The Tribune’s view: Let free market decide University of Missouri’s tuition

By Staff

A proposal to add $30 million to Missouri’s public colleges and universities in exchange for tuition freezes is lacking steam. Hopefully it stays that way.

House Budget Committee Chairman Scott Fitzpatrick, R-Shell Knob, is pushing the matter, but Senate leaders and even some in the House haven’t endorsed the proposal.

**Fitzpatrick’s heart is in the right place; he wants Missouri’s institutions of higher learning to be affordable for students. So do we. But allowing the state to dictate tuition would be government overreach. The University of Missouri System and others need to be able to operate as free markets, and not be beholden to deals with politicians.**

There already is a cap on tuition increases at 2.1 percent to keep with inflation. At UM, a 2.1 percent increase would be about equal to its chunk of the $30 million Fitzpatrick wants added to the budget. Basically, there’s not much to gain other than more red tape.

UM’s enrollment has fallen precipitously in the last couple of years, and university officials are already looking for new and creative ways to bolster enrollment. Affordability will be key to beefing up enrollment numbers.

When lawmakers return from their break we’ll know more about their funding intentions for higher education. The UM Board of Curators will discuss the likelihood of a tuition increase during its April meeting.

Missouri’s institutions of higher learning have been on the chopping block by state politicians long enough. We’d like the legislature to add back $30 million, but without strings attached.
MU Faculty Council discusses student-athlete success, grading policies
By: Kathryn Palmer

Student-athlete success rates and graduate student grading policies were the highlights of discussion at the MU Faculty Council’s meeting Thursday afternoon.

Student-athlete success

Pamela Hinton, the faculty athletics representative, presented data on the status of student-athlete success rates. She said first-generation male student-athletes had the lowest graduation rate and grade point average of any gender or athlete group, and that they would benefit the most from academic support services. However, female athletes have a higher graduation rate than female non-athletes.

“These differences in GPA are concerning to me,” Hinton said. Academic support services include supervised study hall, tutoring and mentoring for at-risk student-athletes.

Multiple council members asked about academic oversight of student-athletes. Hinton said MU recently instituted a new course policy in which student-athletes and their professors must fill out a form that lists the course, number of hours of work per week and other proof of academic engagement. That form then must be approved by other administrators, often including Hinton and athletic coaches.

“If ever there’s a question if a student-athlete has done the work, we have documentation to prove that,” Hinton said.

After reports surfaced that an athletic tutor had taken online tests for student-athletes in fall 2016, scholarly integrity among student-athletes has been of heightened concern to university officials. Amid fallout from the scandal, former faculty athletics representative Christina Wells resigned in February 2017. Hinton assumed the position in May last year.

Several council members asked Hinton about the status of the investigation of the tutoring incident, but Hinton said updates on that specific case would not be available until this fall.

Incomplete grading policy for graduate students

Mary Stegmaier, chairwoman of the Academic Affairs Committee, presented a proposed change to the faculty handbook aimed at reducing the number of incomplete grades graduate students receive for theses and dissertation hours.
Faculty members instead would be encouraged to assign more satisfactory or unsatisfactory grades in an effort to “prompt a discussion between the adviser and graduate student about what is expected,” Stegmaier said. She also mentioned this change is intended to help graduate students manage loan repayment plans.

Council members said the proposed change needs more clarification, so Stegmaier is taking it back to Jeni Hart, MU’s associate vice chancellor for graduate studies, for revision before the committee reviews the policy again.

Other discussions included the Teaching Evaluation Task Force’s plan to move forward with expanding professor evaluation metrics beyond just student rankings, and Mizzou 2020, MU’s five-year strategic plan. The plan is under campus review before going back to the UM System president and Board of Curators for final approval. Also, university human resources officials have drafted a plan for transition assistance policies for non-tenure-track faculty who are laid off, but Intercampus Faculty Council Representative Anne Alexander had no further details on its contents.

Council member Cheryl Black spoke on behalf of Diversity Enhancement Committee chairman Berkley Hudson, who was not present at the meeting, about various diversity-related proposals. She said Hudson met with Kevin McDonald, vice chancellor for inclusion, diversity, and equity, to discuss potential uses for the fund for diversity hiring and retention, as well as the possibility of removing the statue of Thomas Jefferson on Francis Quadrangle and installing statues of the first black students to integrate MU in front of Jesse Hall.

Last month, interim Provost Jim Spain announced some NTT faculty contracts will not be renewed because of state budget cuts. In 2017, 43 percent of MU faculty were NTT, and it is still unclear as to how many NTT faculty contracts will not be renewed.

In its only action item, the council unanimously approved the academic calendar for 2020-2021.

Next month, the council is set to vote for chair, vice chair, Intercampus Faculty Council representative and five committee chairs to serve during the 2018-2019 academic year.

For MU graduate workers, final court hearing could be life-changing
By: Kathryn Palmer
Simona Perales Simkins is a third-year doctoral student in the MU Department of Theatre. She teaches Introduction to Performance Studies and serves as an associate director for MU’s Center for Applied Theatre and Drama Research. She has a 3-year-old. She has Type 2 diabetes.

Because of all these things, she also is co-chair of the Coalition of Graduate Workers, the labor union suing the UM System Board of Curators for recognition of collective bargaining rights.

After nearly two years of litigation, a 13th Circuit Court judge is set to hear final arguments in the lawsuit April 20. The hearing will help determine whether graduate student workers are considered employees under Missouri’s constitution. While the coalition maintains that graduate students are, indeed, employees, representatives of the Board of Curators maintain that graduate students are students.

"The time that we take away from our families, the time that we take away from our studies, the dedication that we have toward our teaching all reflects that we are workers — we are doing the labor for our university. That has never changed," Simkins said. "What we are asking for is recognition that ensures that we are going to be taken care of."

"It is our belief that unionizing is unnecessary for Mizzou’s graduate students," UM spokesman Christian Basi wrote in a May 2016 email. "We believe that graduate students are fundamentally students and are part of our campus communities to learn."

Basi said recently MU’s position remains unchanged. Speaking on behalf of the UM System, he anticipates no further comments will be made on the case until a final decision is reached.

But Simkins said the coalition is fighting for fair compensation for graduate students’ contributions to maintaining MU’s Research 1 status and membership in the Association of American Universities.

"We are doing the labor to keep our university healthy, to keep our students healthy, to keep our education systems healthy," she said.

Although neither side has budged on its position, the decision in this case "could provide legal foundation for all graduate workers statewide," said Joe Moore, journalism doctoral candidate and the coalition's outreach officer.

Certainly, the fight feels personal to graduate student workers.

A life-changing ruling

For Simkins and countless other MU graduate students reliant on health care subsidies, the court’s ruling could be life-changing.

"I depend on insulin to live — and very expensive lancets and test trips to manage my health," Simkins said. "Part of the reason I chose to come here was that I was guaranteed health insurance."

But as Simkins learned in fall 2015, health insurance is not guaranteed for graduate students. She and her husband had just spent thousands of dollars moving to Columbia from northern Minnesota with their newborn daughter in tow.
Simkins was putting the finishing touches on her syllabus when she received an email informing graduate students that their health insurance subsidy would be eliminated. "I had to reread it several times because it literally didn't make sense to me," she recalled.

That same email also made its way to coalition member and applied social sciences graduate student Jason Entsminger, whose family was just about to close on a house in Columbia after relocating from Washington earlier that week.

The health insurance decision spurred MU graduate students to form the Forum on Graduate Rights to issue a list of demands, which included pleas for health insurance subsidies, increased pay and affordable housing and child care.

Within a week, MU reinstated graduate student health insurance subsidies. But graduate students, still unsatisfied with their overall treatment, staged a rally and walkout during the first week of school. In early 2016, MU agreed to a staggered increase of graduate stipends from a $12,000 minimum per nine-month half-time appointment for doctoral students to $18,000 by summer 2017.

"That was precisely because of all of the organizing we did and the threat of unionization," Moore said. "This is a time-honored management tactic. Whenever they’re faced with the prospect of unionization, they always make concessions as a way of saying, 'You don’t need a union because we’re going to give you these things out of the kindness of our heart,' when really they did it because of pressure from below."

The April 20 court hearing will occur almost two years to the day since MU graduate students voted overwhelmingly to unionize. But curators declined to recognize their union.

In May 2016, the coalition filed suit against the curators, and litigation has continued for the past 18 months. The curators hired St. Louis labor attorney Michael E. Kaemmerer to defend their case. The Missouri National Education Association, in conjunction with the private law firm Schuchat, Cook & Werner, also of St. Louis, is representing the coalition.

'A issue of knowing what to expect'

Although officials have said the raise makes unionization unnecessary, graduate students see it as a superficial fix to a deeper problem that they argue can only be solved through unionization.

"We understand the financial situation the university is in," Moore said. "We think the $18,000 minimum is fair compensation. We’re not asking for any more. We want those compensation levels guaranteed in a collectively bargained contract and regular cost of living adjustments."

Even graduate students in STEM fields, who traditionally make well above the minimum stipend, think unionization is the clearest path to academic security.

"I think it's more of an issue of knowing what to expect from our university and know that our issues and needs — which are employees' issues and needs — are respected and taken care of," said Arianne Messerman, organizing and grievance officer of the coalition. The biological sciences doctoral student has worked in a lab and taught classes at MU to earn a $25,000 annual stipend.

Moore also said unstable graduate student benefits coupled with tuition hikes have the potential to undermine MU’s publicized commitment to diversity and inclusivity.
"Lower-income students, working-class students, and we know that students of color are predominately represented in lower-income groups, it's going to be more difficult for them to study at the undergraduate level," Moore said. "At the graduate level, the problem is the same."

Access to affordable child care is another issue driving the Coalition of Graduate Workers' resolve to gain collective bargaining rights. According to enrollment data, 75 percent of MU's 5,872 graduate students are 25 or older and are increasingly more likely to have child care needs than undergraduates.

MU once operated the Student Parent Center, but it was demolished in 2014 and has not been replaced.

"I remember when I first came here in 2013, a graduating English doctoral student told me that they couldn't have completed the degree without the day care," recalled Eric Scott, English doctoral candidate and coalition co-chair. "That's something our union has asked for since day one: There needs to be affordable child care."

Both guaranteed access to health insurance and child care were chief among Simkins’ list of reasons for getting involved. She also wanted to hold the university accountable to its own standard.

"Respect, responsibility, discovery and excellence are our values at this university. I did not feel the university was being responsible. I didn't feel like it was taking actions that were responsible for its workers, for its students or for our lives," she said. "I felt compelled and called to take part in this work with the CGW."

A national problem

Since filing the lawsuit, the national mood on graduate student labor has shifted in the coalition’s favor and then back again. When graduate students first began agitating for unionization in late 2015, the National Labor Relations Board — which oversees graduate student labor practices at private institutions — stood on the side of university administrators, having ruled in 2004 that graduate students did not have the right to unionize.

Then, in August 2016, the NLRB reversed course, ruling that graduate assistants did have collective bargaining power.

Since President Donald Trump’s inauguration, the five-member board has reached a stalemate, with two pro-business, Trump-era appointees and two pro-labor union Obama-era appointees. But Trump’s fifth appointment, management-side labor lawyer John Ring, is waiting for U.S. Senate confirmation, and that could tip the scales in favor of the pro-business agenda. This expectation has led private universities, such as Columbia University, to dig in and bring graduate student demands for unionization to court rather than recognize the unions.

Although Scott, who has been active with the coalition since the beginning, acknowledged that "the national law doesn't have any bearing on the state law," he has seen inconsistency on the administration’s citation of NLRB rulings since the students started organizing the union.

"What we were told at that point (2016) was that the NLRB was against graduates to organize and there was no precedent for unionization," Scott said.

MU students are not isolated in their fight for unionization. As slashes to state higher education budgets have swept the country, including Gov. Eric Greitens’ recently proposed $98 million in
cuts, more and more graduate students at public universities have called for unionization. Graduate students at the University of Iowa unionized years ago, and Moore said coalition members look to Iowa as a model for their own organization.

In addition to taking classes, 2,172 MU graduate students are employed as teaching or research assistants, which requires them to design courses, hold office hours, grade exams and papers and mentor undergraduates. While the Board of Curators argues this work enhances their degrees, professors and students alike see the contributions of graduate students as essential to providing a high-quality education.

"Imagine a course with 80 students with a 10-page paper assignment. That would be 800 pages of grading for one faculty member for only one assignment. Doing a good job grading and providing feedback for students to improve can take at least 30 minutes for one paper," said associate professor of sociology Victoria Johnson, who said she relies on graduate teaching assistants to help instruct her courses.

Entsminger, a graduate instructor, came close to juggling that load last semester when he was teaching a 60-student section of agricultural marketing systems with no teaching assistant while registered as a full-time student.

"I was doing significantly more work, between research and teaching, than what was on the books," he said. "We get paid nominally for a quarter-time teaching appointment, but it actually takes much more time than that to get quality teaching done."

"We are doing work that benefits the university, its students and its research studies," Entsminger said.

'An important day'

MNEA and coalition leaders think a final decision will come by June.

Moore said the coalition is confident in its case and expects a favorable outcome. But regardless of the judge’s ruling, the Board of Curators, as a matter of law, does have the right to appeal the court's decision, and that could place another roadblock in front of union recognition.

The union held a closed meeting in February in which about 40 members met with an MNEA lawyer about updates on the lawsuit, case tactics and organized support ahead of the hearing.

Graduate students have continued to voice their position, holding multiple public rallies in the past two years. Several coalition members made signs ahead of the Feb. 1-2 curators' meeting at MU to reiterate their position:

"I am an employee because ... My original research upholds the reputation and supports the training of undergraduate scientists at MU. RECOGNIZE ME!" Messerman's read.

Coalition leaders also see high value in drawing a big crowd to the Boone County Courthouse on April 20 to further publicize their interpretation of the word "employee."

"We want bodies. We want as many people as we can get. It’s a show of our support. It’s a show of our power and our influence," Moore said. "Although the decision is not going to be made on that day, that day is an important day for us."
The coalition is calling on sympathetic undergraduates, faculty and other local labor organizations to show their solidarity.

"It is the final hearing in the court case that will eventually decide the case," Moore said. "We are going to use that opportunity as a show of solidarity between CGW and other labor groups in Columbia and throughout the state as a statement to university administration."

The coalition has reached out to the mid-Missouri chapter of the Laborers' International Union of North America and Missouri Jobs with Justice.

Missouri’s state labor history could also factor into the outcome of the lawsuit. Although Article 1 Section 29 of the 1945 state constitution does guarantee the right of unionization, it applied only to private employees until 2007, when the state Supreme Court ruled in Independence NEA vs. Independence School District that K-12 public school teachers are entitled to collective bargaining rights. Boone County Circuit Judge Jeff Harris’ decision in the case of Coalition of Graduate Workers v. Board of Curators of the University of Missouri could further redefine who is legally considered an employee in the state.

"The University of Missouri and the Missouri Legislature are hoping this whole union craze will die down if they drag things out long enough," Messerman said. "We still want to guarantee our rights with a democratically agreed upon contract."

Simkins, who juggles the responsibilities of a doctoral program, motherhood and diabetes, plans to join other graduate students at the hearing.

"There is no way for me to survive this program without health insurance," she said. "That has always kept me involved in the union and staying involved in the fight ahead of us."

MU students use spring break to serve

MORGAN KEITH

Generated from News Bureau press release: More than 600 Mizzou students to spend spring break serving others

Over the course of the next week, nearly 600 MU students will be participating in Mizzou Alternative Breaks, traveling to serve communities across the country and overseas. Twenty-one of these students will be traveling internationally.
MAB trips serve a diverse range of locations and provide a wide range of trip focuses, including homelessness and poverty, youth empowerment, environmental issues and several others.

Volunteer locations for this wave of spring break service trips include Key West, Florida; Detroit; Aurora, Colorado; New York City, and more. This year's international trip is to Nicaragua.

"Mizzou Alternative Breaks is led completely by students," MU senior Bizzy Emerson, director of spring service for Mizzou Alternative Breaks, said in a news release. "Student leaders decide where the groups will go and what organizations they will serve. Students are excited to participate and spend their spring break serving other communities. Every year we hear from fellow participants that Mizzou Alternative Breaks was their favorite college experience."

From its beginning as three service trips organized through the University YMCA in 1991, MAB has grown and now organizes annual service trips during Thanksgiving, winter, spring and summer breaks and on weekends.

MAB Director of Events Cleopatra Benos noted how much the program has grown in her three years of involvement.

"Students from every corner of campus are starting to get involved in service," she said in an interview.

Although all spring break trips go out-of-state, MAB's weekend trips serve within the state of Missouri. The organization's current goal is to serve every county in Missouri by 2020. So far, MAB has sent trips to 98 of 115 counties in the state. This idea reiterates one of the organization's seven principles, "Bring it home," which encourages participants to bring their firsthand experiences back to Columbia and the state as a whole.
The University of Missouri awarded the second of five 2018 William T. Kemper Fellowships for Teaching Excellence on Thursday to David Schulz, associate professor of biological sciences.

The award, which comes with a $10,000 stipend, was presented by MU Chancellor Alexander Cartwright and Commerce Bank Chairwoman and CEO Teresa Maledy during a midday class being taught by Schulz.

Schulz, a member of the MU faculty since 2005, is the principal investigator for research into the ability of neural networks to recover from injury or disease in the Schulz Lab in addition to his teaching duties. In a news release, Schulz said the most important trait for a teacher is enthusiasm. Other principles, he said, are respecting students, not underestimating them, honesty about his shortcomings and a sense of humor and humility.

The final three Kemper award winners will be announced Friday. Shelly Rodgers, a professor of strategic communication in the School of Journalism, received the first award Monday.
David Schulz, an associate professor of biological sciences, was awarded the second of this year’s William T. Kemper Fellowships for Teaching Excellence in a surprise visit from MU Chancellor Alexander Cartwright and Commerce Bank Regional CEO Teresa Maledy.

Pat Okker, dean of the College of Arts and Science, said Schulz’s devotion to students and enthusiasm about research is what sets him apart.

“One of the amazing things about Dr. Schulz’s teaching is the way that he really shares the excitement of research and discovery with students,” Okker said.

Schulz has been an MU faculty member since 2005, according to his biography, and is also the director of undergraduate research and director of the departmental honors program in biological sciences. Schulz highlighted enthusiasm as one of the most important principles of being an effective teacher.

“For me, it starts with enthusiasm,” Schulz said. “If I don’t love what I am doing, and what I’m talking about, then why would I expect anybody to care what I have to say about anything? I try to bring a sense of openness and enthusiasm into the classroom.”

The William T. Kemper Fellowships for Teaching Excellence were established in 1991 with a $500,000 gift upon Kemper’s death in 1989. Kemper graduated from MU in 1926. Each fellow receives a $10,000 stipend, according to a the fellowship’s website.

Schulz has been nationally recognized for his achievements as an educator, according to his biography. He was recently invited to join the faculty of the Neural Systems and Behavior course at the Marine Biology Lab in Massachusetts.

“He makes research come alive, he brings students into his lab,” Okker said. “He is just a walking epitome of the integration of research and teaching on this campus and I couldn’t be happier with the selection of him as one of the Kemper fellows this year.”

Cartwright and Okker both thanked the Biological Sciences Department for nominating Schulz.

“I’m very proud to be at a campus that celebrates teaching and honors the very best,” Okker said.
According to his biography, Schulz earns very high scores on his student evaluations and is able to “shrink a presentation for 300 people down to a conversation.”

“My goal as a teacher, first and foremost, is not necessarily to come away with them having learned a specific fact, but to empower them and motivate them to seek their own knowledge beyond the classroom,” Schulz said about teaching students. “I see my job and my goal as providing the tools and the motivation to take whatever happens to capture their imagination and dig deeper, because I can’t do all of it for everyone in the classroom.”

Five Kemper Fellows are named every year. On Monday, Shelly Rodgers, an MU strategic communications professor, was awarded the first Kemper fellowship. After Schulz’s recognition, three more Kemper fellowships will be named Friday.

“I honestly am humbled,” Schulz said. “I know the tradition of this award. I know the incredible people who have won it before me and to be considered in that group is humbling.”

**MU Health Care Plans to Increase Its Range of Services in Mid-Missouri**

By ELENA K. CRUZ & COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN • 15 HOURS AGO

Plans for a more connected Missouri health care system and two new local clinics were topics of discussion at a Board of Curators meeting Wednesday.

MU Health Care CEO Jonathan Curtright and UM System President Mun Choi presented plans in front of the MU Health Affairs Committee on ways to increase connections between central Missouri medical
centers, provide more at-home care for residents and build a more “streamlined” MU Health Care structure of governance, as Choi described it.’

“We must think more broadly than we historically have,” Curtright said.

**Statewide connected health care**

Standing in front of a black-and-yellow-themed slide show, Curtright discussed MU Health Care’s position in the Integrated Academic Health System, which connects MU Health Care with other academic medical centers around central Missouri.

“Our goal is to create an integrated, academic health system,” he said.

The system, which Curtright said is being improved “each and every day,” allows MU Health Care to work closely with Capital Region Medical Center in Jefferson City. It also helps MU to connect with Bothwell Regional Health Center, Hannibal Regional Healthcare System and Lake Regional Health System.

The system incorporates electronic record-sharing technology from the Tiger Institute for Health Innovation so that doctors from different hospitals can see the same patient information.

“The days of faxing are over at (Capital) Region and beyond,” Curtright said.

Their goal is to provide trustworthy information to residents seeking medical attention, Curtright said after the meeting. If a Columbia resident needs health care but is in Jefferson City, for example, they would be able to get efficient help because of the collaborative system.

MU Health Care previously had discussed partnering with Boone Hospital Center, which is not part of the academic health system, but the talks have stopped for the time being.

**Local health care**
Two primary care clinics will open within the next two years in Columbia, Curtright said. One will be located near Battle High School and the other around Thornbrook, providing increased access to care on the north and southwest sides of town.

In addition, Curtright announced MU Health Care’s plan to improve its telehealth technology, which provides Missouri residents access to health care within their homes. With the technology, they can talk to a doctor by video for a flat fee.

“We want to be one of the leaders in telemedicine here,” Curtright said.

The service provides general and dermatology care to Columbia residents and people in rural communities. MU Health Care also uses it to provide physician training: For example, pain management specialists have instructed rural doctors about opioid addiction treatment, MU Health spokeswoman Jennifer Coffman said.

Curtright said the service is “not in its infancy, but it’s not an adolescent. It’s somewhere in between.”

**Streamlined leadership**

Choi walked to the front of the room following Curtright’s presentation to present a proposal for the new MU Health Care management structure.

“Efficiencies will only take us to a certain level,” Choi said during his presentation. “We also want to be transformative.”

The new model simplifies the organizational structure. Choi said it would make internal activities more efficient and improve communication with other medical centers as MU Health Care’s reach grows.

When Choi asked for feedback, the committee members expressed their support.

Committee member John Phillips said the plan “would be good because it would bring expertise into the oversight” through the inclusion of an operating committee. He said this emphasis on expertise “hasn’t happened before.”
Curtright also approved of the proposed model.

“I think the structure would be fantastic because there are many times I’d need guidance, feedback from executives who have walked a mile in those shoes before,” Curtright said.

After the meeting, Choi said people won’t lose their jobs because of the new structure. Instead, he said it would “help lead to growth.”

Choi also asked the committee members for constructive criticism on the model to improve it; he said the final version will be ready in June.

MU Health Care's planned expansion may help rural hospitals

By JASMINE RAMIREZ


COLUMBIA - The University of Missouri plans to expand its partnerships with several hospitals and improving medical care access to its patients.

MU Health Care announced their plans to the Board of Curators' committee on Wednesday night. CEO Jonathan Curtright and UM System President Mun Choi said they want to partner with Bothwell Regional Health Center, Hannibal Regional Healthcare System and Lake Regional Health System and continue working with Capital Region Medical Center in Jefferson City.
One initiative in the hospital partnership is the rural track program. It encourages medical students to work in rural communities once they become doctors.

Dr. Philip Fracica at Bothwell Regional Health Center said medical students are placed at hospitals in rural communities during their third year of school.

"Students will come here to do their core experiences in things like internal medicine, gynecology, surgery, family medicine," Fracica said.

He said he's excited for the program and believes it will help rural hospitals.

"We believe that it provides a significant leg up for being able to retain those people in six, seven, eight years down the road," Francica said. "To have new practitioners join our community and provide care to our citizens."

MU Healthcare's hospital partnership also helps patient information to become more easily accessed through an electronic record system shared between hospitals.

Patients can look forward to easier access to care. MU Healthcare looks to advance its telehealth technology which allow people to video chat with doctors from the comfort of their home.

The healthcare system announced their successful revenue numbers for 2017. MU Health doubled its estimated operating income in its first seven months of the fiscal year. It made a total net income of $98.5 million for the year.

(AAU Science News Website)

Could heat ‘brain switch’ lead to Alzheimer’s treatment?

Posted by Jeff Sossamon-U. Missouri March 23rd, 2018
A newly discovered class of proteins that heat actives can be useful tools for regulating the activity of individual neurons in the brain through changes in temperature, according to a new paper.

These tools will advance fundamental brain research and potentially lead to “deep brain stimulation” treatments used for Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s patients.

“Thermogenetic tools, which utilize heat to act as a ‘switch’ to turn neuron functions on, are expanding the horizons of brain research by allowing us to control specific neurons in the brain and measure behavioral changes,” says Troy Zars, professor of biological sciences at the University of Missouri. “The goal of this fundamental research was to identify more of these special proteins, laying the foundation so that, in the future, scientists have a better understanding of how neuronal circuits function.”

Flies in the heat chamber

Zars led the research team, along with Mirela Milescu and Lorin Milescu, who both are assistant professors of biological sciences. Together, the researchers focused on a family of genes that encode taste receptors found in fruit flies. Surprisingly, some of these taste receptors also are activated by heat and thus play a role in detecting environmental temperature.

First, the students in Mirela Milescu’s lab investigated the thermosensitivity of these proteins and identified one member of the family, called Gr28bD, as a prime candidate for thermogenetics. Then, Lorin Milescu’s students used live-imaging techniques and software developed in their lab to demonstrate that the Gr28bD protein can, through temperature differences, modulate the brain activity of fruit flies.

Finally, the flies were tested in Troy Zars’ lab for temperature-dependent behavior. Using a specially designed heat chamber that allows precise control of the environmental temperature, the Zars’ students were able to show that the Gr28bD protein can control behavior in these flies, using temperature as a “brain switch.”

Deep brain stimulation
“Gr28bD could become a powerful tool in controlling neuronal activity and studying how neuronal circuits function,” says Benton Berigan, a graduate student in Lorin Milesu’s lab. “Since this protein is not found in any mammal, it emerges as a good candidate for the development of novel thermogenetic tools to be used for basic research and potentially one day in humans.”

Further study of thermogenetics could lead to the development of deep brain stimulation tools as a part of the national Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) project, Zars says.

The study appears in Scientific Reports. Funding came from the National Science Foundation. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding agencies.

MU researchers find a protein that could help patients with Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s


Generated from News Bureau Press Release: MU neuroscientists develop potential tools for the study of brain function, could aid research in Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s

Similar stories ran on KGET(NBC) Bakersfield, CA, KSDK St. Louis, and WAVE Louisville, KY.
Another Missouri fraternity placed on probation for hazing

COLUMBIA (AP) — A fraternity placed on disciplinary probation by the University of Missouri for hazing won't face more sanctions from its national governing body.

The university placed Beta Theta Pi on probation until Feb. 1, 2019, after determining members had engaged in hazing during the fall semester. The fraternity also must have monthly meetings and take other steps with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life through Dec. 1.

The Columbia Daily Tribune reported the fraternity's national organization decided the probation is sufficient.

Justin Warren, spokesman for the national fraternity, said an investigation found one incident involving a few members. Two members were suspended until graduation and lost their rooms at the chapter house.

FarmHouse fraternity was closed Tuesday by its national organization for hazing, the third fraternity closed since classes began in August.
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ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Planning commission opposes Missouri Bluffs subdivision

By Mark Schlinkmann

ST. CHARLES COUNTY • The county Planning and Zoning Commission has taken a stand opposing a controversial subdivision proposed for a forested Missouri River bluffs area near Highway 40 (Interstate 64).

The panel on Wednesday night voted 8-1 to recommend that a revised plan by developer Greg Whittaker be rejected by the County Council.

The revised proposal calls for 289 single-family homes and up to 73 multi-family attached units to be built on the edge of the existing Missouri Bluffs Golf Course on land now owned by the University of Missouri.

An earlier version included 315 single-family homes and 120 multi-family units.

The development has drawn opposition from the Missouri chapter of the Sierra Club, Trailnet and other groups. They expressed concern that it would mar the landscape and detract from the experience of people using the nearby Katy Trail.
Whittaker insists that the look and feel of the area wouldn't be adversely affected and that major efforts would be taken to preserve the forested, hilly terrain at the site.

The planning commission's negative recommendation means that support from five of the seven County Council members is now needed to secure council approval.

Hartzler highlights Russian troll attack during MU protests at hearing

By Rudi Keller

The former top officer of the U.S. European Command told a congressional committee Wednesday that he uses the discovery of Russian meddling in the 2015 controversies at the University of Missouri as an easily-understood example of the “hybrid warfare” threatening the United States.

Retired Air Force Gen. Phillip Breedlove made his remarks during questioning from U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Harrisonville, who quoted a Tribune article on the Russian troll attack before asking him for insights into countering efforts to exploit “our own family squabbles.”

The first step, Breedlove said to the House Armed Services Committee, is to wake up to the threat.

“I use this example as I speak around the country, what happened at Mizzou,” Breedlove said. “And it was even multi-layered. After they instigated problems, they went back then and chastised the local press for not covering their disinformation and further spreading it — it was really audacious, what they characterized there.”

It is an example that helps explain to people that “when they go into their social media, they are getting an echo chamber of their own thoughts, they are really not seeing both sides,” Breedlove said. “And in that echo chamber, they are being fed by these people who are trying to incite, again, on both sides of the issue.”

Russian internet trolls jumped into the heavy stream of social media posts about racial protests at MU to feed fears of a white backlash after the resignation of UM System President Tim Wolfe in November 2015. The effort was identified by Air Force Lt. Col. Jarred Prier in a heavily documented research article, published in Strategic Studies Quarterly, identifying several social media accounts involved in the effort.
One now-suspended Twitter account posted a warning that “The cops are marching with the KKK! They beat up my little brother! Watch out!” with a photo of a black child with a severely bruised face and the hashtag #PrayForMizzou. Prier identified the account as one that also tweeted about Syrian refugees in Europe and panic about a fake chemical factory fire in Louisiana.

The account’s original MU tweets were retweeted by an army of 70 robot accounts and hundreds of legitimate users and became part of the huge volume of tweets about the university at that time, he wrote.

The Internet Research Agency — the Russian organization known as the “troll farm” — was the most likely source of the tweets, Prier found. The organization is the first named defendant in Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s indictment of 13 Russians and three organizations accused of interfering in the 2016 presidential election to support President Donald Trump.

In his testimony Wednesday, Breedlove said the Russian tactics are similar to disinformation efforts of the old Soviet Union that have found new intensity through the internet.

“Russia sees the West and in particular a unified West as an adversary,” Breedlove said, according to Stars and Stripes. “Waging a conventional war against the West would be unfavorable to Russia. As such, it has used hybrid warfare to break up Western unity.”

During her time to question Breedlove, Hartzler brought up the Tribune’s reports about Prier’s work and noted that it showed that “the same people involved in the presidential election in Russia inserted themselves into our local issue to make the matter worse.”

Hartzler highlighted a statement from Prier that the Russians didn’t try to generate a new controversy — instead they wanted to feed and amplify it to promote discord.

“I think as Americans, it is time that we rally as a family,” Hartzler said. “It reminds me — back home in Missouri we have a lot of common sense and sometimes we have our own interfamily squabbles and brothers and sisters may fight a little bit but boy, the neighbor kid or somebody else wants to attack our brother or sister, boy we rally around that family and don’t mess with my family.”

The West has been extremely slow to react to Russian disinformation and interference, Breedlove said, according to Stars and Stripes. When Hartzler asked what strategies and tactics will be effective, Breedlove said recognizing the threat is the first step and the second is to deal with the social media companies.

“I think we need to start having tough conversations with those that prepare the social media platforms on what they allow in their spaces,” he said.
A pioneer in Illinois paved the way for women to become lawyers

SANDY DAVIDSON

Sandy Davidson, Ph.D., J.D., teaches communications law at the Missouri School of Journalism. She is a Curators’ Distinguished Teaching Professor and the attorney for the Columbia Missourian.

March is Women’s History Month. When looking at women in U.S. history, one point that unfortunately stands out is this: The U.S. Supreme Court did not support women’s rights.

An example of this is the case of Myra Bradwell, an Illinois woman who wanted to practice law.

Bradwell passed the Illinois Bar exam in 1869, but the Illinois Bar denied her entry into the legal profession solely because she was a woman.

The Supreme Court of Illinois approved Bradwell’s denial. In doing so, the court did historical analysis, looking at England: “It is to be ... remembered that female attorneys at law were unknown in England, and a proposition that a woman should enter the courts of Westminster Hall in that capacity ... would have created hardly less astonishment than one that she should ... be elected to a seat in the House of Commons.”

The Illinois court explained that when the Illinois legislature wrote the law concerning licensing of lawyers, it never entered their minds that women should become lawyers.

The court said: “That God designed the sexes to occupy different spheres of action, and that it belonged to men to make, apply, and execute the laws, was regarded as an almost axiomatic truth.”
The court concluded: “In view of these facts, we are certainly warranted in saying that when the legislature gave to this court the power of granting licenses to practice law, it was with not the slightest expectation that this privilege would be extended to women.”

The Illinois Supreme Court could have just said, “Horrors! Women practicing law? Unthinkable!”

Then an unsympathetic U.S. Supreme Court in 1873 upheld denying Bradwell a law license.

In his concurring opinion, Supreme Court Justice Joseph P. Bradley also lectured Bradwell on her proper role as a woman. He said: “The constitution of the family organization, which is founded in the divine ordinance, as well as in the nature of things, indicates the domestic sphere as that which properly belongs to the domain and functions of womanhood.”

In short, Justice Bradley told Myra Bradwell not to buck nature.

The family was at stake, Justice Bradley seemed to believe: “The harmony, not to say identity, of interest and views which belong, or should belong, to the family institution is repugnant to the idea of a woman adopting a distinct and independent career from that of her husband.”

Bradley stretched his historical analysis back to the dawn of creation: “The paramount destiny and mission of woman are to fulfil the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the Creator.”

As for unmarried women, Bradley said, “It is true that many women are unmarried and not affected by any of the duties, complications, and incapacities arising out of the married state, but these are exceptions to the general rule.”

He opined “the rules of civil society must be adapted to the general constitution of things, and cannot be based upon exceptional cases.”

State’s rights was an important issue. In front of the U.S. Supreme Court, Myra Bradwell invoked the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, which says: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States ... are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. ...”
But the Court declared that the right to practice law “in no sense depends on citizenship of the United States.”

The high Court concluded that “the right to control and regulate the granting of license to practice law in the courts of a State is one of those powers which are not transferred for its protection to the Federal government.”

In short, Illinois had the power to say who could practice law in Illinois courts, and that state power was protected from interference by the feds.

Protection of state’s rights is one thing, but denial of a law license to protect women is something else. The paternalism in Justice Bradley’s concurring opinion shines through, especially in these words: “Man is, or should be, woman’s protector and defender.

The natural and proper timidity and delicacy which belongs to the female sex evidently unfits it for many of the occupations of civil life.”

The question for the high Court as framed by Myra Bradwell’s attorney was not whether women are too “delicate” to practice law, but instead was this: “Can a female citizen, duly qualified in respect of age, character, and learning, claim, under the fourteenth amendment, the privilege of earning a livelihood by practicing at the bar of a judicial court?”

The answer, in effect, from the U.S. Supreme Court was that Illinois can keep women in their houses — and not in courthouses as attorneys — if that’s what Illinois wants.

While Myra Bradwell’s U.S. Supreme Court case still was pending, Illinois denied admission to the Illinois Bar to a second woman, Alta M. Hulett. She and Bradwell joined forces, drafting a bill to prohibit Illinois from excluding anyone from an occupation based on the person’s sex, except military service.

In March 1872, the law passed. In April 1873, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against Bradwell. Nevertheless, in June 1873, Hulett became Illinois’ first female attorney.
In 1890, the Illinois Bar issued Bradwell a bar license without her reapplying. In 1892, the U.S. Supreme Court admitted her to its bar. However, Bradwell never practiced law. Instead, she was a successful journalist.

In 1868, Bradwell founded the weekly Chicago Legal News. Thus, she became the first female editor of a U.S. legal publication. In 1871, the great Chicago fire destroyed Bradwell’s offices. She rebuilt them. She operated her publication for 20 years and turned it into the most widely circulated legal publication in the United States at the time.

Bradwell also wrote a column titled “Law Relating to Women.” In one of her early columns, she said, “We believe ours is the first legal paper in the United States to come out in favor of woman suffrage.”

She also proclaimed: “... woman has a right to think and act as an individual — believing if the great Father had intended it to be otherwise – he would have placed Eve in a cage and given Adam the key.”

Students taking part in nationwide march for gun control

By SANA MOORE

COLUMBIA - Students in mid-Missouri are making noise and want you to hear what they have to say.

Students at Rock Bridge High School are planning a protest for this weekend for gun control in Missouri as part of the March for Our Lives protest.
The march was created after the Parkland school shooting.

One student, Anushka, says she is up for the challenge to get lawmakers to hear her.

“It kind of a stand for initiative for gun control and making our voices heard against our lawmakers and just a way to show this fight is not over and we want to see change,” she said.

She said the Parkland school shooting inspired her and her classmates to get involved.

“It makes me really happy actually because I get to be part of a great committee and team and group of people who are organizing this whole thing and it’s taught me a lot things and just makes me feel as if I have a voice now. Before I wasn’t super politically active but now I am starting to become more and it's just a good experience for me,” Anushka said.

She said she initially thought organizing the march would be hard.

“It was a little overwhelming at first. I was like 'hey is this a thing we can really do, will it be as big like the women’s march, or other sister marches and over the course of the previous weeks.' I’ve been discovering that once you do something it’s not as hard as you think it may be and it’s just really inspiring being a part of something this great,” Anushka said.

Anushka’s teacher, Greg Irwin, said he is proud of his students taking a stand for what they believe in.

He said it makes him feel empowered as a teacher knowing he is helping students find their voice in society.

“I’m just excited if I can empower students in issues they care about, regardless of political persuasion, I want my students that are conservative or don’t have political feelings to feel empowered and I want everyone to have” Irwin said.

He said for some students, this is their first time participating in a political movement because some families don’t have the conversation about it at home.

"I’m proud of their activism and them really thinking about what they believe and try to find the best ideas and arguments,” he said.

**The protest will take place on March 24 from 1-3 p.m. on MU’s campus. Protesters will start at the Quad and end at the Boone County Courthouse.**
Children "sad and frustrated" seeing fellow students die

By ABBY DODGE


COLUMBIA – Students across the nation are taking a stand for greater gun control. In Columbia, students at Rock Bridge High School are leading the way.

Sophomore Rachael Erickson and Kanchan Hans, along with others, are organizing the local “March for our Lives” event Saturday.

“There is no other way for people my age to have their voices heard,” Erickson said. “I can’t vote. I won’t be able to vote for a few more years now.”

Both Erickson and Hans said they were inspired by the actions of the Marjory Stoneman Douglass students.

“That just kind of sparked something in me and a lot of people at Rock Bridge,” Erickson said. “It was the first time that we really figured out that we could do something about it as kids, as students, as high schoolers.”

Hans said it made her realize her own power.

“In the past I might not have felt like I was powerful enough to do any actual change in my community, however this entire movement across America has shown me that students like me are able to do this and therefore that leads me to empowered and actual feel like I can make a difference,” Hans said.
Students organizing the event feel a multitude of emotions when they think about the events that led to the formation of the movement.

“Sadness, because I’ve seen a lot of school shootings in my lifetime and I’m not very old and the fact that I’ve seen so many children my age killed is really just depressing,” Erickson said.

She also has a fire within her.

“Also frustration because in my whole life every time there’s been a massive school shooting everyone thinks, ‘oh, this is going to change. This is going to be the one. Everything is going to be different,’ and it never really is,” Erickson said.

Hans uses her emotion to make the movement stronger.

“This March for our Lives is a very good way to channel that anger into making a difference in this community,” Hans said.

Their youth and the perceptions from the public doesn’t discourage the girls.

“I hope that they learn that kids my age are smart and we’re powerful and we’re able to do a lot of things,” Erickson said. “We can’t vote and we’re not adults yet, but we understand what’s happening and we’re smart. We’re well informed. We’re driven and we have the ability to make a real difference.”

Hans said the student-led movement is not losing steam.

“Actual change is coming to the country and these thoughts and prayers aren’t actually what we need,” Hans said. “What we need is for people to actually go out and make a difference, to go out ad talk to legislators and talk to our policy makers about what we actually need to do.”

Erickson said she never envisioned herself leading a movement for gun control, but when the need presented itself she couldn’t stay immobile.

“We’re tired of seeing children our age being killed and we’re tired of needing to be the ones stepping up,” Erickson said. “I don’t think I should be the one pushing for gun control legislation right now, but I am.”

Erickson said she dedicates around two hours per day to organizing the march. She said she won’t stop until people feel safe.

“We understand why we have to be the ones doing this and we don’t want to be. We don’t want to have to take time out of our live to do this, but we do,” Erickson said. “We are going to keep doing it until we feel safe in school.”

After another school shooting earlier this week, it is clear that time hasn’t arrived yet.
“Even though this movement is so powerful there’s still an unending feeling of frustration that I need to make something change or nothing ever will,” Erickson said.

**The march begins at the MU Columns at 1:30 p.m. and ends at Columbia City Council.** Advocates for stricter gun control and school safety will speak at the Columbia Municipal court following the march.

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**Student panel discusses minority misrepresentation in media**

By Michael Wilmarth

**Voices You Don’t Hear, a Q&A-style event that discusses media portrayals of marginalized racial, sexual and gender communities, held its fourth semesterly meeting Tuesday in Memorial Union.**

The panel included representatives from the Legion of Black Collegians, the Asian American Association, the Association of Latin@ American Students, Oasis, a trans support and advocacy group and Four Directions: Indigenous Peoples & Allies.

Karina Jaimes, a former journalism student and VYDH moderator, began hosting the event when she noticed the ineffectiveness of her cross-cultural journalism class.

“People were really not learning enough,” Jaimes said. “We studied one identity a week and that’s not enough.”

Jaimes said the identities present at the forum offer an education about representation in the media that cannot be gained in a classroom.

“Something like this should be required for students going into media,” Jaimes said. “You are going to be covering human people, not people on PowerPoints.”

ALAS President Gilberto Perez gave his perspective as a member of the Latin-American community.

“My motivation to be here is to give the Latinx perspective,” Perez said. “There might be one person that has never heard it, and this might be their only chance.”

Members of the panel spoke about the problematic representations of their communities in the media.

Espen Mullen, a representative of Oasis, pointed out the lack of transgender representation in media.
“Trans media is very rarely written by trans people,” Mullen said. “It is very rarely portrayed by trans actors. That is not a story about being trans. It’s a story about what cisgender people think being trans is like.”

AAA President Alice Yu explained how the media removes cultures’ works from their origins, like the 2017 movie *Ghost in the Shell*, in which Scarlett Johansson, a white woman, plays the traditionally Japanese character Motoko Kusanagi.

“That is just a huge slap to the face,” Yu said. “You finally found one thing that looked like you, that represented you, and that’s taken away.”

Yu referenced a short film produced in response to the misrepresentation that can be found [here](#).

LBC members Terrell Stanley and Taylar Warren offered their perspectives on the media as members of the black community.

Warren said she felt guilty when, as a result of the media’s focus on the male victims of police brutality, she realized she did not know the names of the female victims.

“Sandra Bland, for example, she was in the media for maybe a week,” Warren said. “Afterward, it was over. That’s an issue I find within our movements, within ourselves, and also how the mediaportrays our movements. Black women are erased.”

Stanley echoed Warren’s mention of media erasure of LGBTQ perspectives in movements.

“It’s a little-known fact that the three women who started the Black Lives Matter movement were three queer women,” Stanley said. “Most black people do not know that.”

**THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Trump Says the Campus Free-Speech Crisis Is ‘Overblown’**

**NO MU MENTION**

By Chris Quintana

Is free speech in a state of crisis on college campuses? Those with a strong opinion say it’s either a dire concern, citing disrupted speeches, or blown way out of proportion in response to cherry-picked incidents. Many conservatives will argue the former, but you can apparently count President Trump as one of the skeptics.
Charlie Kirk, executive director of the conservative student group Turning Point USA, spoke with Trump at a panel discussion on Thursday.

Their conversation covered the recent changes to the tax code, vocational schools, and political correctness. Kirk also requested advice from the president for the “young patriots and conservatives on campus that support your agenda that are being ridiculed and silenced because administrators are clamping down on free speech.”

The president responded that one or two campuses get all the publicity. (Trump last year raised the idea of revoking federal funds from the University of California at Berkeley following the violent protests against a speech by Milo Yiannopoulos.)

But he appeared to ultimately brush aside Kirk’s premise. He said the “vast majority” of people on campuses “want free speech.”

“If you look at what’s going on with free speech with the super left, with antifa, with all of these characters,” Trump said, “I’ll tell you what, they get a lot of publicity, but you go to the real campuses, and you go all over the country, you go out to the Middle West, you go out even to the coast in many cases, we have a tremendous support. I would say we have majority support. I think it’s highly overblown. Highly overblown.”

Kirk responded that he “totally agreed” before adding that he hears from people who are Trump supporters who feel they aren’t allowed to say as much because of administrators and professors.

Research largely backs up the idea that a majority of college students support free speech. A recent Gallup poll found that 56 percent of college students say protecting free expression is extremely important to society — though there were caveats. In the same poll, 73 percent said they supported campus policies that restrict hate speech.

Trump’s statement also goes against comments made by Justice Department officials. In January a top department official said colleges ought to do more to deal with those who heckle speakers or shut down campus events. The department has also filed at least three statements of interest in cases involving free-speech lawsuits and colleges, following a speech by the attorney general, Jeff Sessions, who assailed colleges that attempt to curb free speech through restrictive rules.