Obama hands out grades for KC-area higher ed

During his Tuesday night State of the Union address, President Barack Obama promised Americans that his administration would release a “college scorecard.”

This will let parents and students to compare schools in terms of costs, graduation rate, loan default rate, average amount borrowed and employment, he said.

“Through tax credits, grants and better loans, we’ve made college more affordable for millions of students and families over the last few years,” Obama said in his address. “But taxpayers can’t keep on subsidizing higher and higher costs for higher education. Colleges must do their part to keep costs down, and it’s our job to make sure they do.”

A couple of criteria to note about how Kansas City-area colleges and universities fared:
Graduation rates consist of full-time students who graduate within 150 percent of expected time for completion; loan default rate is in comparison to the national rate of 13.4 percent; and repayment rate is based on the federal loan payment rate over 10 years. The scorecard rates some figures from high to low compared with national averages.

The scorecard does not provide information on employment for each college, but it eventually will share how many grads get jobs, what kind of jobs they get and how much they typically earn.

University of Kansas
Average cost: $14,768 (medium), increased 12.1 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 60.7 percent (high)
Loan default rate: 4.3 percent
Median borrowing: $18,625, or $214.34 a month (medium)

University of Missouri
Average cost: $15,759 (medium), increased 10.1 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 68.9 percent (high)
Loan default rate: 3.9 percent
Median borrowing: $19,403, or $223.29 a month (medium-high)

University of Missouri-Kansas City
Average cost: $19,315 (medium), increased 16.1 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 41.3 percent (medium)
Loan default rate: 10.5 percent
Median borrowing: $16,848, or $193.89 a month (medium-low)

Johnson County Community College
Average cost: $9,189 (medium), decreased 5.2 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 17.1 percent (low)
Loan default rate: 18.3 percent
Median borrowing: $5,717, or $65.79 a month (low)

Metropolitan Community College-Business & Technology
Average cost: N/A
Graduation rate: 21.4 percent (medium-low)
Loan default rate: 16.8 percent
Median borrowing: $5,800, or $66.75 a month (low)

Grantham University
Average cost: $12,104 (low), price remained same from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 13.3 percent (low)
Loan default rate: N/A
Median borrowing: $9,500, or $109.33 a month
Kansas City Kansas Community College

Average cost: $14,342 (medium-high), decreased 12.8 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 23.4 percent (medium)
Loan default rate: 12.3 percent
Median borrowing: $8,000, or $92.06 a month (medium-low)

DeVry University-Missouri

Average cost: $24,795 (high), increased 4.3 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 17.2 percent (low)
Loan default rate: 24.1 percent
Median borrowing: $19,750, or $227.28 a month (medium-high)

Baker University

Average cost: $19,445 (medium-high), increased 9.3 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 54.8 percent (medium-high)
Loan default rate: 6.6 percent
Median borrowing: $21,000, or $241.67 a month (high)

Rockhurst University

Average cost: $18,728 (medium), increased 12.1 percent from 2007 to 2009
Graduation rate: 74.1 percent (high)
Loan default rate: 6.3 percent
Median borrowing: $13,828, or $159.13 a month (medium)

William Jewell College

Average cost: $21,467 (high)
Graduation rate: 62.9 percent (high)
Loan default rate: 4.4 percent

Median borrowing: $18,750, or $215.78 a month (medium-high)
J. KARL MILLER: Hiring should be based on merit, not controversy

By J. Karl Miller
February 13, 2013 | 6:00 a.m. CST

I have viewed the controversy over the possible hiring of Dr. Larry James for a "senior administration position" with the MU College of Education with a mixture of amusement, disbelief and disappointment. I have no problem with the individual or collective right to dissent on any issue deemed destructive/embarrassing to the university; however, any protest should go beyond considering rumor, innuendo, emotion and disputing of investigative findings to be considered an informed protest.

James, a psychiatrist and a former colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, was assigned as the chief psychologist at both the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and the Guantanamo Bay Detention Center in Cuba. Both facilities have been the subject of sensationalized and often biased reporting, a circumstance tailor-made to inflame and galvanize the left and other fringe activists and organizations.

The Abu Ghraib publicity flap in 2003 and early 2004 was indeed deplorable in that it soiled the U.S. military’s reputation for adherence to good order and discipline by enabling the mistreatment of prisoners. While this conduct was, in a word, reprehensible, a cadre of low-ranking military police in a U.S. Army Reserve battalion were charged in the case.

The culprits in the chain of command were punished appropriately, supervision and accountability rules were stiffened, and the appropriate apologies issued. Nevertheless, the media chattering classes and human rights activists were unsatisfied that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and President George W. Bush were not charged as derelict in duty.

Since its creation, the detention center at Guantanamo Bay has been an imbroglio marked by opposing views between the executive and legislative branches, censure by human rights organizations, the International Red Cross, the American Civil Liberties Union, the leftist bent of academia, talking heads and a phalanx of semi-professional activists. The protests have included allegations of torture, the difference between torture and enhanced
interrogation procedures, defaming Islam, the food, a lack of or inept legal counsel, denying habeas corpus, failure to observe the rules of war for prisoners of war and jurisdictional concerns.

Guantanamo Bay is an almost universally unpopular, but undeniably necessary, confinement facility to keep not only U.S. citizens but also other nationalities safe from unreconstructed terrorists. The majority of the issues have been adjudicated or otherwise answered. Owing to the sensitive security requirements, the hostile nature of the detainees and human nature, there have been instances of misbehavior by U.S. personnel.

Critics of the Guantanamo Bay and other terrorist detention facilities do not take into consideration the stressful conditions, physical danger faced by guards, pressure from outside sources, e.g., a hostile foreign press, human rights organizations, geopolitical troublemakers and well-intentioned but ill-informed individuals and special interests.

In the case of James, he has been accused of condoning and permitting torture, beatings, religious and sexual humiliation, sleep deprivation and prolonged solitary confinement at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay alike. These charges were filed by such entities as the International Human Rights Clinic of Harvard Law School's Human Rights Program. In addition, he was the subject of two formal ethics complaints in states he is licensed to practice, Louisiana and Ohio, both for failing to protect the rights of prisoners of war.

Basically launched as part and parcel of the organized witch hunt against the Bush administration's alleged reign of torture and dehumanizing of prisoners and detainees, the allegations against James could be viewed as merely an adjunct of that effort. All of the charges against James have been dismissed.

The arguments against confirmation of James demand an understanding of reality. As a medical officer, then Col. James was not in any command authority nor was he in the chain of command. As a staff officer, his responsibility was one of a professional psychologist and command adviser. When one considers the totality of the military and civilian oversight demanded by the media, the American Red Cross and Human Rights organizations, it is not difficult to understand the dismissal of the litany of charges against James.

The local opposition to James' appointment is organized by a small band of the "usual suspects" who stand ready to protest at the drop of a hat. While they are exercising their inalienable right to do so, their dissent is based upon a wide range of accusations, largely unsupported by evidence and summarily dismissed by proper authority. James' opponents,
faculty, non-faculty and students alike have one thing in common — few, if any, have ever visited Guantanamo Bay or Abu Ghraib.

I would hope that the decision to hire either James or Matthew Burns would be based on merit alone — that the best man for the job be brought aboard.

And, that the protest in opposition to James be afforded the approximate weight of that offered by Franklin D. Roosevelt’s vice president, John Nance Garner, of the worth of his position — that of “a cup of warm spit” — or words to that effect.

J. Karl Miller retired as a colonel in the Marine Corps. He is a Columbia resident and can be reached via email at JKarlUSMC@aol.com. Questions? Contact Opinion editor Elizabeth Conner.
UM System President Tim Wolfe reflects on first year

President going on tour with message.

By Karyn Spory

Tim Wolfe, a University of Missouri alumnus, knew the university was special, but over the past year as UM System president, he has learned how important the four-campus system is to the state.

"It's more than the 75,000 students that we have on our four campuses that we teach to be leaders in their given field, the lifesaving research we conduct in the labs across our four campuses, the patients we heal and cure, the outreach we deliver to every county in the state or the economic benefits that we bring as a whole, it's the work our universities do is really undeniable to all 6 million Missourians," Wolfe said yesterday as he reflected on his past year in office.

Wolfe plans to begin traveling across the state in the coming weeks to deliver a new "Show-Me" value message that reminds Missourians that "education is the gateway to prosperity" as well as the value of the ever-growing four campuses within the system.

"We're educating record numbers of students," Wolfe said. "In the past 12 years, our enrollment has grown by 19,000 students — the equivalent of another campus that would rank third overall in the state of Missouri based on the number of students."

As undergraduate growth has increased 90 percent over the past 12 years, tuition has had to increase, he said.

"We often make difficult tradeoffs to keep tuition affordable to students. The results of our hard work over the last five years have seen our average increase of tuition is 2.3 percent," Wolfe said. "If you look at the surrounding states over that same period of time, the average tuition increase is 6 percent."

The curators recently approved a 1.7 percent increase for in-state tuition. Wolfe said the strategic planning will help the universities navigate where those valuable resources go.
"The strategic planning will drive what resources we need where to accomplish the objectives as defined by each of the four campuses," Wolfe added.

Last year, Harry Tyrer, professor of electrical and computer engineer, said he had concerns about Wolfe not having a background in higher education, but he urged his colleagues to "give him a chance." A year later, Tyrer said he feels Wolfe has "done well."

"I think it's gone well for him, and I think it has gone well for the university," Tyrer said. "We've had some good state funding, which we haven't had for a while, and that's been positive."

Tyrer also noted Wolfe has demonstrated an ability to learn and work with the facility. "He has made changes that, from what I can tell, have been for the good," Tyrer added.

When asked what have been some of his highs and lows over the past year, Wolfe said changing from a business vernacular to academic has given him some trouble. Early in his tenure, Wolfe had referred to students as "customers." However, Wolfe said the past year had been a great learning experience.

One of those learning experiences was the University of Missouri Press. In May, Wolfe announced he was closing the press. The decision drew backlash from professionals in the publishing industry, and a "Save the UM Press" campaign drew thousands of supporters. Eventually, Wolfe reversed course on the closure. Instead, Wolfe agreed to simply transfer management of the press from the UM System to the MU campus.

"I believe the decision we made in terms of moving the University Press closer to the academic research mission here on the MU campus was the right decision. How we went about it could have improved in terms of bringing more people into the conversation to make that transition a little smoother," Wolfe said.

Overall, Wolfe has found it a pleasure to be back on campus.

"What we do at the University of Missouri and our four campuses is special. We have the ability to change people's lives and in a very positive way," Wolfe said.
MOOC

A disruptive development

By Henry J. Waters III

Colleges and universities use recommendations of the American Council on Education to decide whether to offer credit for nontraditional courses.

A big step out of the box is being taken by the council as it approves degree credit for five undergraduate courses offered by Coursera, a company that is changing the face of American higher education.

Coursera provides "massive open online courses" (MOOCs) from leading universities at no charge but, so far, without credit earned.

A growing number of courses are offered for credit by individual institutions. If MOOCs become similarly available, the landscape will change that much more.

**Recently the University of Missouri announced a program slated to cost more than $2 million aimed at expanding its online offerings.** Every college or university of any size is preoccupied with the potential impact of this distance learning challenge.

The worry is obvious. If students can get a good credentialed education without spending time and money on a college campus, brick-and-mortar institutions are threatened. The impact in this college town could be substantial.

Leaders of traditional campuses have two lines of defense. They must enhance and monetize their own online programs, and they must emphasize their geographic "sense of place," meaning the unique value students can receive only by physically being on campus.

Coursera and its cousins represent a new trend that is beginning to put the best teachers in control of their own professional destiny. Superstars can negotiate deals to be paid in large part based on the online audience they attract. The best-known universities in the nation and their best teachers are moving in this direction.
The burgeoning world of online higher education will make traditional educators scramble. This is a classic example of disruptive technology that can’t be ignored and can change the world. College administrators and boards, including those based here in Columbia, will want to pay close attention.
'Hovering' Moms May Take Fun Out of Play

Preschoolers in study played most cheerfully when mothers were warm but non-interfering

By Barbara Bronson Gray
HealthDay Reporter

WEDNESDAY, Feb. 13 (HealthDay News) -- Even something as simple as play can be complicated: A new study shows that mothers who try to tell their young children how to play with their toys can turn their kids off, at least in the short run.

The happiest children had two things going for them, the study found. They had the least amount of interference from their moms as they used their toys, and their mothers demonstrated what the researchers describe as "warmth" -- a gentle voice, a big smile and a dash of encouragement.

Children with the more "directive" mothers tended to respond with anger, throwing a toy away after a mother offered it to them or rejecting it outright and whining or crying in annoyance.

The research shows the danger of being overinvolved in what a child is doing, said study author Jean Ispa, a professor of human development and family studies at the University of Missouri, in Columbia. "We need to allow them to make decisions about what they'll play with, how they'll play and the pace of play," she said.

But Ispa cautioned that her research doesn't suggest parents should completely ignore a child who is playing. "If a child is doing the same thing, day after day, you might want to suggest something more complex, but do it in a kind and respectful way, so the kid still feels it's really [him or her] in charge."
The study, published Feb. 4 in the journal *Parenting: Science and Practice*, analyzed interactions among more than 1,300 pairs of mothers and children videotaped while the children were playing in 15-minute sessions.

The children were 1, 2, 3 and 5 years old, and the mothers whites, blacks and Hispanics (Mexican-Americans) -- were all participants in a federal study on Early Head Start. At each age level, the mothers were given a different bag of toys and told the children could do anything they wanted with toys, but the kids had to play with each one.

The study noted such factors as the mother's education level, the child's gender, and whether the mother became pregnant as a teenager, to be sure they didn't interfere with the results of the study.

The researchers found that white mothers were the least likely to direct their children, and black mothers were the most likely to do so. Hispanic mothers showed the steepest decline in in being directive after the first play session.

Ispa admitted she was surprised to see a high level of interference in the children's play by black mothers. "I had thought that kind of directiveness wasn't working well in white families, but now we know it may not be working in other ethnicities, too," she said.

Dr. Andrew Adesman, chief of developmental and behavioral pediatrics at the Cohen Children's Medical Center of New York, said the study "meticulously analyzes some nice data and then tells us what we already knew."

He went on to explain that when it comes to parenting, less is more.

"Children are sometimes happiest when parents are less directive in terms of their play," he said. "Children often enjoy playing in ways we might not understand and what may seem inappropriate or illogical from a parent's perspective."

Adesman pointed out that while the study identifies some real differences between parenting styles among different ethnicities and how those factors may affect children, studying play is just a snapshot of what occurs in a household on a daily basis. "But that said, I don't think the study conclusions are artifact," he added.

Ispa recommends that parents provide children with toys like blocks that allow kids to use their creativity and imagination. "Show them some things you can do with them, but then really let them guide what's going on. If a kid is having difficulty, suggest something, but then always move back and let them take over," she advised.

Could this study and Ispa's suggestion about stepping back and letting children ultimately take the reins apply to older kids? Ispa said she is concerned about parents not learning to let go and not permitting their teenagers and college-age kids to fail. "It's not a great thing in the long run," she said. "It really doesn't strengthen them."
While this study only goes as far as kindergarten, a new study sheds light on how a high level of parental hovering may affect children as they get older.

Research published Feb. 9 in the *Journal of Child and Family Studies* showed that college students with controlling mothers and fathers -- often referred to as helicopter parents -- are less satisfied with their lives and more likely to be depressed.

**More information**

To learn more about child development and independence, see the U.S. National Library of Medicine.
Happily married couples are healthy

Christine Proulx, assistant professor in the University of Missouri Department of Human Development and Family Studies, examined the long-term relationship between self-rated health and marital quality.

She found that, in all stages of marriage, positive or negative relationships affect the individual's health.

"Engaging with your spouse is not going to cure cancer, but building stronger relationships can improve both people's spirits and well-being and lower their stress," Proulx said, according to a Missouri statement.

Proulx analysed data from 707 continuously married adults who participated in the Marital Instability Over the Life Course panel study, a 20-year, nationwide research project started in 1980 with funding from the Social Security Administration's Office of Research and Statistics and the National Institute on Aging.

Proulx co-authored the study with Linley Snyder-Rivas, an alumna of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies in the MU College of Human Environmental Sciences.
To stay healthy, make marriage happy

U. MISSOURI (US) — Couples who are happily married are both mentally and physically healthier than their unmarried peers, new research shows.

The study shows that in all stages of marriage, positive or negative relationships affect health.

Married people are less likely to develop chronic conditions than people who are widowed or divorced—and aging people with failing health could particularly benefit from improving their marriage.

Spouses should be aware that how they treat each other and how happy they are in their marriages affect both partners' health and consider their relationship when thinking holistically about their health, says Christine Proulx, assistant professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Missouri. 

“We often think about the aging process as something we can treat medically with a pill or more exercise, but working on your marriage also might benefit your health as you age,” Proulx says.

“Engaging with your spouse is not going to cure cancer, but building stronger relationships can improve both people’s spirits and well-being and lower their stress.”

Health professionals should consider patients' personal relationships when designing health promotion programs or treatment plans, Proulx says.

“Physicians should recognize that the strength of patients’ marriages might affect their health. I suspect we’d have higher rates of adherence to treatment plans for chronic illnesses if medical professionals placed more of an emphasis on incorporating families and spouses in patients’ care. If spouses understand their partners’ disease and how to treat it at home, and the couple has a strong marriage, both people’s health could improve.”

Proulx analyzed data from 707 continuously married adults who participated in the Marital Instability Over the Life Course panel study, a 20-year, nationwide research project started in 1980 with funding from the Social Security Administration’s Office of Research and Statistics and the National Institute on Aging. The findings are scheduled for publication in the Journal of Family Psychology.
Most study participants were Caucasian, had more than high school educations, and earned more than $55,000 in annual family income in 2000. Because of these characteristics, the participants probably had some protection against marital and health challenges more commonly faced by people of different ethnicities or with less education or income, Proulx says.

*Source: University of Missouri*
How to help teens with autism shift to adult care

U. MISSOURI (US) — Less than one in four young people with autism spectrum disorder receive transition services designed to prevent gaps in health care and insurance coverage.

The study published in the journal *Pediatrics* recommends that the medical community develop these services to ensure consistent and coordinated care and increase independence and quality of life. About 50 percent of youth with other special health care needs, like asthma or diabetes, receive such services.

Occasionally, young adults lack health services for several years after they leave the care of their pediatricians, but the gap in care is more harmful for young adults with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), says Nancy Cheak-Zamora, assistant professor in the Department of Health Sciences at the University of Missouri.

In addition to their behavioral and communication difficulties, nearly half of youths with ASD have major co-existing medical conditions, such as seizures, gastrointestinal problems, or sleep disturbances. These conditions increase their dependence on the health care system and their need for health care transition (HCT) services.

“The health care community is doing a great job getting young people with ASD into therapies,” she says. “However, once the youths age into adulthood, we stop thinking about how to help them address their medical needs and the new challenges they’re facing. Similar to educational, vocational, or social transitioning, HCT services are necessary to help individuals with ASD function independently.”

Health care providers should discuss the transition to adult health care services when their patients with ASD are about 12 years old. As the youths mature, doctors can gradually give them more responsibilities for their health care so they can develop independence by the time they turn 18.

At that point, youths, their caregivers, and their pediatricians, and adult primary care physicians meet to discuss the youths’ health needs. This meeting can help reduce the risk of anxiety youths with ASD experience when faced with unfamiliar routines and settings that could come with switching to a new provider.
Health care providers are not always trained to implement HCT services and don’t receive sufficient financial reimbursement for the services, which can take time away from appointments that the physicians now use to address patients’ immediate health needs, Cheak-Zamora says.

“Most people with ASD are younger than age 18 right now, so in the next decade we’re going to get an influx of adults with ASD. Our health care system is currently unprepared to treat their needs.”

Source: University of Missouri
Damien Escobar might be best-known for his stint on "America’s Got Talent" and his success as half of the platinum-selling hip-hop violin act Nuttin’ But Stringz, but in a visit Tuesday night to the University of Missouri, the musician focused on what he called his self-emancipation to a solo career.

Escobar performed in front of a packed house at Whitmore Recital Hall as part of the university’s Black History Month events. His "Sounds of Strings and Streets" concert took students and Columbia residents through a musical journey as he told his story of growing up in the Jamaica area of Queens, N.Y., and finally finding his way to the stage and his true self.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH HIGHLIGHTS

Thursday: “Singing from the Heart: A Review of Slave Spirituals,” 11 a.m. at Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Aldermanbury, at Westminster College in Fulton.

Monday: “Words from the Drum” with Kunama Mtendaji, 2 to 2:45 p.m. and 6:30 to 7:15 p.m., Children’s Program Room, Columbia Public Library, and “Black Columbia in the Urban Renewal and Civil Rights Era,” 7 to 8:15 p.m., Friends Room, Columbia Public Library.

Feb. 27: “Knowledge as Power: Freeing the Past through Family History” brown-bag session, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m., 325 Gentry Hall, MU.

Feb. 28: Screening of “Soul Food Junkies” and Q&A with filmmaker Byron Hurt, 7 p.m., Jesse Wrench Auditorium, MU Memorial Union.

"Most of you guys know me through my brother; we started together 10 years ago," he said of his brother, Tourie, the other half of Nuttin’ But Stringz. "We had a dream to change the face of music with the violin, and we did."
"A million records later ... we decided not to call it quits, but to take a break."

It was then that Damien Escobar also took a break and stepped away from music. He went back to school, and in August he got his real estate license and began working a 9-to-5 job in an office.

"I stopped playing music. I didn't have the love for it anymore," Escobar said. "That started a really depressing year for me, to the point that I felt I had to start rediscovering myself. I left my million-dollar condo and asked my mom if I could stay with her for a little bit. I stayed in the 'hood, and that's where I found myself."

Escobar picked his violin back up, and next week his solo tour dubbed "I. Am. Me." will begin.

In recognition of the 150th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, the theme for this year's Black History Month events at MU is "Emancipation as Progress."

"His journey from Queens to classical music to hip-hop — I thought that journey was his own personal journey to emancipation, and I thought that's how it would manifest," said Stephanie Shonekan, assistant professor of ethnomusicology and black studies. "But to hear him talk about almost giving up and then making that choice to come back, I thought that was a sweet treat to find nuance in the process of emancipation."

After Escobar's performance, he took questions from the audience, ranging from what his favorite instrument is to how he judges music.

"We had all kinds of questions — technical, cultural. It brought out the different facets that I thought Damien Escobar would bring us," Shonekan said.

She said she thought the night was a success and that she was thrilled with the level of energy — not only from Escobar, but from the audience as well.

"This is my first public show away from my brother, and you all have been really good to me," Escobar told them.
Hip-hop violinist brings tale of musical journey to MU for Black History Month

By Vivian Qian

Two-time Emmy winning violinist Damien Escobar discussed how he went from performing on the street to performing at Carnegie Hall.

Violinist Damien Escobar kicked off his tour with a performance and discussion Wednesday night at Whitmore Recital Hall.

Escobar, a two-time Emmy Award winning violinist who was featured on America’s Got Talent, was invited by the MU Black History Month Committee to make MU the first performance of his “I. AM. ME.” tour.

After growing up in Queens, New York Escobar began playing on the streets and in the subways of the city and eventually worked his way to the prestigious Julliard School. He said his music, a combination of hip-hop and classical, helped him figure out who he was as a person of mixed race.

“Music brings many different works together,” Escobar said. “People who speak different languages and come from different religions can get together by music. They can understand and enjoy it. They hear my melody and then they begin humming the melody.”

To Escobar, the culture of hip-hop has changed over the years.

“In my opinion, the hip-hop violin music is more about melody,” he said. “For me, it’s an evolvement of classical music. It is easy for me to play on stage.”

The performance and discussion was a featured event of Black History Month at MU. Stephanie Shonekan, assistant professor of ethnomusicology and Black Studies, said Escobar’s musical combination and his background make him unique.

“We thought (Escobar’s) life and his music stand well for the theme of emancipation, which is the theme for Black History Month,” Shonekan said. “I think his journey is one of emancipation. It frees him.”

Escobar encouraged audience members to pursue their dreams fearlessly.
“If you know what you want to do, when you grow up, just do it,” he said. “Why do we get scared? Life is too short. Spread your swings, and you fly.”

After the performance many audiences expressed that they were deeply affected by Escobar’s passion and confidence.

“I am interested in the idea and event,” junior Cicely Haire said. “My professors recommended it and said that it was different. I think the passion Damien Escobar brought to us is meaningful and what he did was inspiring.”