification may need to change

Generated from News Bureau press release: **[Study Reveals Recommendations for Certifying Emotional Support Animals](#)**

Watch the story: <http://www.komu.com/news/mu-study-shows-emotional-support-animal-certification-may-need-to-change>

COLUMBIA - A study conducted by the MU psychology department shows that the certification process for emotional support animals is flawed.

The study, conducted by Cassie Boness, a graduate student studying clinical psychology, and Jeffrey N. Younggren, a forensic psychologist and clinical professor at MU, looked at whose responsibility it should be to certify emotional support animals.

Emotional support animals are certified so they can be allowed in areas where pets normally are not allowed to help comfort an owner with a disability. However, recently there has been a surge in people getting their animals unnecessarily certified so they can have the benefits of an emotional support animal.

Right now, the process to certify an emotional support animal is simple. A licensed mental health professional can write a letter describing their client's symptoms to certify the animal without any training. Many people can gain access to certification letters through websites as well.

The recent MU study, however, shows the certification process should change so forensic psychologists are the ones performing animal certification because their certification would be on a case by case basis, and wouldn't come from a clinician who already has a relationship with the patient.

Younggren and Boness believe there needs to be a policy change on the national level so people stop abusing the emotional support animal program around the country.



July 1 in Missouri in honor of journalist

Watch the story: <http://www.komu.com/news/july-1-in-missouri-in-honor-of-journalist>

Generated from News Bureau pitch

JEFFERSON CITY - For the first year ever, July 1 in Missouri will be known as "Lucile Bluford Day."

Lucile Bluford was an influential African-American journalist who worked for the Kansas City Call for decades. Bluford was involved in a legal case with the University of Missouri that eventually opened its doors to minority students.

Bluford's day of recognition took three years to get voted into effect. Missouri House Representative Gail McCann Beatty, D-Kansas City was the one who created the bill, which was signed on July 14, 2016.

"Lucile Bluford is kind of someone that I knew of growing up, but had not really known the history behind her," McCann Beatty said. "I always knew that she was a very well respected journalist, but what I didn't know was how active she was involved in the civil rights movement."

Bluford is well known for working to eradicate racial segregation at the University of Missouri. Bluford was accepted to the university's journalism school, but was not allowed to register for classes when the school found out her race.

Bluford was given the Missouri Honor Medal in 1984, the journalism school's highest award, for her work in the field of journalism.

"You have to understand your past and history is destined to repeat itself if you don't know your history," McCann Beatty said. "Learning about her, her challenges on the MU Columbia campus, a lot of things that we were starting to see on campus, it just seemed like this was an important time to honor her."

Bluford died in 2003 at age 91.

McCann Beatty has been working on adding Bluford into the Hall of Famous Missourians. She said she hopes Bluford will be added to the hall in the next year or so.



[How to catch pesky Japanese Beetles](#)

By Stephanie Hirata

Watch the story: <http://krcgtv.com/news/local/how-to-catch-pesky-japanese-beetles>

JEFFERSON CITY — If you've seen those metallic green [Japanese Beetles](#) lately, you're not alone.

But that's not good news, according to local environmentalists.

Horticulture specialist James Quinn with the University of Missouri Extension Program said the invasive insects resurface in early June and tend to attack plants and crops. They peak around the Fourth of July and start to decrease in August.

Quinn tracks the pests to monitor their population.

There's been a steady increase of Japanese Beetles over the last few years.

Quinn said he was catching about 5,000 a day in mid-Missouri, far above what's average.

"Based on the fact that we had so many in 2015 and it increased in 2016. And the weather is good for them because we have plenty of moisture," Quinn said. "That means they have places to live in the ground and food to eat. So there's no reason to expect we'll suddenly have less this year."

For more information on how to catch them or any other questions, comments or concerns regarding Japanese Beetles, [click here](#).

To see the demonstration, watch the video above.



[Journalism app took grand prize at MU competition](#)

BY ELAINE ADAMS

They call it pack journalism. Hordes of reporters chase the same story — in the same way — while other developments go uncovered.

That's the challenge that Lee's Summit High School graduate Chris Mitchell tried to solve with two other students at the University of Missouri. They created an app called Informator, which took the grand prize at the 10th annual RJI Student Competition at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

For the competition, MU students from various disciplines collaborated to design a program or app using newer technology.

For the 2017 competition, teams were given the challenge of “building mobile applications of artificial intelligence to address journalistic problems and opportunities,” according to Mike McKean, competition mentor and associate director of the Reynolds Journalism Institute at the Missouri School of Journalism.

Mitchell, who graduated from high school in 2015, is studying computer science at MU. His Team MindFlow — which also included computer science student Evan Teters and journalism student Humera Lodhi — devised a search tool that finds hidden relationships between key words and phrases — leading journalists to new story angles.

By tracking concepts highly correlated with the word “transgender,” for example, the team surfaced a report that many European countries require transgender residents to be sterilized when they try to change their name or gender on a driver’s license. They also teased out an under-reported story about the difficulty that transgender diabetes patients have with health care services, especially in rural areas.

Mitchell says he enjoys the creative side of computer science, designing technology that’s eye-catching and easy to use.

“I’ve always wanted to find a way to combine technology and art or design,” he said.

Team MindFlow traces its beginnings to the fall semester last year, when Teters suggested that he and Mitchell, who were friends and roommates, attend an informational session about the competition. When people were asked to introduce themselves to others, Lodhi turned around and said hi to the two young men sitting behind her. They began talking and decided to form a team, Mitchell said.

“Humera really helped us understand some of the challenges journalists face when trying to find unique angles to cover stories,” Mitchell said. “I drove the concept for building the app, Evan did most of the computer coding, and Humera worked on how to effectively market the app. I was surprised at how many technology tools journalists rely on.”

There were some hiccups, of course.

“The database service we were using to build the app on was shut down part way through the development phase, and we had to quickly shift to a different type of service to power the app,” Mitchell said. “That was probably the biggest challenge and the most stressful part of the process.”

Informator’s code now sits on top of the Aylien News API, which indexes news content for two months from what it describes as thousands of high-quality and trusted sources worldwide.

Team MindFlow envisions researchers, educators, marketers and political advisers as other potential customers for Informator.

“It’s a clear concept that they already started to refine, and they thought about it beyond this competition and beyond journalism,” said Amanda Klohmann, a final-final round judge.

Mitchell said his years at Lee’s Summit High School have proved valuable. He points to “some very good teachers,” especially those who taught the demanding International Baccalaureate courses.

“I learned how to manage my time and balance different activities, which has been helpful in my first two years of college and helped me a lot with balancing my coursework and this extracurricular project.”

After his sophomore year in high school, Mitchell attended the three-week Missouri Scholars Academy, which encouraged him to take advantage of college opportunities and where he learned “some of the skills that helped me refine our app into its final form.”

After earning his bachelor’s degree, Mitchell hopes to continue exploring his twin interests in technology and design through a master’s degree and perhaps a doctorate.

“Then we’ll see what opportunities develop.”

MISSOURIAN

Student startup to connect MU talent with employers

MITCHELL BARTLE Jul 2, 2017

COLUMBIA — Two MU student entrepreneurs are starting an agency that will give their peers hands-on experience in their fields, potentially landing them a job or an internship.

The agency, called [Relevant Youth](#), will be a hub for the creative and business community, inspiring collaboration between the most innovative and ambitious students at MU, said Drew Rogers, co-founder of Relevant Youth and The Bridge.

“We want to connect people who mutually want the same thing,” he said, describing the agency as a “talent incubator.”

The other co-founder is Blaine Thomas. The two have been working together for a long time, beginning their journey at an entrepreneurship incubator at their high school in St. Louis.

They opened their first business, The Bridge, a store in MU’s Student Center, in 2016 with a \$2,000 startup investment and a rent-free space from the Missouri Student Unions Entrepreneurial Program. Earning over \$50,000 in revenue in their first year, Thomas and Rogers are the first student entrepreneurs ever to keep a business in the Student Center for more than a year. The Bridge will be re-opening in the fall, Rogers said.

Thomas said the idea for Relevant Youth was a direct result of running The Bridge.

"The skills that we were learning running a business were second to none," he said. "We thought, 'How can we give that same experience, that same knowledge to students at the university? What if we took a step back and let fellow students run our company and get that experience?'"

They plan to have the agency up and running at the beginning of the fall semester, providing account management, marketing, finance, media and merchandising to the partners of The Bridge.

Partners provide the merchandise in the store, which is sold on consignment. They receive 70 percent of the sales revenue from their products. Thomas said The Bridge had 20 partners in 2016 and that he would like to see that number double in the next two years.

That could be an achievable goal, as the staff of Relevant Youth — about 40 people — will be solely devoted to furthering the business interests of The Bridge. They will be divided into five teams, each with different responsibilities within the agency.

Business experience won't be the only benefit for students. Rogers and Thomas plan to showcase the talent at Relevant Youth to companies that would be interested in sponsoring the agency. By paying to become a sponsor of Relevant Youth, companies will gain access to the inner-workings of the agency and have the opportunity to observe or mentor students as they work for the partners of The Bridge.

"Companies care about the heart, companies care about the soft skills that people have as a worker," Rogers said. "(It will) not only help companies get to know students, but it will really help companies get their name out there to Mizzou and in kind of a cool way."

Thomas said he and Rogers are actively seeking out and talking to companies about possible sponsorships, but none have committed yet. While money from sponsorships and exposure to possible employers are both important to the long-term success of Relevant Youth, the agency's main focus will be the development of skills.

"Something I like about The Bridge and Relevant Youth is that we don't have a monetary goal," Thomas said. "Our main goals are how many other entrepreneurs and students we can help and we can serve."

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Farmers from Missouri to West Bengal, India adapt to the global challenge of climate change

By Renee Hickman and Tanushree Sen Special to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Liz Graznak is the co-owner of Happy Hollow Farm, a family operation located on the rolling hills of Jamestown, Mo., where she grows crops including tomatoes, greens and corn.

Graznak said she has seen big changes in weather conditions since she started farming 10 years ago. These days, she said, “it’s more extreme one way or the other.”

This and other effects of climate change represent a global challenge, and farmers such as Graznak have found themselves on the front lines of the struggle to adapt.

For her, that has meant altering the way she farms. Large tunnels covered in plastic dot the seven acres where she grows vegetables, protecting them from greater variability in rainfall and temperature. “More plastic is the way that I feel like most mid-Missouri small-scale farmers are trying to deal with the challenges of the weather,” she said.

In the village of Joynagar, in the Indian state of West Bengal, Srimonto Soren is dealing with such challenges in his own way. He grows rice, long beans (which resemble green beans), and lady’s fingers — better known in the U.S. as okra. Date palms and shrubs grow along a flat landscape where the red soil can be hard to grow crops in.

Like Graznak, Soren has been farming for the past 10 years, and has noticed shifts that affect his livelihood, such as rainfall that’s now “more erratic and unpredictable.” Soren and other farmers in the area look to low-cost ways to adjust to these shifts, such as making vermicompost, produced when earthworms speed up the breakdown of organic waste. The product is then added to the soil to make it more fertile and resilient to variable weather conditions.

In the agricultural heartlands of India and the United States, extreme weather events have caused damage to millions of acres of crops. Not only does this jeopardize the incomes of farmers, it puts food supplies in the United States, India and the world at risk.

Farmers are divided on the root causes of climate change. But experts who work to help them adapt say farmers are increasingly united in the recognition that their environment is changing. In places as far-flung as West Bengal and Missouri, farmers have very little choice but to seek out practical solutions to preserve their livelihoods.

According to data from NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 were each the warmest years on record. Climate change experts say the warming climate is driving up the numbers of droughts, floods, storms, heat waves and other weather events that can devastate crops.

Water woes

For farmers in both India and the United States, wild changes in precipitation can cause some of the most immediate problems connected to climate change.

As the Earth's surface warms, water from oceans, lakes, rivers and streams evaporates and rises, gathering in the clouds and resulting in rain, storms and snowfall. At other times and in other places, the warming climate increases and intensifies droughts.

All farmers depend on some level of predictability in the weather to manage their businesses. Large fluctuations in precipitation patterns can result in issues such as changes to planting and growing seasons and lower crop yields.

Extreme rainfall has devastated many farms in India. In March 2015, heavy rains fell throughout India. In states such as Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, it was the wettest spring in decades, if not on record, according to the [Centre for Science and Environment](#) in New Delhi.

Farmers in parts of India plan for occasional heavy rainfalls, since they are a regular feature of the climate in many regions of the subcontinent. But that spring saw especially intense rainfall even for a string of years with precipitation far higher than normal.

The rains came just as farmers were preparing to harvest their winter crops — from wheat and sugarcane to mangoes and bananas — and the impacts were huge. In Uttar Pradesh, the Indian state most affected by the event, crops in more than 65 percent of the affected area experienced 33 percent or more damage, data from the center shows. That cost farmers more than \$3 billion.

In Missouri, farmers are also feeling the effects of volatile precipitation levels.

Jerry Hatfield, laboratory director at the [National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment](#) for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said dry summers reduce farmers' yields — and their profits go down. Wet springs, meanwhile, may delay planting because the soil is so waterlogged. Again, farmers lose money.

Patrick Guinan, a professor of climatology at the University of Missouri, said wet springs are the biggest problem for farmers in Missouri right now. "You can go back 30-40 years; you're not going to find a wetter period in Missouri," he said.

Story continues: http://www.stltoday.com/business/local/farmers-from-missouri-to-west-bengal-india-adapt-to-the/article_f9eac321-834e-5c68-a981-676791e345ee.html

MISSOURIAN

Local refugees and others celebrate World Refugee Day

[LORETTA LEE](#) Jul 1, 2017

COLUMBIA — World Refugee Day brought people of different backgrounds together on Saturday at Broadway Christian Church.

Not only were the attendees celebrating refugees, most of them were wearing blue to celebrate Somalia's independence day. Abdiwahid Khalif was one of them.

"Columbia is a very nice place," said Khalif, 28, who came to Columbia a year ago from Somalia. "Anywhere you go, you enjoy it. It's your home."

Khalif was happy to see many different people in one room celebrating different cultures.

World Refugee Day is an annual event hosted by Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri leadership and Broadway Christian Church. The event celebrates the strength and determination of Columbia's local refugees, said Dan Lester, the local Catholic Charities executive director.

"World Refugee Day is an internationally recognized event that was created by the United Nations," he said. "Our goal for the Columbia celebration is the same as that put forth by the UN — to 'commemorate the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees.'"

Yusuf Mohammed, 21, has worked as a case manager at Catholic Charities' local Refugee and Immigration Services since January 2015. He has urged the general public to become more familiar with the refugee community in Columbia.

"Since we are resettling in Columbia, people in Columbia know more than others for the refugees," Yusuf said.

Alex Ringling organized this year's event for the first time as the volunteer coordinator. She expected a turnout of 150 people attending the annual event.

"When you think Columbia, you rarely think diversity," Ringling said. "I hope the World Refugee Day could help raise awareness of the refugee community and to make a home for them by bringing different communities together."

Catholic Charities is the official refugee resettlement agency for mid-Missouri. Lester said they are the initial point of contact for newly arrived refugees and are responsible for assisting refugees in making their transition to their new homes as smooth as possible.

"We ensure that all new arrivals have safe and comfortable housing, food and clothing. Many arrive with nothing more than the clothes on their backs," Lester said. "In addition, we work with employers to get refugees into jobs, kids into school and address any medical concerns that new arrivals might have. We also offer ongoing cultural orientations and English language classes to help ensure that refugees can become independent, productive citizens of their new home."

Samuel Byamukama, 14, fled to America eight months ago with his nine siblings from Uganda, but his mom remains there, he said.

He speaks fluent English.

"I knew a little English back in Africa," Byamukama said. "I think Columbia is a very nice place, and I plan to stay here in America in the future."

Pulcherie Guissou, a medical student at MU who came from Burkina Faso, in West Africa, said people should be more compassionate to the refugee community.

"These are people who suffered," Guissou said. "They might not do everything right. But it's our responsibility to guide them and help them adapt to the new way of living without losing their own identity."

Guissou said that this event could allow people from Africa to get to know and rely on the other people who are already here.

Lester said refugees are resilient people.

"They have been driven from their homes by war and terror," he said, "and many have been living in refugee camps for extended periods of time. They come to this country seeking safety and freedom from oppression and fear, and the last thing that they want to bring with them from their homes is more violence."