



**MU News Bureau**

*Daily Clips Packet*

December 11, 2017

# MISSOURIAN

## Consulting firm cautions \$160 million deficit by 2023 if UM takes no action

By EDWARD McKINLEY

**ST. LOUIS — Consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers outlined between \$44 million and \$74 million in opportunities for UM System budget cuts Friday, including benefits, facilities and information technology.**

The administrative review to seek out areas for improved efficiency was described by UM System President Mun Choi before the PwC presentation as a “very important topic that really defines the future of the university.”

“This is not meant to depress anyone,” system finance vice president Ryan Rapp said. “But it is sobering to look at the challenges we have going forward.”

Potential budget cut numbers are subject to change going forward, said PwC consultant Breck Marshall. But he warned that if no action is taken, by 2023 there will likely be \$160 million more spent by the system than received, based on current trends in inflation, tuition increases and other factors.

“Everyone is working hard — that is clear. The question is, is everyone working smart?” Marshall said. “The current way of operating is actually snowballing more work, not less.”

To no great surprise, the report identified budgetary issues as stemming mainly from declines in state funding and enrollment. Missouri is 46th in the United States in higher education appropriations per capita, according to the PwC report.

“The future looks pretty dire when it comes to state resources,” Choi told the UM System Board of Curators.

The system cut \$100 million over the summer already, and Choi estimated that 450 to 500 people lost their jobs. In the wake of the administrative review, the system will now survey all staff members and look at data to determine further action or areas where duplication of efforts is occurring.

Choi said in a news conference after the meeting that he could understand how staff may be concerned for their jobs over this news, but no decisions have been made yet. He emphasized that, in the future, employee responsibilities may shift or unfilled positions may be eliminated, but this process doesn't necessarily mean people will lose their jobs.

Final results of the staff survey and analytics, as well as decisions for further action, will be shared with the public by early summer 2018, Choi said.

By far, benefits is the biggest single area identified for potential budget cuts in the PwC report.

"I understand I'm on a live mic, and this is a contentious issue," Marshall said, but a lot of money could be saved by cutting benefits. The PwC report estimates between \$17 million and \$30 million could be saved from such cuts.

While considering cuts to employee benefits, it's important to balance the need to be good stewards of public resources versus recruiting and retaining high-achieving faculty, Choi said.

The right way forward, Choi and the PwC consultants said, is to identify a management model and build around it. This management model wouldn't work for everything, as it might not be the most effective way to manage human resources, information technology or other divisions in the exact same way. The likely way forward is a mix between the two, Choi said.

PwC estimated that by spending more efficiently, the system could save up to \$14 million in facilities and up to \$8 million in information technology.

The report offers two possible models:

- Core management — where a larger office at the system level makes decisions for the campuses and measures the success in collaboration with the campuses.
- Strategic management — where the system allows campuses to monitor and make decisions for themselves, while a smaller system office would work to coordinate among the four campuses.

Aligning the interests of the four campuses into a single platform is a difficult process and a discussion that needs to be had, said curator David Steelman, who was elected Friday as board chairman.

"There's no question we're going to have that discussion," he said.

"Having a stronger system isn't the goal," Choi said. Rather, the driving goal is academic excellence — a stronger system would just help accomplish that.

At the same time, “there has to be some level of autonomy at the campuses to be nimble enough to meet the needs of the campuses,” Choi said.

The kind of change that PwC has recommended may be painful, Marshall said, but it is important.

“Some, when executing change with highly educated individuals, have experienced pushback,” he said, but, “It’s too hard to ignore the opportunities.”

The UM System owes it to the state to find a way to be successful and sustainable, Choi said.

PwC was contracted for \$428,000 for eight weeks of work.

## **T** COLUMBIA DAILY **TRIBUNE**

### **Consultant identifies up to \$70 million in savings at University of Missouri**

By RUDI KELLER

ST. LOUIS — **The University of Missouri has 107 employees at the system level and on the Columbia campus with primary duties for human resources support.**

If that was all, consultants from PricewaterhouseCoopers told the Board of Curators, it would be a world-class model of efficiency. But because there are 477 other people who are “hobbyists” in the topic, handling issues in their department or division, with 450 variations on the basic processes used, it is a tangle of inefficiency that could provide \$3 million in savings with streamlining.

That was one example provided in the report that will become the basis for major changes in the role of the system and campus administrations intended to free up to \$70 million for academic needs. The first steps are already underway, but the bulk of the report’s recommendations will be put in the hands of a transformation office that will put in new structures for information technology, purchasing, human resources and other administrative tasks.

“The focus is really going to be on academic excellence, that has to be the driving force,” UM System President Mun Choi said. “But to support it, we know we have to make changes to the

university. We have to figure out what are the right changes that support that academic mission and priorities. Changes for changes' sake causes entropy.”

The consulting firm was brought in to continue the process of reallocating resources begun soon after Choi took over as president on March 1. The first step included cuts of nearly \$101 million and 500 jobs in June at the system and on the four campuses.

There are ongoing efforts on the Columbia campus examining which academic programs to continue and to plan how to finance future construction and other needs. The report delivered Friday will be followed by additional steps to examine implementation but Choi said obvious savings will be acted on without further review.

“This is a very honest look at where we are,” Choi said of the report.

The report focused on the \$644 million of UM’s \$3.2 billion budget that are direct and indirect administrative expenses and applied the findings to operations in Columbia on the MU campus and the system administration offices. Along with human resources, the review looked at facilities costs, financial administration, information technology and purchasing. The report projects savings of \$26.8 million, or 12 percent of non-benefits spending, by 2020 with another \$17.5 million saved on benefits.

“The difference between this particular effort and previous efforts is we are all bought into this,” Choi said. “We’re doing this not because we are being asked to do it; we need to do it to secure a university we can be proud of.”

Some of the savings are from making better decisions, Margaret Stover of PricewaterhouseCoopers told the board. The university has a good purchasing system and supply contracts, she said.

“The opportunity in supply chain lies with choices among items selected in those contracts,” Stover said. “So do you need the Mercedes or should you get the Ford when buying items?”

The combined savings of \$44.3 million could grow to more than \$70 million as the recommendations are applied to the other three campuses, the report indicates.

Several assumptions about the growth of future spending are driving the push to centralize and streamline the administration. The university assumes state tax support will remain steady or decline, that the total number of employees will be unchanged and that enrollment will increase by 1 percent and tuition by 2 percent. Setting aside a raise pool of 2 percent of payroll, along with other rising costs, would leave the university with a \$160 million gap between expenses and revenue by 2023.

Stover said not to focus too heavily on any particular goal of the report. It was prepared after eight weeks of study, she said, and the actual savings will only be known as each piece is examined for implementation.

“The bottom line is there is opportunity out there you can take advantage of,” Stover said.



## [President Choi: Too soon to talk job actions after administrative review](#)

By ALYSSA TOOMEY

Watch video at: <http://www.abc17news.com/news/president-choi-too-soon-to-talk-job-actions-after-administrative-review-1/669467374>

**President Choi said it's too soon to say what the job actions will be after the results of an administrative review were presented at the UM Board of Curators meeting Friday.**

The review centered on Mizzou's campus and the UM System Central Office. As ABC 17 News has previously reported, Mizzou has faced [unprecedented budget challenges](#) due to a reduction in state funding and declining student enrollment.

"I can't say at this point what the job actions are going to be but we're also going through this with the mindset that we want to find every opportunity for our staff members to have other responsibilities within the university," Choi said at a press conference after Friday's meeting.

CFO Ryan Rapp started off the presentation with what he called some "sobering" findings. He said if no changes are made, then by 2023, there will be a \$160 million gap between the university's revenue and expenditures.

The administrative review was launched in August shortly after the announcement of short and long term budget cuts that resulted in \$100 million in reallocations system-wide. It involved a steering committee made up of administrative leaders, faculty and staff and was facilitated by an independent contractor, PricewaterhouseCoopers, to "determine investments that support the activities" of faculty and staff and the University's academic mission, according to a letter sent to all four campuses by Choi.

PricewaterhouseCoopers identified more than \$40 million in possible savings if changes are made to areas like benefits, human resources, finance and more. The next step is an activity analysis for staff across the system. A work survey will assess the workload and processes of each employee with a goal of improving efficiencies.

"If there's duplication in across the system and within the campuses we're going to look at those very very carefully to help succeed in academic excellence," Choi said.

Choi said leaders are "committed to collaboration, transparency and accountability." He said there will also be opportunities to provide feedback on the strategies and recommendations.

Changes as a result of the work survey will be put in place early this summer.

Since Choi became president, cuts and adjustments have led to \$60 million in savings at Mizzou. [Hundreds of jobs have been cut](#) and Choi has repeatedly said that the university will [reallocate resources](#) to focus on programs of excellence. He also said Friday that faculty and staff salary raises are a top priority.



## [UM Board of Curators approves future plans to accomplish operational efficiency](#)

By SHALETTA NORWOOD

ST. LOUIS - [The University of Missouri Board of Curators discussed the administrative review report presented by the UM System leadership on Friday, with the support of Pricewater Coopers.](#)

The board approved the plans and ideas the UM System leadership presented, in hopes of improving functions at the University of Missouri - Columbia campus.

The following functions the board reviewed include:

- changing landscape in higher education
- the need for new business models
- receiving input from faculty and examining
- analyzing data to make effective decisions.

MU President Mun Y. Choi said the board's mission will be a challenging task to accomplish with less state support, but he believes it can be done.

"Continuous cuts have hurt us," Choi said. "Now we have to think about what are the ways we can be more efficient in our operation, so we can reallocate those for student needs, as well as our faculty research."

The University plans to track the administrative effectiveness through a survey to be distributed to all employees. Choi said he is excited to start the process.

"The upcoming work survey and other actions will allow us to complete a detailed analysis into how we perform administrative functions," Choi said. "We will identify where we can make changes to become more efficient and to become a stronger university and a key asset to the state of Missouri."

Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer at the University of Missouri System Ryan Rapp introduced the four key platforms the board are using to combat critical issues.

Those include academic excellence, resources utilization, revenue enhancement and operational excellence. Rapp said operational efficiency is the most important platform.

"As we think of these four key platforms we see those as the ones as what drives those strategic things that the president has talked about," Rapp said. "But I just want to be clear we're really focusing on operational efficiency."

You can read more about the academic review [here](#).

The next topic Rapp discussed was the university's revenue. He said the university would have \$160 million gap if it continued to do nothing about its economic stress.

"Decisions need to be made now to ensure we do not land here," Rapp said.

The board also made changes to rules and regulations that will expand employee leave and educational assistance benefits for faculty.

In officer elections, Curator David L. Steelman was nominated as the Chairperson and Curator Darryl Chatman as the Vice Chairperson for 2018.



## UM System Board of Curators Discusses Review of Administrative Costs

By NATHAN LAWRENCE & ERIN SCHROEDER

**The UM System Board of Curators discussed a third-party review of administrative costs in their meeting this morning.**

Consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers presented the report, which outlined about \$44 million in potential cost-saving measures. Among them are suggestions that departments like human resources should be consolidated across the UM System and that current employee health benefits should be re-examined.

This review comes amidst continued budget woes for the system. Last July, officials cut more than 150 full-time-equivalent jobs through layoffs or retirement.

UM System President Mun Choi said that further decisions will be shared by early summer 2018.

“Right now, the future looks pretty dire when it comes to state resources and if we're going to grow, we have to grow our own resources as well as reallocate the resources that we have,” Choi explained.

PricewaterhouseCoopers also suggested evaluation of the UM System's other campuses, which they say could bring as much as \$30 million in additional savings.

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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## 'Remarkable opportunity:' New University of Missouri board leaders poised to tackle tough budget times

By: Ashley Jost

**BELLERIVE • The University of Missouri's governing board will soon be under new leadership.**

David Steelman — a Republican, former state legislator and a lawyer from Rolla — was elected Friday to be the next chairman of the Board of Curators.

“We have a remarkable opportunity to remake this institution,” Steelman said. “To do that, we’re going to have to be bold, but we can’t be brash.”

When nominating Steelman for the role, curator Jamie Farmer said his ability to build consensus and keep the board on pace makes him “the right person to guide us” through difficult budget times.

It’s no secret that the university system and its four campuses have struggled with money. Declining state dollars for higher education compounded by declining tuition revenue on multiple campuses forced administrators to take a look at the budget earlier this year and ultimately [eliminate about 500 positions across the campuses](#). Half of those jobs were filled at the time, leading to layoffs.

But the budget stress isn’t quite over.

Campus leaders across Missouri are realistic that state dollars are unlikely to return to the funding levels of the early 2000s and could shrink even more.

The curators and administrators [heard from PricewaterhouseCoopers consultants](#) Friday about ways to streamline, eliminate and replace that could save the university system and the flagship campus, Mizzou, millions of dollars.

The consultants were hired to review administrative functions of the Columbia-based operations, focusing on human resources, information technology, finance, supply chain and facilities.

According to the consultants, the independence of the campuses has produced some inefficiencies — one consultant described it as “waste” — because of duplication. Remedies could also include layoffs.

The consultants offered suggestions, but university leaders are tasked with taking the next few months to review systems and make changes that could save [upwards of \\$44 million](#) over the next three years.

Multiple times during the meeting, leaders like University of Missouri System President Mun Choi and his CFO Ryan Rapp stressed that the point of this effort was to find savings they could kick back to the core mission of education and research. Similarly, a portion of the savings from the more than \$60 million in cuts earlier this year at Mizzou went toward funding a new need-based scholarship.

Steelman said it was too early to talk about what he wants to focus on as board chairman, other than supporting leaders as they tackle ongoing budget issues.

Joining him in a new leadership roll is newly elected vice chairman Darryl Chatman. Chatman, a Democrat and St. Charles County native, is [general counsel for the Department of Agriculture](#), starting under then-Gov. Jay Nixon. He has four degrees from Mizzou and was [appointed to the board in February](#).

The Board of Curators has changed in the past year, participating in [more public dialogue than in the past](#). Though the curators almost always vote unanimously, Steelman often acts as a dissenter in discussion. Chatman has been active, too, openly questioning funding priorities.

Steeleman said he's open to "some disruption" during the coming year, calling it healthy.

"If we're making these decisions right, we may have a few split votes," he said, adding that "the best answers" oftentimes come from "competing, strong opinions."

The two incoming leaders officially take their roles over Jan. 1.

## THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

### University of Missouri Curators pick new leadership

By: Mara Rose Williams

#### **University of Missouri curators on Friday elected David Steelman of Rolla as the new chair of the board.**

Darryl Chatman of St. Louis was elected vice chair. Both will serve one year in those board leadership positions, starting Jan. 1.

Steeleman, a lawyer and senior partner at Steelman, Gaunt and Horsefield, was appointed to the University of Missouri Board of Curators in 2014. An MU graduate, Steelman was elected to the Missouri House of Representatives in 1979 and served three terms. Currently he serves as chair of the nine-member board's finance committee.

Chatman, who is the general counsel for the Missouri Department of Agriculture, currently chairs the board's governance, resources and planning committee.

From January 2015 until January 2016, Chatman served as a deputy director for the Missouri Department of Agriculture. He was appointed to the Board of Curators by Gov. Eric Greitens earlier this year.

A graduate of MU, where he played football from 1992 to 1996, Chatman holds a bachelor's and master's in animal science a masters in agricultural economics and a doctorate. He also has a master's in public administration from North Carolina State University.

The curators sit on the governing board for the four-campus UM System including schools in Rolla, Columbia, Kansas City and St. Louis.

# T COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE

## Board of Curators selects Steelman as chair

By RUDI KELLER

ST. LOUIS — **The election Friday of new officers for the University of Missouri Board of Curators was no contest, with David Steelman selected as chair without opposition and Darryl Chatman as vice chair the same way.**

The nominations, very brief discussion and votes all took less than five minutes. An eight-paragraph news release, with biographical details about both men, was issued almost simultaneously with the conclusion of the vote.

At a news conference after the vote, Steelman and outgoing Chairman Maurice Graham said they have tried together to make the board's work more transparent. Attorney Jean Maneke, an adviser to the Missouri Press Association on Sunshine Law issues, wrote in an email that she thinks the election is a potential violation.

“Miracles happen, except the issuance of a press release as votes are being taken is the straw we are looking for,” she wrote. “This was clearly pre-planned.”

Stelman and Graham, defended the vote. They said there were discussions of who the board officers should be ahead of the meeting but that it did not mean the vote was decided before the nominations were made.

“In real life, those are discussions as you come up on the end of the year and there are discussions about who is interested, who has commitments and who doesn't have the time,” Graham said.

He did not know who would second the nominations, Graham said.

“I had some idea of who might nominate someone because I had been informed of that,” Graham said. He declined to say who had informed him. Curator Jamie Farmer made the motion to vote.

Steelman said the board needs to be transparent but also have allowances for “the fact that nine people who know each other and like each other have discussions. And those are not hub-and-spoke decisions.”

A “hub-and-spoke” decision is a violation of the Sunshine Law that occurs when a central figure contacts members of a body subject to the Sunshine Law to determine the outcome of a vote ahead of a public meeting. In 2006, the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority and all of its members [paid a fine](#) after admitting Sunshine Law violations that included conducting a “hub and spoke” vote on selling authority assets.

“I haven’t reviewed the hub-and-spoke-decisions that you talked about but I worked with the Sunshine Law my entire life and I am absolutely confident the Sunshine Law was not violated in any way in this election,” Steelman said.

Steelman is an outspoken Rolla attorney who has been on the board since 2014. He publicly [called for the firing](#) of then-associate professor Melissa Click after her actions blocking photographers at campus demonstrations in November 2015. The board ultimately voted to [fire Click in a closed session](#) several weeks after Steelman called for the action.

He defended his actions in the Click case during the news conference and said he expects other members of the board to be outspoken if they see it is necessary for the good of the university.

“The good thing about me is I am not a hypocrite, so I will say that if that happens while I am chairman I am not going to find that particularly disruptive,” he said.

Steelman is a former legislator and in 1992 was the Republican nominee for attorney general. He was appointed to the board in 2014. His wife, Sarah Steelman, is a former state treasurer and currently commissioner of the Office of Administration for Gov. Eric Greitens.

Chatman is an attorney for the Missouri Department of Agriculture. Greitens appointed him to the board this year.



## University of Missouri Board of Curators elects 2018 officers

By MOLLY STAWINOVA

ST. LOUIS, Mo. - **The University of Missouri Board of Curators elected two new officers at its December meeting in St. Louis, which just finished up today.** David Steelman was elected to a one-year term as the chair of the Board and Darryl Chatman was elected vice-chair.

Stelman has been on the Board since 2014, and he received a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Missouri-Columbia and then went on to graduate from the MU School of Law.

He served three terms in the Missouri House of Representatives starting in 1979, and served as minority floor leader from 1981 to 1985. He currently is managing and senior partner at a law practice in Rolla.

Chatman received a bachelor's degree in animal science, master's degrees in animal science and agricultural economics, and a juris doctor, all from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

He is the general counsel for the Missouri Department of Agriculture. He has served on multiple search committees for the University of Missouri.

The two men will begin their terms on Jan. 1.



## MU interim provost expected to be named in next couple weeks

By KRISTIE CRAWFORD

Watch video at: <http://www.abc17news.com/news/mu-interim-provost-expected-to-be-named-in-next-couple-weeks/670209535>

**COLUMBIA, Mo. - It's been over a month since the announcement was made that University of Missouri Provost Garnett Stokes will be the next president of the University of New Mexico.**

Shortly after, Mizzou Chancellor Alexander Cartwright announced an interim provost would be named soon.

During a press conference after the UM Board of Curators meeting Friday, UM System President Mun Choi said Cartwright would be naming an interim provost before the new year.

Choi said that after the new year, the search for a permanent provost will begin.

Choi said the interim provost will help make decisions regarding the future of some of academic programs. The changes are expected to be made within the spring semester, possibly before a permanent provost is chosen.

"(Cartwright)'s trying to identify a person who has (a) very strong and academic research record, an individual who can make the difficult decisions that can support the reallocation of resources that we need to grow the academic enterprise," Choi said.

But, the decisions to add or eliminate academic programs will be a team effort, with Cartwright and the academic analysis task force leading the effort, Choi said.

Choi said the hope is to choose a permanent provost by the end of spring 2018.

# MISSOURIAN

## Interdisciplinary studies a concern at MU task force forum

By SAMANTHA KOESTER

### A task force looking at the status and success of MU academic programs took final questions Friday from faculty.

The Academic Programs Task Force will turn in a report Jan. 15 to Provost Garnett Stokes recommending which programs could receive more funding or be consolidated or terminated.

The task force has been evaluating programs based on discussions with deans, graduation and enrollment rates, how much grant money the programs get, how much the programs cost to run and other factors.

About 25 faculty members turned out at the Memorial Student Union to question the task force members.

Several expressed concern about the status of interdisciplinary studies, which lack full administrative and other support. The fear is that such studies would be deemed unnecessary or that they wouldn't be evaluated comprehensively. If certain programs were to be eliminated, it could impact several interdisciplinary students.

Matthew Martens, co-chairman of the task force, said he has heard similar concerns. The task force was attempting to figure out how to frame their recommendations in a way that would take a program's potential status for elimination into consideration, he said.

Committee member Bill Wiebold also assured faculty that the task force has been researching which departments work closely together in an interdisciplinary way or rely on other programs in some way.

Martens said repeatedly that the purpose of the evaluation was to provide data and recommendations. Official decisions regarding budget allocation and program eliminations will be made by the provost and other high-level administrators next year.

One goal of the task force is to figure out which departments are struggling or may face difficulties. Even if a program is recommended for termination, Martens said, an intensive process would be undertaken by administration to determine whether that is truly the best option.

The task force also discussed any negative data with the appropriate deans and were able to determine what the program in question was doing to address the issue, some members said.

Wiebold and task force member Stephanie Shonekan emphasized the reason behind forming the task force was to have real people involved in the data analysis.

“We are mindful that the data is not the full story,” Shonekan said.

Shonekan also reminded the attendees that the goal of committee members was not to ruin careers or departments.

“We’re not just a group of consultants from out of town,” she said. “We’re faculty.”

The task force plans to meet with a board of retired MU faculty members next week for extra insight before finalizing the report.



# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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## [Research: Video game sensors can help with physical therapy](#)

Generated from News Bureau press release: [Video game system technology helping physical therapists, athletic trainers](#)

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — [New research from the University of Missouri found that video game motion sensors can be useful in physical therapy.](#)

A team from the University of Missouri's health professions school, engineering college, health care center, motion analysis center and orthopaedic institute found that the Xbox Kinect 2.0 motion sensor can be used as a suitable replacement for medical motion labs, [the Columbia Missourian reported](#) .

Motion sensors help physicians with analyzing patient movement, tracking rehabilitation and assessing future injury risk. But motion labs often cost more than \$100,000 and are time-consuming, according to the research team's news release.

Aaron Gray, a sports medicine physician with the university's health care center, said replacing the labs with an Xbox Kinect can make motion analysis testing inexpensive and portable.

Gray said the study focused on knee angles during landing and jumping movements. He hopes that the research will allow others to study more movements.

The research team is currently assessing tests conducted on 180 students at local middle and high schools. During the testing, the team found that each exam using the Kinect was completed in less than three minutes.

Gray said the team will need to consider other sensors on the market after Microsoft recently announced that the Kinect is being discontinued.

Trent Guess, an associate professor of physical therapy and orthopedic surgery, suggested virtual reality technology.

"This new generation of virtual reality depth sensors may have advantages over the Kinect and we hope to be among the first users to properly validate and use these new technologies for health care," Guess said.

*Similar stories ran in Associated Press newspapers across the country.*



*AAU research magazine*

## [Video game tech cuts cost of high-end physical therapy](#)

Generated from News Bureau press release: [Video game system technology helping physical therapists, athletic trainers](#)

A depth camera usually used with a video game console can give health care providers objective information that could improve patient care for thousands of dollars less than similar technology, researchers report.

Motion-based lab technology can help physical therapists, clinicians, and athletic trainers analyze how we move, but it also is very expensive. Some motion labs can cost upward of \$100,000.

**“In testing the system, we are seeing that it can provide reasonable measurement of hip and knee angles,” says Trent Guess, associate professor of physical therapy and orthopedics at the University of Missouri.**

“This means that for only a few hundred dollars, this technology may be able to provide clinics and physical therapists with sufficient information on the lower limbs to assess functional movement,” Guess says.

Guess and the team of researchers used the depth camera to capture movement from participants doing drop vertical jumps and lateral leg raises. They also measured participants’ movements using traditional motion-capture technology that involves placing markers on the skin. Researchers found that the systems produced similar results.

Aaron Gray, a sports medicine physician with University of Missouri Health Care, was also interested in how easily accessible technology could help athletes avoid knee injuries. He began working with a team of researchers to test the idea, including Guess and his colleagues.

“Assessment of movement is essential to evaluating injury risk, rehabilitative outcomes, and sport performance,” says Gray.

“Our research team is working to bring motion analysis testing—which is expensive and time consuming—into orthopedics offices, physical therapy clinics, and athletic facilities using inexpensive and portable technology. Our research has shown that depth camera sensors from video games provide a valid option for motion assessment,” he explains.

Aaron Gray, a sports medicine physician with University of Missouri Health Care, was interested in how easily accessible technology could help athletes avoid knee injuries. He began working with a team of researchers to test the idea, including Guess and his colleagues.

The researchers report their findings in several recent studies, including one in the [\*Journal of Applied Biomechanics\*](#) and another in [\*Sports Health\*](#).



## Columbia Morning with David Lile

*Appearance resulted from direct pitch by MU News Bureau.*

University of Missouri Law School Dean Lyrissa Lidsky and Jeff Turnbull, Mizzou Law’s financial aid coordinator, appeared on the David Lile show Friday to discuss the school’s successful [“Thrifty Budget Plan.”](#)

During the past five years, the average debt load of Mizzou law school graduates declined by about \$25,000—a 32 percent drop. The decline, from an average debt of \$78,110 in 2012 to \$53,480 in 2017, can be attributed to several factors, including increased scholarship offerings and the law school’s Thrifty Budget Plan, which was introduced in fall 2014.

Listen to the full interview [here](#).

# THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

## The Verification Trap

**This overlooked part of the federal-aid process isn't meant to hinder low-income students, but that's often what it does**

By ERIC HOOVER

Most students don't expect it. They're going along, thinking about something else, when, suddenly, they find themselves in a trap.

It's called "verification," a vexing part of the federal-aid process. That's just the official term, though. Many students call it a burden, a nightmare, torture.

Most everyone knows about the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or Fafsa, which students and parents use to get government grants, scholarships, and loans. The lengthy application is widely seen as a barrier to college access, and a national push to simplify it is underway.

The Fafsa, though, is just one obstacle. Each year, approximately one in three aid applicants gets another chore. The U.S. Department of Education requires millions of new and returning students to submit additional information to colleges, which then must verify the accuracy of each Fafsa flagged for review. Students must comply to get their money. If you haven't been through the time-consuming procedure, then you're probably not poor.

Verification, such a bland and bloodless word. Don't be fooled. It's really the story of a high-school senior with no ties to his parents who waited four months for the IRS to send the tax form he requested a dozen times. It's the teenage mother who had to dig up receipts for what she had spent on her child. It's the father with no internet service who used a library computer to try to get an old form from a tax service, but couldn't afford the \$40 fee. It's the football player who couldn't enroll at a community college because his mother refused to give him a tax transcript.

For the most vulnerable students, the line between enrolling and not enrolling, graduating and dropping out, is already thin. Verification difficulties push some people right over that line.

That's why recent numbers are worrying people. This fall, many colleges have seen the number of the number of students selected for verifications spike, even doubling or tripling, despite the institutions' having about the same number of aid applications as they did a year ago. And some high-school counselors say selection rates for their students are off the charts.

What's going on? The Education Department's Office of Federal Student Aid attributes the surge to big changes in the aid process. The department regularly adjusts its selection criteria based on recent application patterns, and a tumultuous cycle just ended. Last year, the Fafsa opened in October (instead of January), applicants used "prior-prior year" taxes to complete the form, and an online tool that helps them do that was disabled. All that skewed estimates for the current cycle, the department says. It's working on a fix that should be in place in mid-December. After that, officials expect the selection numbers to come down.

Nobody questions the purpose of verification: to reduce fraud and improper payments. Ensuring that the right amounts of taxpayer money go to the right people is important. Still, the federal pursuit of that goal complicates another: helping millions of students get to (and through) college.

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### **Are Colleges Engines of Inequality?**

Last year, Jazmin Hernandez, a psychology major at the University of Illinois at Chicago, got a notice requesting a copy of her father's tax transcript, verification of their address, and a worksheet to complete. Just as she had done the two previous years, Ms. Hernandez requested the tax form from the Internal Revenue Service.

When the form finally arrived a few weeks later, she transmitted the documents to the aid office. A document was missing, she recalls being told. Another delay to get it. She sent everything again but didn't receive a confirmation. Still, she thought everything was fine.

That semester, she had a lot to think about. After falling ill, her mother had stopped working. The money her father earned from seasonal landscaping jobs wasn't enough to support the whole family. So Ms. Hernandez, who was enrolled full-time, took a second part-time job, at McDonald's, to help support her parents and younger sister.

Later, Ms. Hernandez learned that she wouldn't be receiving the same \$5,000 institutional grant that she had received in previous years, the grant she needed to stay in college. By the time she resolved her verification, she learned, the money was gone.

Ms. Hernandez almost certainly would've dropped out right then and there if she hadn't known Hannah Lee, who works at the Chicago office of Bottom Line, a nonprofit group that helps low-income college students. Ms. Lee knew that because Ms. Hernandez's parents couldn't apply for

a PLUS loan, the student could qualify for an unsubsidized federal loan of up to \$5,000. And so she got it.

The story conveys just how easily a low-income student's college career can unravel. Sure, Ms. Lee says, Ms. Hernandez might have helped herself by going to the financial-aid office and making sure everything was OK before it was too late. But how many students whose parents came to the United States from Mexico to work low-paying jobs grow up feeling confident and comfortable enough to do that? "Verification puts the onus on students," Ms. Lee says. "It requires them to make no mistakes, to be vigilant."

Ms. Hernandez is now in her fourth year at the university. "Now I know I should've gone to the financial-aid office in person," she says. "It's just that there were so many other things taking up my time."

That's how the verification trap works. It snags students when they're busy, delays them for weeks or months, and disrupts their plans.

Sara Urquidez has seen it happen many times. She's the executive director of the Academic Success Program, a nonprofit group in Dallas that provides college advisers to 19 of the city's public high schools. Each year she keeps a close eye on verification numbers. This fall's totals have alarmed her.

By the end of November, nearly 1,400 seniors in schools served by her organization had filed a Fafsa. So far more than two-thirds had been selected for verification. (In recent years, the total has been 33 to 40 percent.) If the current percentages hold, Ms. Urquidez anticipates an unprecedented avalanche of paperwork for students and their advisers. "I have no idea," she says, "how we're going to process all that."

Imagine the view from the desk of one of the program's college advisers. Say 150 of the seniors she advises each applies to four institutions, and 100 are selected for verification. That's 400 sets of documents to assemble: institutional forms, tax transcripts, W-2s, 1099s, and whatever else a college might ask for. Many students will need a lot of help from that adviser, who must spend less time advising and more time sifting through documents. "We've made this so complicated," Ms. Urquidez says, "that a kid can't figure it out on their own."

"We've made this so complicated that a kid can't figure it out on their own." The numbers from the Dallas schools reveal a striking socioeconomic contrast. Verification isn't random, remember? So far, the average EFC of students selected for verification is \$854. The average for those not selected is about \$15,000. It's another reminder: Lower income, greater bother.

**That dynamic worries Nicholas W. Prewett, executive director of student financial aid at the University of Missouri at Columbia. He's been watching verification numbers climb, too. As of early December, 83 percent of Missouri's Pell-eligible applicants had been selected. A year ago, the number was just 33 percent. And 38 percent of all students flagged have a \$0 EFC. Those numbers trouble him.**

The jump in Pell-eligible verifications reflects a sharp increase over all. As of late November, 32 percent of Missouri's aid applicants had been selected, up from 13 percent a year ago. "There's been a little bit of panic," he says. "Right now, we're in a scramble phase to keep up, and it's going to take us longer to turn around files."

Mr. Prewett's office is staffed to handle up to 3,000 verifications per cycle; the university already has more than 5,000. And the more "regulatory" tasks that aid officers must tend to, the less time they have for one-on-one advising.

Mr. Prewett has a deeper concerns about verification. "It creates an artificial barrier" for students, he says. "We're questioning their authenticity."

A major shift has occurred within his field. For years, Missouri and many other colleges participated in the federal Quality Assurance Program, which let them set their own verification criteria, based on analyses of application elements that were most likely to contain errors. Many aid directors say the approach enabled them to focus their verification, resulting in fewer selections. The Education Department ended that program at the end of the 2016-17 cycle, and all colleges must now verify the students the government selects.

The current system complicates the nature of aid officers' work, says Justin Draeger, president and CEO of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. "They're asked to counsel and be a trusted source, and also to be federal police officers hounding students," he says. "Those two things don't go hand in hand."

Perhaps it's fitting that aid officers wear two hats. The Education Department does, too: It manages an aid system that propels millions of students through higher education while also policing the distribution of all that aid.

Verification is a trickle-down system. Once the government flags a student, the onus is on the college, which spends a great deal of time and money verifying his information. Naturally, students tend to blame their institution for the hassle.

That dichotomy is especially difficult to manage at community colleges, which serve many low-income and first-generation students. When Cuyahoga Community College, in Ohio, ran its own

verifications under the Quality Assurance Program, it selected 12 percent to 15 percent of aid applicants each year. Yet the verification rate has just about quadrupled — to 48 percent — now that the government does the flagging. Staff members in the system's four aid offices have been working overtime to keep up. Once those offices could verify a file within a couple days; now it's more like three or four weeks.

"It's changed a lot of our focus, in terms of what we can do for students individually," says Angela Johnson, executive director of enrollment and financial aid. "We pride ourselves on access, but this has made us feel pretty insufficient. We feel the weight of the pressure from students."

As policy makers in Washington consider proposals for untangling the aid system's knots, footnoted policy reports and proposals might well inform their thinking. Sometimes, though, nothing is as powerful as a student's story. Recently, Elaine Williams came to Washington to tell hers.

In late November, Ms. Williams testified before the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, which heard proposals for simplifying the Fafsa. As legislators in cushioned chairs looked on, Ms. Williams described the form as her "No. 1 hurdle" in finishing college.

Ms. Williams grew up in Richmond, Va. When she was in middle school, her mother — then struggling with addiction and mental-health problems — couldn't care for her. So she lived for a while with her great-grandmother, then with various relatives, never for very long. After her 18th birthday, one of those relatives kicked her out.

One in 10 young adults between 18 and 25 experiences some form of homelessness in a year, according to a recent report. And 29 percent of them were enrolled in college or an educational program.

Ms. Williams completed the Fafsa with the help of a college-access group. Though most students must include parent information on the form, the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act allows unaccompanied homeless youth to forgo that requirement and file as independent students.

***This is an edited version of the Chronicle story. [Click here](#) to read the full piece.***

# ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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## Mizzou rewards Odom with extension, but he remains SEC's lowest-paid coach

By: Dave Matter

**COLUMBIA, MO. • After guiding Missouri to its first bowl game in three years, Barry Odom was rewarded with a two-year contract extension, though financial terms of his original five-year deal remain the same.**

Odom's new deal lasts through Feb. 28, 2023, according to the memorandum of understanding released Saturday. The MOU is subject to approval by university system president Mun Choi and the Board of Curators at a future meeting.

"I am excited for the future of this program, as we have made positive steps over the course of the last two years," Odom said in a statement released by MU. "I am so appreciative of my team and staff; they continually work together to make Mizzou Football a great representative of our University.

"The stability that this will provide for us to continue to provide a foundation for our student-athletes to be successful for the next 50 years of their lives is important. The leadership from Mr. (Jim) Sterk and our administration is moving Mizzou forward in a great way, and I am certainly grateful for their support."

After a 4-8 debut season in 2016 and a 1-5 start this fall, Odom led the Tigers on a six-game winning streak to finish the regular season 7-5 and 4-4 in the SEC, tied for third place in the East Division. The Tigers will play Texas (6-6) in the Texas Bowl on Dec. 27 in Houston. Mizzou will attempt to become just the second team in FBS history to win eight games after starting the year 1-5.

With a guaranteed salary of \$2.35 million, Odom will remain the lowest paid head coach in the Southeastern Conference. This past season, Odom made more than Ole Miss interim coach Matt Luke, but the Rebels removed the interim tag last month and Luke's salary was raised to \$3 million for next year.

All six new SEC coaches across the league will make more than Odom, according to published reports in recent weeks: Texas A&M's Jimbo Fisher (\$7.5 million), Florida's Dan Mullen (\$6 million), Tennessee's Jeremy Pruitt (\$4 million), Arkansas' Chad Morris (\$3.5 million), Luke and Mississippi State's Joe Morehead (\$2.7 million).

Odom's buyout doesn't change under the extension, which means it remains among the cheapest in the power conferences. Should Missouri fire Odom without cause before his deal expires, the school only owes Odom his base salary (\$450,000) for every year left on his deal. According to [USA Today's latest salary database](#), Odom's 2017 buyout (\$1,462,500) ranked second-to-last among Power 5 coaches and 76th among all FBS coaches. Twenty-seven coaches in the Group of Five conferences have higher buyouts than Odom. That makes Odom's extension low risk compared to other contracts around the power conferences and gives Mizzou's administration significant flexibility should the program's progress stall under Odom's watch.

“We are pleased that we were able to reward Coach Odom for his performance this season with a two-year contract extension,” Sterk said. “Coach Odom and his staff are building a strong foundation for Mizzou Football that will ensure continued academic and athletic success for our student-athletes

“Mizzou Football has great momentum on the field with six-straight victories heading into the Texas Bowl, one of the top football Graduation Success Rates in the Southeastern Conference and ground-breaking for the new Memorial Stadium South End Zone Building slated for early next year. Coach Odom has tremendous passion for Mizzou and I look forward to watching him lead our football program for many years to come.”

The only financial change to Odom's original contract is a new incentive payment. In any season that MU's ticket revenue for home games exceeds \$11.7 million, Odom will receive an equal amount to 20 percent of that amount over \$11.7 million. According to the most recent data submitted to the NCAA, Mizzou's football ticket revenue during the 2015 season was \$13,282,209. Under those figures, Odom would have made a bonus of \$316,442. Memorial Stadium's capacity will decrease starting with 2018 with the construction of the new south end zone complex, which could explain the lower threshold for Odom's incentive payment.

Under his original contract, Odom can earn up to \$1.025 million in one-year performance incentives. This year, he will earn an incentive of \$50,000 for making a bowl game. That payment increases to \$75,000 if the Tigers win the Texas Bowl.

Odom [has several vacancies on his coaching staff](#) that he must fill in the coming weeks. On Tuesday, offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Josh Heupel accepted the head-coaching job at Central Florida. Odom learned Friday that offensive line coach Glen Elarbee is leaving MU to join Heupel at UCF. Odom will also hire a linebackers coach to replace former coordinator DeMontie Cross, whom he fired in September. On Friday, Odom formally promoted secondary coach Ryan Walters to defensive coordinator.

# MISSOURIAN

## MU uses an online program to build up university students' self image

By CAMERON R. FLATT

At least 30 million Americans have had an eating disorder at some point in their life, according to the Eating Disorder Coalition. The holiday season can make these disorders even worse.

**The holidays are generally a difficult time of year for many people, said S. Craig Rooney, director of behavioral health services for the MU Student Health Center.**

“They bring up comparisons between our perceived reality and idealized images of self and family,” Rooney said in an email. “For people struggling with body image and eating behaviors, the holidays can be especially difficult because so many activities and traditions are centered around food.”

To help students with their mental health, the MU Health Center offers an online program all about self-image.

The program, called “Body U,” begins with an online evaluation that helps the system understand the user’s behavior and self-image, according to the Body U website. The system then creates a custom eight- to 10-week program with different guided self-help modules with online coaches or counselors that cover general fitness, healthy eating habits, coping skills, anxiety/stress reduction and self-evaluation.

Potential benefits from the program listed on Body U’s site include:

- Better eating habits.
- Improved body image.
- Better general mental health.
- A 50 percent reduction in disordered eating habits.

Body U was created through the Healthy Body initiative, a joint effort including researchers from Washington University in St. Louis and Stanford University for a national study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, Rooney said. The MU Student Health Center acts as a local resource in case a student requires more serious attention, such as if a student shows signs of anorexia.

“Because many college students are comfortable with digital formats and may not be ready to seek help face to face,” Rooney said, “and because eating disorders can be among the most dangerous of mental health diagnoses, MU Student Health Center believes this is an innovative partnership in trying to get services to students who may be suffering alone.”

MU started using the program in the fall of 2014. Since then, students have completed over 2,000 screenings, with 48 indicating the likelihood of anorexia nervosa, Rooney said.

If the Body U system thinks the user shows signs of anorexia, it prompts them to contact the MU Student Health Center for treatment.

“The hope is that the Body U screening may help some students become aware that they likely need a higher level of in-person intervention,” Rooney said.

Body U is available at [bodyu.golantern.com](http://bodyu.golantern.com) or as an app for smartphones.



## Operation Steal Back Christmas is a success

By JASMINE RAMIREZ

Watch video at: <http://www.komu.com/news/operation-steal-back-christmas-is-a-success>

**COLUMBIA - MU Police Department, MU Greek Life, local businesses and residents made Operation Steal Back Christmas a huge success.** The operation was launched after two storage lockers in Fulton, MO were stolen from in October.

Twelve large boxes of toys collected since January was stolen from [Toys for Tots](#). The toys are given to children during the holiday season. [Missouri Pay it Forward](#) had 350 pairs of shoes stolen.

MU Police Department and MU Greek Life made their own partnership called Greeks Against the Grinch and began to collect toys, shoes, coats, socks and underwear.

Officer Gawlik from the MU Police Department said they hoped to counteract the loss that was felt from the stolen donations.

Several sororities placed donation boxes in their chapter houses for members to make their own contributions to the operation.

Former Community Service Vice President Lydia Jane said her sorority, Kappa Delta, wanted to help as much as possible.

"It's a really amazing thing to see how much good people can do when they all come together for the greater good," Jane said. "We've collected so many items that our box has overflowed and just became a corner in the house for members to put their donations."

The MU Police Department said their storage room is almost completely full with donated items. Gawlik said she is excited to see the final donation count.

Missouri Pay it Forward accepts new or gently used clothing items. Toys for Tots donations must be new toys.

The last day to donate for the Stealing Back Christmas campaign is Wednesday, Dec 13 but Toys for Tots will continue accepting donations until Christmas eve. Visit the [Toys for Tots](#) website to find your closest drop-off box.



## [MUPD supports dispatcher diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer](#)

By DANIEL LITWIN

Watch video at: <http://www.komu.com/news/mupd-supports-dispatcher-diagnosed-with-stage-4-cancer>

**COLUMBIA- Alyssa Schell joined the University of Missouri Police Department as a dispatcher in February, excited to be living out her dream.**

"I've always been interested in law enforcement," Schell said.

But in September she was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer, which didn't take long to spread to her liver and lungs.

Suddenly, Schell had to balance cancer treatments with her daily life.

"I just kind of had to put things in place, figure out what I was going to do," Schell said.

She decided to remain at MUPD in the communications department while going to chemotherapy every other week.

The people at MUPD were glad she decided to continue working despite the hardship.

"She has a great personality. She's super helpful when we're getting dispatched to calls" said MUPD officer Buddy Anlicker.

Schell's hospital visits started to add up, and soon she was out of vacation days. Every day out of the station was a day Schell was not making money.

Her fellow officers knew they had to help out some how, so, to thank her for all her hard work, dedication and to support her during this difficult time, they set up a [GoFundMe](#) for to pay for Schell's treatment.

"She's a part of our team, and a very important part of our team, making sure that each one of us is safe every day, and we couldn't thank her enough by doing this" MUPD officer Bry Gawlik said.

Gawlik's chapter of the National Fraternal Order of Police has a tradition of choosing one individual or organization to support during the holiday season. She said this year, choosing Schell was a "no-brainer."

"MUPD is one giant family and we support each other no matter if we're in communications or out on the road," Gawlik said.

Schell is more than thankful for her coworkers at MUPD.

"They've been great emotional support. They're family, so it's amazing having a family backing me. A second family," Schell said.

As of December, Schell's GoFundMe page has \$2065 in donations. The current goal is \$15,000 to offset her medical costs. 100 percent of the proceeds will go directly to Schell.

## New engineering scholarship honors memory of late MU graduate

By MORGAN SMITH

**Since graduating in 1981, Scott and Linda Wright have inspired both of their children to attend MU. After Scott passed away in 2014, the Wright family decided to establish the Scott N. Wright Memorial Scholarship in his honor.**

The scholarship is open to all mechanical and aerospace engineering students from Missouri, with preference given to those who have similar experiences to Scott, such as growing up on a farm. Other preferences include participating in marching band, Boy or Girl Scouts and sports. The scholarship will be worth a minimum of \$1,000 each year with applications through the College of Engineering's annual scholarship application.

"There are so many young students that need assistance, and to me every little bit helps," Linda said.

Scott, who passed away at age 55 after battling cancer, earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical and aerospace engineering. He served on the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Industrial Advisory Council and supported various capstone design projects, according to an MU News brief. He and his wife, who graduated with the same degree in 1981, first started talking after skipping a mechanical design class their senior year and going to the Heidelberg.

Both Linda and Scott had been very involved alumni, Whitney Hays, advancement officer for the College of Engineering, said. Through alumni engagement events and personal interactions with Linda, Hays was able to assist her with the establishment of a permanent memorial scholarship in Scott's honor.

"He'd be very proud," Linda said. "He always loved helping students, and to me this was a good way to do it."

Serving on the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Industrial Advisory Council meant that twice a year, Scott reviewed the semester-long projects that seniors in mechanical engineering were required to complete and present. Linda said he loved being involved with the council and getting to work with the students.

Linda said both she and her husband knew they wanted to give back to the students of the School of Engineering before he passed away, especially after receiving financial assistance throughout college. She said she hopes the scholarship will help students like them.

“I’m hoping that there will always be young men or women that grew up in Missouri on farms that want to be engineers,” Linda said.

Scott and Linda’s two children both graduated from MU. Their daughter Sonya Germain earned a bachelor’s degree in political science in 2009, and their son Kevin Wright earned his bachelor’s in mechanical and aerospace engineering in 2012.

“We’ve always been Tigers,” Linda said. “Being a Tiger to me is being proud of tradition.”

This fall, the scholarship was awarded to its first recipient, senior Jonathan Halla, at the College of Engineering’s annual scholarship dinner. There, Halla was able to thank the Wrights in person.

Halla is from an area close to where Scott grew up and will graduate in the spring of 2019 with the desire to help those in underdeveloped countries. He said it was an honor to be selected.

“It’s a super cool experience to meet the people who are contributing to help pay for your school costs,” Halla said. “They are some of the nicest people I’ve ever met.”

Linda said she was very pleased with Halla receiving the scholarship and how appreciative he was.

“I think it’s a super considerate and helpful donation that they provided to this school,” Halla said. “It’s super cool how they were honoring their loved one and putting his name out there to help for future students.”

## Seeing the light: Student curator brings fresh vision to Sager Braudis

By AARIK DANIELSON

The greats have gathered in the main room at Sager Braudis Gallery.

As part of the venue's now-annual Masters Exhibit, six women who contributed mightily to 20th-century surrealism and abstraction — even if, in some cases, the impact is only now being felt — grace the walls.

Pass through a threshold into the gallery's smaller "Hallery" space and you'll find an exhibit that is more modest in scope and size, featuring work by artists whose stories certainly are still being written.

**The curator of that exhibit, University of Missouri senior Kat Cua, doesn't feel an ounce of intimidation at placing her vision in such close proximity to modern masters.** She wouldn't have it any other way.

"I just think it's doubly powerful," Cua said. "... We're making space for people who haven't had their opportunity in here, or have been slighted by this sort of institution."

Indeed Cua's exhibit — titled *As I Am* — complements the Masters Exhibit by centering the personhood and worth of people who might once have seen the fine-art world as a distant dream.

Cua once was one of those people too. She grew up in suburban Chicago, part of a family whose members have pursued careers in medicine and technology. She recalls always being interested in art, but never recognizing its potential as a career path.

### **As I Am**

**Where:** The Hallery at Sager Braudis Gallery, 1025 E. Walnut

**When:** Through Friday

**Website:** [www.sagerbraudisgallery.com](http://www.sagerbraudisgallery.com)

She came to MU to study journalism and "would pepper" art history classes "into my schedule" as she had time. Eventually she had amassed enough credits to add an art history major.

“It was something that I wanted to do all the time. So I tried to find a way to do it all the time,” Cua said.

Doing it all the time has included a two-year curatorial fellowship with The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City and an internship with Sager Braudis. It was only as Cua learned about curation that she realized she had what it took to do the job.

Her qualifications were more immediately evident to others.

“It is immediately evident when you meet Kat that she’s energetic, driven, and extremely smart,” gallery director Hannah Reeves said in an email.

“She came here a remarkably good writer, trained in the J-school, but I feel I’ve seen her gain understanding of writing for other purposes. That is, conveying a nearly ineffable sense one gets from a work of art in a curator’s statement, or promoting an exhibit in a way that persuades our audience of the importance of seeing an exhibit in person — those pieces are a little different from state-the-facts journalism.”

Cua’s aesthetic tastes and critical thinking have evolved over a short period of time.

Initially she responded to strictly European, representational art. The more she saw and studied, the more she became enamored with conceptual work.

“The art isn’t what you’re seeing, but rather the ideas behind it,” she said of what drew her.

To Cua, the power of an image to provoke thought or inspire change is unmatched. As she continues her pursuits, she wants to focus on breaking down any of the real or perceived barriers that keep all kinds of people from interacting with all kinds of art.

“You shouldn’t have to come from a certain family, you shouldn’t have to have the right education, in order to access these ideas and these objects,” she said.

The need for this sort of two-way visibility animates *As I Am*. The show consists of work by four artists: Helen Hawley, Laura Baran, Jarvis Boyland and MU graduate Simon Tatum.

The work on display, in some way, provides an entrance into a conversation about exceptionalism and communities of color. It’s a conversation that Cua, a child of Filipino immigrants, has been having with herself for quite some time.

“Growing up as a child of immigrants and growing up as an Asian-American and being charged with the sort of ‘model minority,’ I had spent all this time growing up trying to figure out why I’m so uptight. I just thought it was something that was self-inflicted, something that was just a part of my nature,” she said.

Reading the thoughtful commentary of Nigerian-born artist Toyin Ojih Odutola crystallized Cua's understanding and sparked her imagination. She reckoned, as so many people of color do, with a world that expects them to excel in order to be seen.

For Cua, that expectation had taken the shape of doing justice to her parents' sacrifices.

"They didn't leave their home country to fumble through a new culture and a new language for me to fall flat, essentially. They didn't risk it all for that," she said.

Cua is actively making peace with those concerns — "It's not a burden, but it is a weight," she said — and the work in *As I Am* is helping. Each piece conveys the inherent value of its subject, and their right to take up space simply because they can. The people in each portrait are "not doing anything remarkable, just existing," Cua said.

Hawley and Baran's work, especially represents an "elevation of the regular person ... celebration of the ordinary." Cua returned time and again to Boyland's work, "Girl with the Hoop Earrings," a piece created in dialogue with Vermeer's famous "Girl with a Pearl Earring."

In the Chicago painter's work, a young black woman is treated with the reverence she deserves and portrayed as beautiful and formidable. Cua deliberately placed Boyland's piece at the exhibit's entrance; the hoop-earring wearing girl is the right person to welcome viewers into the show.

"She holds her gaze, it's very confrontational," Cua said.

In Cua's curation, another group of greats has gathered. Everyday greats. Icons of the normal. Saints of the mundane. Along with the artists she has programmed, she has properly estimated the worth of underseen people. And she has left significant shoes for her more experienced Sager Braudis colleagues to fill.

"Kat's social consciousness has raised the bar for all of us," Reeves said. "Her take on curation is pretty activist; she's going to use any platform she has to make a statement."