

## Ferguson Prosecutor lectures on grand jury process amid protests



Photo by Amber Garrett

COLUMBIA — Only a select few made it into MU's Hulston Hall to hear St. Louis County Prosecutor Bob McCulloch lecture about grand juries Tuesday night.

Ryan Nely, the co-founder and president of the student chapter of the Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, which hosted the event, said 140 seats were made available.

MU School of Law students, staff and faculty were given the opportunity to register for the event in an email sent March 21. By 3 p.m. Monday, every seat in Hulston Hall's basement auditorium had been snapped up, Nely said.

But that didn't stop about 40 protesters from groups including MU4MikeBrown, Occupy COMO, Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation and Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty from gathering outside the Law School before and during the event to condemn the appearance of the controversial prosecutor.

McCulloch has drawn criticism for his handling of the grand jury that decided not to indict white Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson for shooting Michael Brown, an unarmed black 18-year-old, on Aug. 9.

Black leaders and Brown's parents expressed doubts about McCulloch's impartiality throughout the grand jury process. State Rep. Karla May, D-St. Louis, [expressed her concern in December that McCulloch had "manipulated" the grand jury](#) into a non-indictment.

Members of Occupy COMO and Mid-Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation handed fliers echoing those accusations and condemning the "sneaky process" the Law School used in restricting the event to law students.

"It's of public interest," community activist Traci Wilson-Kleekamp said. "It looks sneaky for them to announce it over spring break and then only have him confirm it a couple of days ago."

MU School of Law Dean Gary Myers denied trying to keep the public in the dark.

"This was a student-initiated and sponsored event that was meant for the Law School students, faculty and staff," Myers said. "The room was at maximum capacity."

MU4MikeBrown, an organization dedicated to "demanding justice for black and brown bodies," according to [its Facebook page](#), was also present. Its members chanted, "Back up, back up; we want freedom, freedom," and voiced anger at the prosecutor's appearance.

Yasmin Younis, a freshman at MU and member of MU4MikeBrown, said she thought it was offensive that McCulloch was asked to speak on campus.

"I'm here because I disagree with racial oppression," Younis said. "I am a minority. I am a woman, I am Middle Eastern, and so I can sympathize with this cause."

In an email announcing the event, Nely said that MAPA was neither endorsing nor condemning of McCulloch and his decisions, but security at Hulston Hall took no chances with those who might disagree with the prosecutor.

The email said no bags would be allowed inside the auditorium for safety reasons, and the building's entrances were locked three hours early.

Nely said that the event was free to attendees and that MAPA did not pay McCulloch for the appearance.

After the event, McCulloch responded to criticisms that he confused grand jurors with too much information during their meetings.

"I don't understand the criticism," McCulloch said. "How can you give a decision-maker too much information?"

McCulloch said he enjoyed the reception he received at the event and appreciated the questions law students, staff and faculty asked.

"People asked tough questions, but they were things that people would want to know," McCulloch said.

*Supervising editor is Austin Huguelet*

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