



MU News Bureau

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Survey shows only 7 percent use MU resources during hostile incidents

Complete campus climate survey results released

Watch the story: <http://www.abc17news.com/news/mizzou-climate-survey-shows-only-seven-percent-utilize-mu-resources-during-hostile-incidents/623745843>

COLUMBIA, Mo. - **The University of Missouri released its complete campus morale report this week.**

The more than 500-page document shows the results from the climate survey that was taken by nearly 10,000 students, faculty and staff.

Last week, [university leaders](#) met with nearly 150 respondents and presented their findings.

Specifically looking into incidents that dealt with exclusion or hostile conduct, one-third of people who took the survey back in 2016 said they witnessed exclusionary, intimidating, offensive or hostile incidents at the university. Almost 1 in 5 said they personally were a victim.

Data shows African-Americans experienced a higher percentage of exclusionary style conduct but only 196 chose to answer. Those that identified as white had the lowest percentage but a higher number of responses.

The fall 2015 protests were brought up in the responses and were referred to as "unsettling," "over the top" and "violent (in) nature." One student went as far as to say "during the Concerned student 1950 protests, I felt incredibly uncomfortable on campus as a white female." Another was quoted "the actions of the group has made this campus a worse place to be."

ABC 17 News spoke with students on campus that said the university has handled the situation inappropriately.

Nick Barnedy, a senior at Mizzou, said the university "did a poor job as a reflection of that decreased enrollment."

Emily Schenberg, a junior at Mizzou, said "ever since the protests we have come together. I think the right people are in charge right now," she said.

Thirty-three percent of survey takers say they didn't do anything when they saw a conflict. Only 7 percent took action by going to an MU resource, like title IX.

You can review the full report [here](#).



[Data places MU professor pay near bottom of public universities](#)

By: Caileigh Peterson

COLUMBIA — Data from the American Association of Universities placed pay for University of Missouri near the bottom of the list of AAU public universities.

Males holding full professorships at the University of Missouri were the only MU faculty that were not the worst paid public faculty members of the AAU.

According to the data, men who held full professorships at MU in 2015-16 had an average salary of approximately 128,900 dollars. That average salary was over 24,000 dollars less than the average of AAU public universities.

Women with full professorships at MU in 2015-16 made an average of approximately 108,000 dollars. That average was 30,000 dollars less than women with the same rank at other public universities.

According to MU's Campus Climate Assessment Project, of the 60 percent of faculty and staff respondents who seriously considered leaving the university, 58 percent did so because of pay.

There are 33 public universities in the AAU.



With survey results in, MU is ready to move forward with new inclusivity plans

By TATYANA MONNAY and TRISTEN ROUSE

MU and Rankin & Associates Consulting released a full report of the 2016 Campus Climate Survey results, which measure perceptions of respect by students, faculty and staff, on Monday.

The full 578-page report follows a pair of town hall forums on Sept. 12 and Sept. 13, where officials from the consulting firm and the university presented a summarized report to the public.

The Campus Climate Survey measured feelings regarding race relations on campus, graduate student rights and levels of respect felt by faculty and staff.

In the town halls, audience members and live stream viewers were able to ask MU leadership questions about the survey results.

Audience members asked about department accountability, increased parking options for students, Title IX protections and how MU administration plans to balance freedom of speech and students' need to feel safe.

"Policies are not going to move the needle; we need to read the report and reflect on it," UM System President Mun Choi said.

The findings are part of a wider survey of campus climate on all four UM System campuses, and reveal that only 66 percent of the MU community feels comfortable on campus, which is lower than the national average of 70 to 80 percent, according to Dr. Emil Cunningham, senior executive associate of Rankin & Associates Consulting.

The 120-question survey featured open- and closed-ended questions and was available online and on paper from October to November 2016. 9,952 students, staff and faculty participated in the survey, which equals about a 22 percent response rate.

Cunningham, who presented the survey's findings, noted that the results must be viewed in context, as the survey was taken just after the [2015 protests](#), a time on campus when racial tensions were high.

Campus climate is defined as “the current attitude, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential,” according to the Campus Climate Survey website.

In addition to the lower levels of on-campus comfort, the wider survey found that 19 percent of respondents had experienced some form of hostile conduct. Of that number, the majority of respondents reported that the treatment was based on gender and gender identity, followed by ethnicity, position, racial identity and age, respectively.

The survey report also includes quotes from respondents.

“We all need to be treated the same no matter our sex, color, political views, etc. No one should have a leg up for any reason other than experience and qualifications,” said one respondent, who elaborated on suggestions within the survey.

Despite those reports, 54 percent of students felt that the university encouraged open discussion about difficult topics.

The survey also reported that 38 percent of employees seriously considered leaving MU, and that 47 percent of employees listed “limited opportunities for advancement” as a reason for considering a departure, while another 25 percent gave an unwelcoming campus climate as a reason.

However, most of the staff who strongly considered leaving actually stayed at MU, Cunningham said.

Senior administration such as Choi, Provost Garnett Stokes, Chancellor Alexander Cartwright and Kevin McDonald, vice chancellor for Inclusion, Diversity & Equity and UM System chief diversity officer, acknowledged that while the survey results were relatively consistent with national averages, improvements still need to be made.

“While our results are very similar to what has been found at other institutions, we are not happy with some of the findings, and it helps us identify areas that we should address in the future,” Cartwright said in a press release.

Nearly one year after the survey’s distribution and two years after the protests, multiple steps have been taken to increase inclusivity across campus. Students, staff and faculty now have representation in the Chancellor’s Cabinet and administrators have begun “Listen and Learn” tours where faculty and staff are able to communicate how they think their work could be better supported.

These steps will be followed by the final phases of the survey initiative, where Cartwright and the Chancellor’s Cabinet will begin developing and implementing strategic actions to create a

more inclusive campus environment. Development is set to begin in the spring semester, according to the survey website.

“Honest, open and direct feedback is the only way we can work together to build a better Mizzou,” Cartwright said in the press release. “Our core values of Respect, Responsibility, Discovery and Excellence will guide us.”

MISSOURIAN

Minorities potentially discriminated against in Title IX processes

By NWADI OKO

Do colleges and universities discriminate against minority students in their enforcement of Title IX rules?

Probably, according to one MU professor. But it’s not possible to know for sure because institutions of higher learning aren’t required to record and publish demographic data about students who are sanctioned for violating the rules.

That’s the conclusion that MU Associate Law Professor Ben Trachtenberg reached in [an article to be published early next year](#) in the Nevada Law Journal. The lack of data about students who are sanctioned potentially hurts all students, he writes. Without the numbers, he says, universities cannot address the problem of discrimination.

Harsh punishment of black students can be seen in studies dating back to the 1970s. Trachtenberg’s article cites research that shows black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students in grades K-12.

The same kind of discrimination can also be seen in the criminal justice system, where black suspects are also arrested at higher rates than whites for the same conduct, he writes. Those disparities were revealed through detailed record-keeping, and the results helped fuel reforms.

Meanwhile, higher ed just doesn’t have the data.

“At universities all over America if you want to know what percentage of people of different races who got suspended last year for plagiarism, or who got suspended for drug and alcohol violations ... we don’t have those answers,” Trachtenberg said in an interview Monday.

Trachtenberg thinks the problem deserves national intervention.

“I think it would be particularly helpful for the U.S Department of Education to simply require that colleges and universities receiving federal funds produce the same sort of data that public elementary and high schools produce,” Trachtenberg said.

This data would allow for concrete facts and greater clarity when looking at racial disparities and would prompt real changes to the university system.

Trachtenberg is “cautiously optimistic” about the sort of data that could be kept in the future and plans to write to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos when [the public comment period begins](#) regarding Title IX.

DeVos has been critical of the current Title IX process for not being fair and said in a [speech](#) at George Mason University that she plans to alter the Title IX system. Her plans have not touched on possible biases against minorities.

Calls to MU’s Office for Civil Rights and Title IX were not returned.

Trachtenberg said there are several reasons colleges and universities don’t keep that kind of information.

“Some schools haven’t thought about it, and some might be embarrassed with the results,” he said.

The disciplinary process at universities can also prove tricky. All student conduct hearings are held in secret, outsiders are not allowed to watch or comment on the fairness of each trial. There are often no transcripts or recordings of the proceedings, and punishments are not public information, Trachtenberg notes in the article.

In addition, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or [FERPA](#), limits what student information can be made public.

And with vague definitions for sexual assault and harassment, it leaves interpretations to the disciplinary board. Studies show that racial disparities are bigger when offenses are more vaguely defined, Trachtenberg said.

“Given the history that this country has of treating the sexual interest of black men as dangerous and the other implicit biases that people have, I find it hard to believe that similar conduct of black men might not be perceived as more threatening and more likely to be called harassment than the same thing done by white people,” Trachtenberg said.

Due to the unconscious implicit racial biases of those administering disciplinary sentences, he said, they could be discriminating against minority students.

“It’s likely that the same implicit biases that lead to more black high school kids getting suspended could well be affecting the college system,” Trachtenberg said.

However, without the numbers, Trachtenberg says, schools can't move forward and work to end the racial discrimination pertaining to Title IX and the disciplinary process.

If they did collect the data, schools would be able to compare demographics and punishments for university students. And with aggregate data, schools would have a guideline for certain punishments, and students would be able to judge the fairness of the outcome.

"It just has to be the case that if we take a hard look at ourselves we are going to get data that will help us work toward greater fairness," he said.

the **maneater**

MU law student Paul Wade awarded Pat Tillman Foundation scholarship for military service

By SARAH PETERSON

Generated from News Bureau press release: [University of Missouri Student Veterans Named Pat Tillman Scholars](#)

MU law student Paul Wade has served his country through the U.S. military for much of his life. This summer, he was recognized for his service, leadership and impact on the community when he was awarded the Pat Tillman Foundation scholarship, one of the most prestigious scholarships for veterans.

Wade first enlisted in 2003 after graduating from Truman State University with a bachelor's in history. Wanting to serve his country in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks and the invasion of Iraq, he decided to enlist in the Army.

"I was probably going to enlist anyway, but when we invaded Iraq, there was obviously something to do for our country," he said.

At the time, he worked at Wal-Mart and had applied to a management program at the company but was told that few people would be accepted due to economic conditions. The day after he enlisted, he was informed that he had been recommended for the program.

"I just looked at [the human resources lady] and I was like, 'You should have told me that yesterday because I'm in the Army now, so there's not much I can do,'" he said.

He initially enlisted as a specialist in the infantry.

“When you first get there, it’s just like really low-level work,” he said. “I joke because you know I was manager of the Wal-Mart, so I used to be in charge of the guys who cleaned the bathrooms, then when I joined the Army, I was the guy who cleaned the bathrooms.”

However, he quickly rose to positions of leadership. During his first military tour, he was a squad leader supervising two poll sites in the first Iraqi elections. A year later, he was deployed again as a truck commander in a quick response force that responded to trouble on the east side of Afghanistan.

He then applied for officer candidate school and was trained as a lieutenant in the U.S. He returned to Afghanistan once more as an officer and worked to improve the training of the Afghan National Police in areas such as vehicle and weapons proficiency. In total, he served on active duty for just under 12 years.

Wade said his time spent overseas helped him gain a deeper understanding of other cultures.

“When you deal with cultures of different people and you see what they value and how they value it and why they value it, I don’t want to say it makes you question what you value, but it gives you a more detachment of how the culture works, and it makes you kind of see the common humanity between people,” he said.

He earned a master’s degree in international business while in the army and is now enrolled in the MU School of Law. His long-term plan is to combine knowledge of law and business along with the cultural understanding he gained while deployed to bring more businesses to poorer countries and help include them in the global economy. His experiences in Afghanistan allowed him to see how much of a difference business and infrastructure can make in developing countries.

“When people can actually get employed and life is worth living, you start getting people going to school, you do all these different things, the violence goes down across the board,” he said. “It’s amazing.”

Wade currently uses his knowledge of the law to help fellow veterans through the MU School of Law Veterans Clinic, which aids veterans and their families in securing disability benefits. He also volunteers with Team Red, White and Blue, an organization that focuses on creating connections between veterans and the community.

“I think part of the thing that happens is when people come back, they don’t get connected with the community,” he said. “And I’ve seen it happen, where when you get a lot of community members and you get veterans both together and you do that shared hardship thing, you run a 5K, 10K ... You have those shared hardship experiences, and that brings you closer together.”

Wade was awarded the Pat Tillman Foundation scholarship, which was given to only 60 students in 2017, in June. Robert Ross, director of the MU Veterans Center, encouraged Wade to apply for the scholarship. He believes that Wade's ideas for impacting the world after he graduates helped his application stand out.

"They're looking for people who have ideas that are achievable," Ross said. "They are not looking for someone to say, 'Well, I got this medal. I got that medal. I was named the soldier of the year.' They want to know what you are going to do with your background, your training, to move the needle forward on solving some of the issues in the world."

Wade continues to serve his country through participation in the Missouri National Guard and hopes to join the JAG Corps, the legal branch of the military, after he graduates from law school.

the maneater

The Mizzou Store sales drop with changes to increase financial and academic success for students

By CLARE ROTH

Businesses on campus are suffering after changes to student charge and affordability initiatives were introduced this semester.

The Office of Cashiers [announced](#) in July that student charge purchases at MizzouRec, Campus Dining Services and The Mizzou Store will be limited. Student charge is a credit form of payment many students have historically relied on to charge items such as coffee or clothing to their student accounts to pay off later.

Compared to last year's term, starting July 1, The Mizzou Store has seen a 35 percent drop in course material sales, which can be student charged, a 19 percent drop in clothing sales and a 9 percent drop in snack sales. Sales of gift items were up 28 percent, likely due to the Aug. 21 solar eclipse, Liz McCune, associate director of the MU News Bureau, said in an email.

According to Jim Spain, vice provost of Undergraduate Studies, the guiding thought behind the decision to limit student charge was students' academic success.

"The bookstore recognizes that they're not there to be a profit center, but as a support center for students to get the materials they need," Spain said.

Student charge was used to pay for 59 percent of Mizzou Store purchases last year and 52 percent of purchases this year, according to McCune.

McCune said that UM System President Mun Choi, Chancellor Alexander Cartwright and Spain are focused on reducing the financial burden on MU students and have implemented several initiatives within the past year in the wake of budget cuts and enrollment decline.

Last month, Cartwright and Pelema Morrice, vice provost for enrollment management, signed the Missouri Land Grant Compact, which will cover tuition and fees for all students eligible for the Pell Grant starting next fall. Pell Grant-eligible Honors College students will have room and board paid for as well.

Spain said that on July 17 there were 1,756 students who hadn't re-enrolled for the fall following the spring semester. Of those 1,756, he said, 1,065 had a hold on their academic record. Of those 1,065 holds, 521 were cashiers holds from any of the 180 cost centers on campus.

Spain said that after receiving this information he did an audit of what these 521 students had charged at The Mizzou Store.

“A high percentage of the students had charged non-academic items, such as snacks, makeup and electronics,” Spain said.

A group of Missouri Students Association senators is currently working with Spain and other administrators to address the needs of students with “chronic financial shortfalls” who relied on student charge for things such as food and hygiene products. Spain said this committee is coming up with a few “safety net” approaches to find a solution that is “really going to be in the interest of [students’] long-term financial needs.”

This decision hasn't come without opposition. In a Twitter poll conducted by the MSA Senate in June, 80 percent of the almost 500 students who responded said they were opposed to the new limitations.

Blaine Thomas and Drew Rogers, co-founders of The Bridge, a student business run through the Missouri Student Unions Entrepreneurial Program, also expressed dissatisfaction with the decision.

“As a student entrepreneur, what's honestly painful is that people can go student charge a round of golf but they can't come into the student unions and student charge a product made by a student entrepreneur in a store owned by student entrepreneurs,” Thomas said. “So the way I look at it is, if this whole student charge thing is gone, make it gone, but I don't think it's fair for the university to play a pick-and-choose game.”

Students can still use student charge for course materials at The Mizzou Store such as textbooks, pens and calculators because they are academic in nature. The limit of \$1250 per semester will

stay in place. Students can also charge tickets to some cultural and sporting events. The “round of golf” Thomas referred to can be student charged at the A.L. Gustin Golf Course.

“We pumped 70 percent of our revenue — \$40,000 — back into the entrepreneurial program last year; our business was helping entrepreneurial students primarily,” Rogers said. “With this policy now in place, it’s not going to totally ruin our business at all, but it’s going to definitely impact it greatly, which is going to hurt student entrepreneurs on this campus.”

McCune and Spain both said that the drop in sales was likely due to lower enrollment, changes to student charge and the bookstore’s new textbook affordability initiative. Textbook prices are currently, on average, 18 percent cheaper than this time last year, McCune said.

According to Todd Mackley, assistant vice chancellor of finance administration, other schools in the Southeastern Conference use systems similar to the one MU is currently working to enforce — Tiger Cash, a prepaid payment option, treats the student ID more like a debit card than a credit card.

Mackley is currently leading a group working to identify cost centers affected by student charge, such as student-run entrepreneurial projects like The Bridge. But, with around 70 percent of The Bridge’s profits last year coming from student charge, Spain said this is not a sustainable business model.

“We are not going to support businesses not devoted to student success,” Spain said.

Both Rogers and Thomas understand why the limits have been put in place, and they believe the university’s intentions are good.

“I do wish that we, as people who were going to be directly affected by this decision, had at least been contacted about it,” Rogers said. “I don’t think they realize how big of a negative impact it will have on other parties. And this isn’t just us. It’s The Mizzou Store, too. It’s going to really hurt this campus and the type of capitalistic structure we have.”

T COLUMBIA DAILY
TRIBUNE

Committee will develop University of Missouri tobacco ban

By RUDI KELLER

The University of Missouri banned smoking on campus in 2013 and now a new committee will use a grant to develop policies to ban all tobacco use.

The \$20,000 grant, part of \$1.2 million distributed to 126 colleges and universities by the American Cancer Society and the CVS Health Foundation, will fund the creation of a plan to create a tobacco-free environment, the university said in a news release.

In Missouri, cigarette smoking among teens has fallen below the national average but the use of other tobacco products — including smokeless tobacco, cigars and e-cigarettes — is near or above the national average, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control. While the campus smoking ban includes cigars and e-cigarettes, not everyone is aware of the full restrictions and some are uncertain about where it is enforced, said Kevin Everett, a faculty member in family and community medicine and chairman of the committee.

The smoking ban includes every university-owned building and the land surrounding it. Where the university owns property on both sides of a public street, the ban extends to the right-of-way. Only major roadways through campus — Stadium Boulevard, College Avenue and Providence Road — are not covered by the smoking ban.

“We will use some of the resources for better communication, such as signage, and look at what other campuses are doing for compliance to policy to see what some of the better outcomes are for addressing violations,” Everett said. “That is part of the issue of why I applied for the grant, because that level of understanding has not been articulated since the policy went into effect.”

The committee, when fully formed, will have about 18 to 20 members, representing faculty, staff, administration and students, Everett said.

According to the news release, about 1,600 of the nation’s 4,700 college campuses are 100 percent tobacco free. Tobacco is the single largest cause of preventable deaths, said Gary Reedy, cancer society CEO, and reducing use among youth will prevent deaths later.

CVS Health Foundation has set a goal of eliminating youth tobacco use, Eileen Boone, president of the foundation, said in the release.

Banning tobacco use in particular locations doesn’t, by itself, eliminate tobacco use, Everett said.

“It is a combination of factors, about getting good information out there about the harm that smoking and tobacco use can cause, what exposure to second-hand smoke can do and getting to access to treatments,” he said.

The current policy is enforced through awareness, with people asked to speak to offenders when they notice smoking, said MU spokesman Christian Basi.

“The vast majority of the time, that works,” Basi said. “If the individual is not comfortable with that, they can go to the building coordinator, who can address the situation.”

There is no timeline for the committee to make policy recommendations. The campus administration will look closely at any proposal that is intended to improve student and employee health, Basi said.

T COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

White nationalist group small, disorganized in effort to recruit new members on MU campus

By CAITLIN CAMPBELL

The white nationalist group that grabbed headlines statewide after posting recruitment flyers at the University of Missouri last month is small and disorganized, according to people who say they infiltrated the group online.

In early August, flyers recruiting for an organization calling itself the “Midwestern Alliance” were posted around the MU campus. The flyers prompted a written response from MU Chancellor Alexander Cartwright and Provost Garnett Stokes.

MU administrators sent an email to students and employees saying they were aware white supremacist groups were recruiting on college campuses across the United States. The email asked anyone aware of “activity that might violate university policies” to report them to MU’s Office for Civil Rights and Title IX.

“One of the core values of the University of Missouri is respect,” Cartwright wrote in the email. “As such, we are committed to fostering a community of inclusion.”

The Midwestern Alliance professes to want to start a “Midwest ethnic nationalist movement.” The group did not respond to an email seeking an interview.

MUPD Major Brian Weimer said there was not a police investigation into the matter, nor any laws broken that he was aware of. Any individual may place materials on public bulletin boards on campus. It is unclear which university policies — if any — were violated by the flyers.

After the flyers appeared, the Tribune was contacted by individuals who said they joined the group to gather information about its activities.

On Friday, a Wisconsin-based anti-fascist activist group that called itself Right Wing Leaks contacted the Tribune claiming its members had “infiltrated” the Midwest Alliance “by posing as virulent Nazis.” The group provided access to a cache of more than 609 pages of Midwest Alliance chat logs dating back to early July, audio recordings and photographs. The information provided includes a photograph that does not show an individual’s face, but shows someone giving a thumbs up over a stack flyers identical to those that appeared on MU’s campus.

Chat logs provided by the infiltrators show the group is small, with a few dozen unique users located across the Midwest. Some post about college exams, activities and parties, providing hints as to their age.

Only two individuals in the group identify themselves as from Missouri.

The sole person who said he is from Columbia in the chat logs is a man who used the screen name “WillSmithButWhite.” In a phone interview, he identified himself as a member of antifa, an anti-fascist activist group known for sometimes using violence against right-wing extremists, and said he only joined the Midwest Alliance to keep an eye on its activities after the flyers were posted at MU. Another user who said he was from Illinois later contacted the Tribune using encrypted communication and provided photographs of the individual who posted recruitment flyers on campus.

The sources requested anonymity to protect their identities, citing safety concerns.

The chat logs indicate the flyers at MU were posted by a young man who is neither from Columbia nor a student at MU. The flyers netted the group at most five responses from the local community, according to the logs.

The man who posted the flyers wrote that he is a community college student from Kansas City. He posted the flyers when he was in Columbia to visit his brother — an MU student with access to the observatory — during the eclipse. He took and shared photos of where he posted the flyers as he put them up around campus in the middle of the night.

Members of the group expressed frustration at the community’s response to the flyers.

“They lumped us in with white supremacists?” one user posted at 3:33 p.m. the day flyers went out in Columbia. “We had one article on the site about race.”

Three minutes later, the founder of the group shared similar frustrations and said he repeatedly stressed on their website that the group is “identitarian.”

A third user butts into the conversation to share he “read a little ‘Mein Kampf’ yesterday” and it “has some really revolutionary and effective ideas for a new movement like ours.”

Many of the group’s conversations included racist or anti-Semitic memes and fascist imagery. At one point, members discussed going back to MU and placing additional flyers at the

Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center. Cooperating with other white nationalist organizations to put flyers on campuses at the same time might help to “totally over inflate our numbers and presence,” one member wrote.

They talked about how they might recruit better by not using Nazi or fascist symbols.

“I like Hitler just as much as the next goy (sic), but I’m willing to set Third Reich iconography and references aside when we go public,” one member wrote. “It doesn’t do us any favors. Optics are everything.”

The group just needs to describe fascism without using the word fascism, the man who posted the flyers wrote.

The user WillSmithButWhite said that just because the group is small and made up of “stupid college kids” doesn’t mean that people are not concerned about them.

“It’s a small group of vocal racists who don’t know how to organize,” he said. “But they’ve been empowered recently and things happen like in” Charlottesville, Va., where a man espousing white supremacist ideas drove a car into a crowd of protesters and killed a woman.

T COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

Fulton hospital’s new owner tied to shaky ventures

By BRITTANY RUESS

FULTON — The owner of the company now operating the Fulton Medical Center has been tied to hospitals with financial and legal issues, but denied Tuesday any wrongdoing.

EmpowerHMS, a for-profit company owned by Jorge Perez, announced last Friday that it was buying the Fulton hospital — a week before the hospital was scheduled to close. **The hospital was previously owned by NueHealth, formerly Nueterra, and University of Missouri Health Care, which had minority ownership stake.**

Continuous financial loss prompted MU Health to sell its stake and NueHealth to announce the hospital’s closing. Records from MU Health show the hospital was losing millions of dollars annually.

Perez, who is also the chairman of the not-for-profit National Alliance of Rural Hospitals, said he has saved dozens of rural hospitals in financial crisis that had been scheduled to close. He and other representatives from EmpowerHMS and the rural hospital alliance met with Fulton officials and the public Tuesday in Fulton City Hall.

EmpowerHMS is a new, Kansas City-based company that is consolidating some of Perez's companies, said company President Mike Alexander.

Perez is listed with the Florida Department of State as the vice president and treasurer of Hospital Partners, LLC, which operates the Putnam County Memorial Hospital. The northern Missouri hospital was the subject of a scathing audit report last month from State Auditor Nicole Galloway that claimed the hospital was billing insurance companies for lab tests that never happened and received payments through another company.

The audit said the hospital acted as a shell organization to channel about \$90 million in insurance payments it received to another lab company.

The company refuted Galloway's audit, claiming the hospital lawfully billed for clinical lab testing at a reference lab, according to a statement from Hospital Partners. Non-patient lab testing is an "essential part of providing local revenue for the hospital to offset financial losses."

"The gross mischaracterization of this standard practice by the State Auditor's office has led to inaccurate conclusions and potential limitations of access for the local patients being served by the hospital," the statement said.

In an interview Tuesday, Perez said he was "just an investor" in the company and the situation should not cast a negative light on the good he's accomplished in his professional career. He said he's been to the Putnam County Memorial Hospital twice and had no oversight of the hospital.

"You're always quick to hear when negative things come out and you make it in the news, but you never make it in the news with all the great things you do," he said. "What you just saw here today, I've done this 30-40 times in my 30 years of being in health care. This is something I'm very passionate about and I enjoy doing this. To go back and have an issue here or there, is just the nature of the industry."

Perez was also once involved with the Campbellton-Graceville Hospital, in Graceville, Fla., which had its own financial and legal issues. The hospital was on the brink of shutting down when the company People's Choice Hospitals took over management in 2015, according to the Jackson County Times, a local newspaper.

About a year later, Florida Circuit Court Judge William Wright signed an emergency temporary injunction that banned company President Seth Guterman, Vice President of Strategic Business Growth Chris Alise, hospital Chief Financial Officer Edith Mears and Perez from having

signatory access to the hospital's bank accounts, according to the Washington County News, another Florida newspaper.

The newspaper reported that the judge found People's Choice had been wrongfully taking hospital money for its own use by wiring two payments — one of \$750,000 and another of more than \$500,000 — to its own accounts.

People's Choice appointed Perez as the hospital CEO when the company took over, the Washington County News reported. Perez said as CEO, he stepped out of the role when he noticed issues and informed the hospital board of them.

“As a matter of fact, if you read all the articles correctly, you will find that I was the whistleblower and I was the one who discovered — I can't go into all the details, but I'm sure this stuff is all public information if you look I was the one who uncovered issues there, also the CFO of the hospital,” he said.

When asked exactly what his involvement was with the hospital, Perez said his company, Empower H.I.S., provided the Campbellton-Graceville Hospital with software and billing services.

Perez contended that he had nothing to do with the financial troubles of either hospital and his only mission is to save rural, critical access hospitals.

“They never paid me. The hospital never paid me. People's Choice never paid me,” he said. “I did everything for free. Like I told you, what you saw me and my team say today, that's who we are. And it's just unfortunate people don't like that in the industry and you're bound to get some scars when you're navigating in that world.”



[Aaron Hedlund eyes Senate race even as D.C. conservatives warn him to go easy on Josh Hawley](#)

By DEIRDRE SHESGREEN

WASHINGTON — Aaron Hedlund hasn't announced a Senate bid yet, but the University of Missouri economics professor is already getting blowback about his possible political ambitions.

First, leaders of a powerful Washington conservative group made it clear to Hedlund that they were committed to another Republican contender, Missouri's Attorney General Josh Hawley, and they asked the Mizzou professor to treat Hawley with kid gloves if he gets into the race.

Now, Hawley's spokesman is raising questions about Hedlund's allegiances and intentions. Scott Paradise, Hawley's spokesman, said that in July, Hedlund offered to help Hawley if he ran for Senate and promised not to run if Hawley did.

The skirmishes come as Missouri Republicans are trying to unite behind Hawley, who many see as the strongest contender to take on incumbent Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill. Hedlund could throw a wrench into that effort if he mounts a serious primary challenge to Hawley.

Hedlund said he will make a decision in the coming months.

"I don't have a political career that I'm looking after, so whether or not somebody else jumps in the race doesn't affect my calculus," he told the News-Leader.

Earlier this month, Hedlund came to Washington at the request of the Club for Growth, the D.C.-based conservative group. Allies of Hedlund — who worked as an unpaid adviser to Gov. Eric Greitens during the 2016 campaign — say his résumé and right-of-center political leanings seem tailor-made to fit the Club for Growth's candidate profile.

But the club's leaders did not seem excited about his possible run.

[Story continues.](#)



Keeping Close Tabs on the Local Job Market

St. Louis Community College's annual employer study finds openings for middle-skilled employees but also concerns about applicants' skills and training.

NO MU MENTION

By ASHLEY SMITH

Every year St. Louis Community College surveys the region's employers to get a better picture of the area's work-force needs.

A growing number of colleges have bulked up their job-market research amid pressure from the public and policy makers for institutions to do more to improve wages and opportunities for working-class people. Community colleges in particular are feeling this scrutiny.

Administrators at St. Louis Community College view the report as one part of how it seeks to stand out as a leader in work-force development.

"The fact is the community college has its pulse on the economy and the job market," said Steve Long, associate vice chancellor of work-force solutions for SLCC. "In a larger sense, part of the value of this report is in communication with the employer community, job-training community, the federal network of training programs, and government and community-based organizations, that we need to work together to solve these issues."

The 2017 report found that 42 percent of responding employers anticipate increasing the number of employees, while only 2 percent expect to decrease their staffs. But nearly 60 percent of employers reported shortcomings in the applications they receive for open positions. In particular, employers complained about inadequate soft skills of job candidates, including interpersonal skills, critical thinking, problem solving, work ethic and teamwork.

The college surveyed more than 1,000 employers in the St. Louis region and compiled the information with federal labor market data.

Middle-skills jobs, or those that require more than a high school degree but less than a four-year degree, are important in eastern Missouri. According to the National Skills Coalition, 53 percent of all jobs in the state in 2015 were of the middle-skill variety. These jobs also account for slightly more than half of openings nationally.

These professions include skilled trades, industrial maintenance, precision machining, health care and nursing, all of which require some form of college-issued credential. Yet nearly half of people over the age of 25 in the St. Louis region have a high school diploma but no college degree, according to the report.

However, the report also revealed that 70 percent of employers have jobs open that require only short-term training, or training that could be completed within six months of finishing high school.

"Students come into these short-term accelerated programs, and they ask how quickly can they get a job," Long said. "We have to counsel them that you have to get the skills before you get the job, and some students choose to not go forward."

For those students who do choose to stay, the college has worked on integrating soft skills into the curriculum to address employers' concerns about problem solving, critical thinking and teamwork.

"We try to embed those in our short-term accelerated programs," Long said, "and we try to talk to the faculty of degree and certificate programs about doing the same."

The National Skills Coalition has been advocating for changes in program eligibility for federal Pell Grant funding so short-term programs can qualify for financial aid, the lack of which can be a barrier for some students who seek to become certified in a skilled trade.

"A lot of these short-term occupational programs have smaller class sizes and need more equipment, so it's expensive," said Kermit Kaleba, federal policy director for the National Skills Coalition. "It's not like running another section of English compositions, so we think it's important from a financial aid perspective to make these programs more accessible."

Despite the work-force needs of St. Louis-area employers, the unemployment rate in the region is particularly low -- 4.2 percent as of May -- which means recruiting students to apply for middle-skilled jobs isn't easy. Potential students may feel it's too risky to leave their current employment for a middle-skills job or go to college to pursue a credential.

"In Missouri, the unemployment rate you usually hear about is 4 percent, but when you look at the larger unemployment rate or the rate for people who are working part-time for economic conditions, but want to work full-time, it's 9 percent," Long said. "There is a whole generation of young people, by income and race, who really have not been fully attached to the labor market."

That trend appears nationally, as well, with the unemployment rate at 4.3 percent as of July.

"We see people are making a set of choices based on their need to work and feed their families," Kaleba said. "They're making the choice between an available job that pays less, but [that] they can start right away, or going and enrolling in a community college program where you may get to a higher wage and have, longer term, better outcomes, but it's three months, six months, or 12 months down the line."

And colleges are going to have to be creative if they want to reach out to those young people, Long said.

"The middle-skill labor market and training market is not well advertised and communicated for a lot of job seekers," Kaleba said. "There are a lot of pathways with community colleges, union-run programs, apprenticeship programs, and there is confusion about the pathways to get the training and education. We don't talk about those job opportunities as much as we should."