Team colors on beer cans changes risks

Friday, November 12, 2010

COLUMBIA, Mo., Nov. 12 (UPI) -- U.S. college students who viewed images of beer cans packaged and displayed in university colors say drinking this beer was less dangerous, researchers say.

Chris Loersch, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Missouri in Columbia, says previous research showed belonging to social groups can affect the behaviors or perceptions of individuals -- these people tend to feel a sense of trust and safety within their own groups, or what psychologists call "ingroups."

"In this research, we wanted to determine if certain marketing strategies had an effect on whether individuals felt that a certain behavior -- in this case, drinking beer -- was more or less dangerous." Loersch says in a statement. "We found that when people identify themselves with a certain group, such as a college or university, and if that group 'endorses' a product, people assume the product is safe."

In one of the experiments, University of Missouri students were randomly assigned to view either a standard beer can or a fan can with their college colors, along with other beverages. The study participants rated beer consumption as less dangerous after having seen the fan can compared to the regular beer can, Loersch says.

The study was published in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.
Researchers: Cans make beer inside seem ‘safer’

By Janese Silvey

Kim Dude, director of the University of Missouri Wellness Resource Center, had a bad feeling about the black-and-gold beer cans that debuted in Columbia last fall. The Bud Light “fan cans” created another obstacle in the university’s efforts to curtail student drinking, she said at the time.

Turns out, her fears were not without merit. Two MU researchers have found that students who see beer cans in their school colors believe the alcohol to be safer than beer in other colors.

Bruce Bartholow, an associate professor of psychological sciences, and post-doctoral fellow Chris Loersch conducted three experiments to conclude that students assume products are safe when packaged in their own school colors. Their findings were published recently in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.

“Previous research has consistently demonstrated that people view members of their social groups as trustworthy and safe,” Loersch said in a statement. “Our research indicates that this sense of interpersonal safety for in-group members appears to extend to a product that, via its packaging, conveys cues for group affiliation.”

Dude said the findings surprised her somewhat: She thought students might consider the “fan cans” more fun, but she didn’t realize students might think the beer to be safer.

“I think we just live in a society that attempts to glamorize alcohol and link alcohol to things we enjoy, such as sporting events,” she said this morning. “It makes our job really difficult to try to encourage students to drink in moderation.”

Chancellor Brady Deaton called on Anheuser-Busch, which makes Bud Light, to stop selling the cans.

Despite obstacles, the Wellness Center’s efforts to curtail binge drinking have proved successful, according to student surveys. Over a five-year span, the surveys show a 25 percent decrease in binge drinking, a 71 percent decrease in students buying alcohol without having an ID checked and a 73 percent decrease in underage students getting alcohol from someone they know at a bar.

The results aren’t as positive when it comes to drinking by women, Dude said, adding that her focus this year is on educating them.
MU's efforts on student drinking have garnered national attention. The U.S. Department of Education named the Wellness Resource Center a "model program," a designation given to five universities. It comes with a $130,000 grant. The money will be used to launch a new project to encourage students to intervene when others are engaged in risky behaviors. The project will strengthen partnerships between the Wellness Center and other entities.

Dude credits partnerships for successes on campus, especially Columbia police Chief Ken Burton.

"The data didn't move much until Chief Burton came to town," she said. "The leadership of law enforcement has been significant. We can educate all we can, but we need an environment that supports that good-decision making."

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbiatribune.com.
Verbal aggression may signal depression
Published: Nov. 11, 2010 at 9:39 PM

COLUMBIA, Mo., Nov. 11 (UPI) -- Nursing home residents who began using aggressive language were 69 percent more likely than others to be diagnosed with depression, U.S. researchers say.

Lorraine Phillips of the University of Missouri in Columbia says increased verbal aggression may signal depression in the elderly.

"Depression is currently diagnosed using several methods that emphasize mood symptoms including interviewing and self-reporting of depression symptoms," Phillips said in a statement. "However, since elderly depression may appear with non-mood symptoms, these characteristics identified in this study can help diagnose depression that may be overlooked by traditional screening methods."

Phillips and colleagues found non-mood signs of depression as they analyzed information from the Missouri Minimum Data Set -- a federally mandated clinical assessment of Medicare/Medicaid-certified nursing home residents -- on more than 14,000 nursing home residents age 65 and older not diagnosed with depression when the study began.

Non-mood depression-associated changes noted in the study, published in the Journal of Gerontological Nursing, included:

-- Urinary incontinence
-- Increased pain
-- Weight loss
-- Changes in care needs
-- Reduced cognitive ability
-- Decline in performance of daily living activities such as dressing one's self.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU celebrated veterans, new center and history project

By Sarah Tucker
November 11, 2010 | 7:32 p.m. CST

COLUMBIA — A lone table sat opposite the podium in Memorial Union’s Stotler Lounge on Thursday.

Covered with a white tablecloth, the table was empty except for a few carefully chosen items. An upside-down glass sat next to a plate containing only a paper lemon slice. A single salt shaker and a red rose in a vase tied with a red ribbon were the only other items allowed on the table. The table was set for one, set for a soldier who would never show.

Called the Missing Man Table, it’s a symbolic memorial to prisoners of war and soldiers missing in action. And it was just one way MU recognized veterans and their families for their service and sacrifices on Thursday.

MU students and staff, veterans, and state and local officials gathered to recognize veterans and celebrate the collaboration on the Missouri Veterans Oral History Project.

Regardless of the war, “our veterans have a story to tell, and that plays a unique part in the history of our nation,” MU Chancellor Brady Deaton said.

State Rep. Jill Schupp, D-Creve Coeur, recognized the people and organizations that helped start the Missouri Veterans Oral History Project after state budget cuts brought the original Missouri Veterans Stories project to a halt.

“The state had good intentions” but, in light of the budget crisis, simply could not maintain funding for the program, Schupp said.
Through the collaboration of the Midwest Litigation Society, Columbia College, MU and local military service organizations, the stories of Missouri veterans will not be lost.

“What better way to remember the sacrifice of the men and women who have given all than this project?” Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid said.

The group also celebrated the grand opening of the MU Veterans Center. Originally part of the Admissions Office, Deaton helped lead the push to make it a freestanding office.

“He wanted to make the campus more veteran friendly,” Veterans Center Director Carol Fleisher said.

Fleisher recognized faculty, staff, students and the Mizzou Student Veterans Association for helping to make the center and MU “more individualized, more friendly” for student veterans.

Army Brig. Gen. Marty Robinson, who along with Schupp was presented with a special coin recognizing their service to veterans at MU, admired the new office.

Robinson liked the new facilities and the noticeable support MU gives to its veterans.

“This facility speaks volumes about the support your university gives,” Robinson said. "You have a center dedicated to the veterans. You’ve given it a priority.”
The Maneater

MU cuts ribbon on new Veterans Center

The new space is in the basement of Memorial Union's north tower.

By Christine Soucy

Published Nov. 12, 2010

Veteran James Langley discusses the new Veterans Center with Barbara Schneider on Thursday afternoon at Memorial Union. The center, located in Memorial Union South, now serves as a link between the school and student veterans.

MU memorialized Veterans' Day this year with the ribbon cutting of the new Veterans Center.

Veterans Center Director Carol Fleisher said the staff at the center, which is located in the basement of Memorial Union, mainly hires former active duty and combatant veterans. The goal is for student veterans to feel at home and part of a community.

"You can physically see their shoulders relax as they talk military ease and begin to feel at home," Fleisher said.

The Veterans Center works with veterans and service members who are MU students, faculty, staff and prospective students. Center staff helps to certify students for education benefits, works with students being deployed or returning from a tour of duty, helps with access to health care and counseling services, assists with employment searches and provides references or assistance in anything else the veteran requires.

"It really is a full service facility," Fleisher said.
Fleisher said the center does its best to take care of any needs the veteran might have.

The new facility will enable the center to reach out to more veterans and better accommodate those who come seeking assistance. Fleisher said the program has a great deal of potential.

The Veterans Center is one of four in the U.S. that is free standing and not a branch of an admissions or financial aid office. The center was formerly a part of the admissions office. It is actively helping other schools set up similar programs as well as doing outreach to military bases.

MU has come a long way in its treatment of veterans. David Fleisher, a former Navy pediatrician and husband of Carol Fleisher, said he remembers a time when universities were not so considerate toward veterans. He told a story of how, when a veteran came to his professor to tell him he was being deployed, the veteran was threatened with failure because he would be missing the final exam. The professor told him to call up the Marine Corps and tell them he would be late.

In his opening speech, Chancellor Brady Deaton spoke about doing everything he could to make MU more veteran-friendly. He said 320 veterans attend MU and he wishes to revive the tradition of hat tipping when walking through the arch of Memorial Union to show support and appreciation toward the veterans.

Carol Fleisher said in all her time working for MU’s Veterans Center, she has not come across any university staff member who has been anything but obliging toward the veterans.

Part of the Veterans' Day celebrations included a presentation about the up and coming Veterans History Project.

State Rep. Jill Schupp, D-Crève Coeur, initiated the Veterans History Project. In her speech at the reception, she said the project is all about honoring veterans, those with stories from the past and those with stories playing out right now.

The School of Journalism is offering course credit to those sharing the veterans’ stories. The project will document the accounts of Missouri’s war veterans for future generations.

Deaton supports the project and said in his speech it is important to know the human dimension as well as the historical. The project will be a tribute to all veterans and tell the stories of Missouri’s men and women in uniform.

The annual wreath-laying event proceeded the ribbon cutting and the project presentation and honored all U.S. veterans.
Veterans Day events include commemoration, parade

Soldiers expressed their feelings on the most infamous days in American history.

By Steven Dickherber

Published Nov. 12, 2010

Veteran Fredrick M. Wilson holds back tears while reading a letter from a soldier who is now deceased to those attending the Veterans Day Ceremony on Thursday at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital. During the ceremony, students from Jefferson Junior High School and Rock Bridge High School were awarded for essays they wrote about the meaning of Veterans Day.

A Veterans Day breakfast, parade and commemoration honored those who have served or are serving in the military Thursday.

Truman Memorial Veterans’ Hospital hosted the commemoration, which featured keynote speaker Lt. Cpl. Michael Wilson and an essay contest award ceremony.

“Instead of a day off, we all need to understand the significance and sacrifices of those who have served in uniform,” Wilson said. “In times of war and in times of peace, men and women throughout the country leave their families and stand ready to defend freedom.”

Before the ceremony, a pancake breakfast was held for veterans at Columbia’s Veterans of Foreign Wars post. After the ceremony, a parade moved through the city to the Boone County
courthouse in downtown Columbia where an honor guard held a flag ceremony for those in attendance.

The room was filled with a mixture of students, veterans and hospital employees who came to show support and remember those who had sacrificed their lives. Veterans in the crowd cheered out occasionally when speakers lent their support.

"The staff and myself here at the (hospital) believe every day is Veteran’s Day," Hospital Director Sallic Houser-Hanfelder said.

In his speech, Wilson told the audience there was no such thing as an uninjured veteran and the definition has possibly become blurred during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"(A veteran is) someone who loves their country, someone who makes a pact with his fellow soldier in arms, someone who’s willing to serve to give up their lives for others," Wilson said.

Leo Blakley, a veteran who volunteered to serve in the Navy during World War II said his decision to serve is different than those who volunteer for the military today. He said when the 1941 attacks at Pearl Harbor occurred, the decision to do the right thing wasn’t as conflicted as today where he believes mistakes have been made by those in charge.

"You have to perceive that there is a problem," Blakley said. "It’s just a matter of doing what you think is right."

After the speech, two essay contest award ceremonies were held for junior high and senior high students. Isabelle Bouchard took first place in the junior high division and Courtney Engle earned first place in the senior high division.

In closing his speech, Wilson read the letter of a soldier from Illinois serving in Afghanistan. The soldier recognized the corruption and desperation permeating society but knew his service protected America from the horrors he saw overseas. The soldier expressed his desire to see his family at home but accepted the sacrifice he may be called to make. He was killed one week later.

"Remember that freedom is not free, we are all here because of sacrifices of those in uniform now and in the past," Wilson said.
Deaton urges tipping hat to veterans

Chancellor wants to bring back dormant tradition.

By Janese Silvey

The bronze plaque near the doors of Memorial Union North caught Ryan Stander’s eye Thursday as he passed through the building’s archway.

Stander, who’s pursuing a master’s in history at the University of Missouri, read it, paused, looked around and took off his plaid beret, not knowing a reporter was watching.

When the Tribune caught up with him, Stander admitted it was the first time he’d ever read the 1926 plaque charging men and women to tip their hat to honor the 117 names of University of Missouri students-turned-World War I casualties etched above them.

The timing was ideal. Less than an hour before, MU Chancellor Brady Deaton publicly challenged the campus community to bring back the tradition. Not wearing a hat? That’s OK, Deaton said: Just salute.

“I call on you faculty, staff, students and administrators at the university to resurrect that tradition and tip their hat or salute to recognize the incredible sacrifices of the veterans who have served our nation and have paid,” he said. “We owe them that respect.”

Deaton later told the Tribune his charge was somewhat impromptu and that he still needs to sit down with the student affairs office and figure out logistics of bringing back a long-forgotten tradition.

It will be tough. Even the some 100 veterans, administrators and students gathered at Memorial Union yesterday to celebrate Veterans Day seemed to have forgotten Deaton’s request as they filed out of the building afterward. A couple of people stopped to salute but most did not.

And students passing through the archway seemed too occupied with cell phones or hurrying to classes to notice the hat-tipping plaque, or the etched names of men — many not much older than themselves — who died in a Great War some 92 years ago.

The call to resurrect the tradition falls in line with Mizzou’s other efforts to become a more military-friendly campus. During a string of ceremonies Thursday, campus leaders celebrated the opening of a new Veterans Center, a room downstairs at Memorial Union North donated by the
College of Engineering. The center will serve as a one-stop shop for veterans transitioning to college life.

Also Thursday, state Rep. Jill Schupp, D-Creve Coeur, joined MU administrators to introduce the new Missouri Veterans History Project, an oral history program salvaged by lawmakers and community groups after legislators cut state funds for the project.

Schupp and others, including Columbia Rep. Stephen Webber, joined forces with MU to recruit journalism students to record interviews with aging veterans. The program is in need of more volunteers to be trained to expand those efforts and get more veterans from across the state, Schupp said.

During the afternoon ceremony, Mayor Bob McDavid praised the effort and said war history, although tough to hear sometimes, needs to be preserved.

There’s “no better way to remember what happened than getting stories from veterans,” he said. McDavid warned that there are stories from the battlefield veterans likely won’t share but said interviewers should press for information anyway.

“We ask you to tell us even stuff you don’t think we’re prepared to hear,” McDavid told veterans. While war is a “dark history,” he said, “it’s a history that reminds us that peace is determined by the men and women willing to put on uniforms and fight for what we have here.”

Reach Janese Silvey at 573-815-1705 or e-mail jsilvey@columbia missouri.com
MU awarded $1 million grant to improve care for growing elderly population

New geriatric medicine training project supported by Donald W. Reynolds Foundation

As the first baby boomers begin turning 65 years old next year, the University of Missouri will launch a project to improve care for the rapidly growing elderly population. MU's innovative training effort is supported by a new $1 million grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

MU will enhance geriatric medicine education by offering several new programs for medical students and resident physicians. The programs will emphasize teamwork training and the patient-centered "medical home" model of care. The model involves close collaboration among multiple care providers, which is especially important to elderly patients with multiple chronic illnesses.

"The burgeoning number of older adults compels us to enhance the geriatric care skills of all who are involved in providing health care to elders," said Steven Zweig, MD, the project's principal investigator and director of the MU Interdisciplinary Center on Aging. "Teamwork is essential, and at MU we have the skilled leadership, enthusiastic faculty members and innovative program designs to make us successful."

Zweig also leads MU's family and community medicine department, which is highly ranked for its success in improving health care delivery and education. He and his department colleagues were awarded their first geriatric medicine education grant from the Reynolds Foundation in 2003. MU is one of 10 universities to receive the new round of funding from the Reynolds Foundation.

"The new grant will strengthen our internationally admired education program for students by giving them more opportunities to learn about interdisciplinary teamwork and the complexities of caring for older adults," said Michael Hosukawa, EdD, the project's co-principal investigator.
and a professor of family and community medicine at MU. “In addition, physicians completing training in family medicine and internal medicine will learn more about interdisciplinary care in office and hospital settings, with the goal of improving quality, safety and satisfaction for patients.”

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation is a national philanthropic organization founded in 1954 by the late media entrepreneur for whom it is named. Headquartered in Las Vegas, Nevada, it has committed over $210 million nationwide to its Aging and Quality of Life programs.
Forsee warns of tuition increases at University of Missouri

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

At his town hall meeting, University of Missouri President Gary Forsee did not mention how British students were rioting in London over tripled college tuition.

Perhaps he should have. It might have made his own warnings of coming increases in tuition a little less ominous.

At the meeting Thursday at the University of Missouri-Kansas City campus, Forsee could not guess at the amount, but said even a 10 percent jump would not be enough to cover losses if the state cuts the higher education budget in the 8 to 15 percent range as some predict.

“We won’t put the cuts all on the backs of students,” Forsee said, softening the blow. “That math just won’t work.”

A boost in tuition also would be accompanied by more spending reductions across the university system’s four campuses, which already have been tightening belts through salary freezes and discontinued programs.

One example of the financial pain was heard in audience questions about possible changes to the system’s pension plan. Forsee said new employees probably would pay more into the plan, because “there isn’t enough money” to continue with the current setup.

The challenge is to deliver high-quality education without pricing out low- and middle-income families, he said.

“As we consider tuition increases, I want to keep in mind that the student financial aid picture has also been challenged,” he said.

Funding for the state’s need-based student financial aid program was slashed from $83 million to $33 million this year.

He talked about the mission to increase graduation rates, collaborate more with other universities and seek new funding sources.
For two years, while big slices came out of other departments, Gov. Jay Nixon kept the carving knife away from higher education, so tuitions mostly held steady. Now, state universities, which get about 11 percent of the overall Missouri budget, expect their turn.

"I anticipate institutions will take an 8 to 10 percent cut, but a worse-case scenario will be 15 percent or higher," said Paul Wagner, state deputy commissioner of higher education.

By law, the public schools would face financial penalties for raising tuition above inflation, which currently is about 1 percent. Forsee said the system planned to request a penalty waiver.

Tuition increases will vary among the campuses, a first, Forsee said.

Next month the governor's office will formulate revenue estimates that form the basis for the governor's budget early next year. Forsee expects a final announcement in January.
EPA might face a lawsuit over water rules

Local entities say options are few.

By Jodie Jackson Jr.

Thursday, November 11, 2010

A potential legal battle is brewing over a likely federal mandate to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff that reaches Hinkson Creek.

Officials and attorneys representing Boone County, the city of Columbia and the University of Missouri will huddle tomorrow morning in a closed meeting at city hall to discuss possible legal action against the Environmental Protection Agency. The three entities are joint holders of a municipal separate storm sewer system permit that allows them to discharge stormwater runoff into local creeks.

The EPA is under a federal court order to establish a total maximum daily load — or TMDL — to regulate the amount of pollution that the Hinkson can receive while still meeting water quality standards. The Hinkson is one of 10 water bodies in Boone County that are on the EPA’s list of “impaired waters” that fail to meet standards of the Clean Water Act.

The Hinkson TMDL was due at the end of 2009. Dec. 31 this year is the final deadline. Until mid-October, the state Department of Natural Resources was charged with establishing the TMDL, which used stormwater runoff as a “surrogate” or substitute for a defined, identified pollutant or source of pollution.

The TMDL draft presented last fall by DNR called for keeping two-thirds of stormwater runoff from reaching Hinkson Creek. One Columbia engineering firm estimated that the equivalent of 58 million rain barrels would be needed to capture that amount of runoff. A revised draft this past spring called for only a slightly lower runoff reduction target.

But stormwater managers and other water quality advocates — including developers and environmentalists alike — said the trouble with that approach was that TMDLs are supposed to target a specific pollutant. A TMDL based on stormwater runoff in general could require a local government to adopt policies and spend money without any scientific evidence the measures would actually improve water quality.
EPA took over the TMDL process last month and finished a draft that was released for a 30-day public comment period on Oct. 29. Miller said local stormwater engineers deemed the new draft “maybe a little worse” than the ones produced by DNR.

DNR officials have said they identified a number of pollutants in the creek but could not target a single culprit — or “a smoking gun” — to zero in on.

Columbia City Manager Bill Watkins recently said legal action might be the best way to stop what could be a “prohibitively expensive” fix to the Hinkson’s woes.

“I guess my strategy would be to tie it up in court for a couple of years and wait for a new administration,” Watkins said. “That’s just my personal opinion.”

From the county’s perspective, Southern District Boone County Commissioner Karen Miller said the commission does not have the needed authority “to keep the crap out of the creek” if EPA imposed regulations spelled out in the TMDL.

Boone County Stormwater Coordinator Georganne Bowman said most of the county’s concerns still aren’t being addressed in the latest TMDL draft.

“That’s disconcerting,” she said. “We all know the Hinkson is having flashy” rain “events over the last few years especially. More than likely the aquatic life is impaired.” But without knowing more about sediment moving through the stream or the health of stream banks, the TMDL is “just taking a stab in the dark.”

Miller said legal action could be “inevitable” if EPA insists on using runoff as a surrogate for an identified pollutant.

“We really didn’t want to go there,” Miller said. “I really think it’s a waste of money either way.”

Reach Jodie Jackson Jr. at 573-815-1713 or e-mail jjackson@columbiatribune.com.
MU touts increased minority enrollment as retention rates lag

Scholarships for minorities have not increased since 2001.

By Luke Udstuen

Published Nov. 12, 2010

As it has in past years, MU touted the 2010 freshman class as the most diverse ever. Yet, MU retains less minority students after their first year and even less graduate in six years than white students.

For the past eight years, black students had a six-year graduation rate at an average of 11.46 percentage points less than white students, according to the MU Registrar's Office. Since 2001, retention rates of white students have been higher than those of black students for all except two years. The numbers hit their biggest disparity for that period in 2008, when white students were 9 percentage points higher. MU minority retention rates are higher than several Big 12 schools, but still are not equal to white students.

Black students are also the largest underrepresented group at MU, meaning the number of black students at MU is disproportionate to the number of black residents in Missouri.

In 2009 the national average six-year graduation rate for black students was 38.9 percent, according to the US Department of Education. MU's six-year graduation rate for black students was 58 percent in 2010. MU's rate is significantly higher than the national average but still falls well below the MU white student rate, 70.4 percent.

"I don't feel like it's always the university's fault because it also starts within high school," Legion of Black Collegians President Lisa White said. "It depends on whether communities shine a light on college being highly necessary."

Josh Travis, Missouri Students Association presidential candidate and junior, said he has spoken frequently this semester about the culture on MU's campus. Many students he spoke with see a sort of self-sustained segregation on campus.

"It's not always on the basis of race or ethnicity. one of the glaring ones is Greek vs. non-Greek," Travis said. "A lot of students feel marginalized when it comes to university traditions, particularly and most recently in mind, Homecoming."
Changes in measuring diversity
In 1981, percentages were all that mattered. A federal mandate required MU to increase African-American enrollment to mirror the state population of Missouri.

According to a 2009 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau, this would mean 11.5 percent of students at MU would be African-American. That year, 6.1 percent of MU students reported their ethnicity as African-American.

But as the years have worn on, a series of supreme court cases have ruled both racial quota systems and racial proportion equivalencies unconstitutional and thus changed the way MU looks at diversity. In other words, MU can not admit certain students on lesser qualifications in order to equalize racial distribution. All students admitted must be equally well-qualified for university study.

"It's important to understand that diversity in numbers is not necessarily sufficient," Chief Diversity Officer Roger Worthington said.

Worthington said although some still look at diversity with a mindset similar to that of the 1970s, diversity now means something bigger than fulfilling a quota.

"Because of that, I think there's a fair amount of controversy related to what should or shouldn't be done from every perspective," Worthington said.

He said MU focuses instead on creating an inclusive campus climate, keeping in mind campus diversity is often associated with positive academic outcomes.

When compared with the rest of the country, MU's retention rates are among the best in the country when comparing white retention rates to minority retention rates, Worthington said.

"That doesn't mean there's not still a problem and that there's not still work to be done," Worthington said.

Free Money vs. Retention
MU offers four types of scholarships targeted toward students of an underrepresented in higher education groups. The amount MU offers for each scholarship has not increased since 2001, with the exception of a study abroad travel voucher offered for two years. The total cost of tuition and required fees at MU for a full-time in-state student has increased by $717.20 since 2007, according to data gathered by the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

"What has been frustrating is that the cost of education, the cost of living -- all of those things continue to rise and financial aid stays stagnant," Travis said. He receives a Brooks Scholarship, one of the four scholarships offered.

Money is tight across campus, though. Since fiscal year 2001, the state has reduced its funding of MU's operating budget from a little more than 60 percent to 37 percent for the fiscal year 2011.
Vice Provost for Enrollment Management Ann Korschgen said minority student aid is helpful but not sufficient in attracting students to MU.

"We hope to increase scholarship offerings in the future through fund-raising but at the time, our scholarship budget is very tight given the increasing enrollment and the financial need of our students," Korschgen said in an e-mail.

The mystery in causality
For the first time this fall, MU will implement a new program to gain knowledge on why some students chose to continue their education at MU.

"As an institution, we've been going under a process of analyzing some of the data we do have more carefully, because there are a wide number of factors that influence a student's persistence to graduation," Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Jim Spain said.

MU will send a survey to students who are eligible to return to MU in the spring but have not registered.

"We're going to begin to ask our students who are leaving," Spain said.

A faculty member in the College of Education is developing the survey based on literature that has evaluated student success, Spain said.

"By better understanding why, then we can better develop programs and strategies on campus that are more supportive and provide a better infrastructure of student support than we presently have," Spain said.

Although minority student retention rates begin to indicate campus climate, the story is much larger.

"We don't admit students to the university with the assumption that it's acceptable that any percentage is not going to graduate," Worthington said.
Editorial:

Minority retention tells the real story

Published Nov. 12, 2010

No tags for this article.

MU advertisements with statistics regarding minority enrollment can be misleading: while enrollment statistics are increasing every year, graduation rates are not — a fact we think is both unacceptable and changeable.

Although embracing increasing diversity is definitely a good thing, finding the areas of disconnect causing students to leave the university before graduation should be a top priority of the MU Registrar’s Office. For example, the graduation rates for white students has been recorded at 70.4 percent as the rates for black students lag behind at 58 percent.

Although black students at MU are graduating at a rate better than the national average of 38.9 percent, we shouldn’t see that large of a gap. Rather, we should be striving for equality. Black students are also the most underrepresented minority in the university, and the state population percentage is still above the university enrollment percentage. MU has a better representation of minority students than most schools in the Big 12, but that doesn’t make our graduation gap anymore acceptable. Whether the problem is rooted in funding, majors offered or a basic cultural difference, we’re confident the problem is one that can be fixed.