Tampa welcomes new University of Missouri Chancellor Dr. R Bowen Loftin to town on ‘Tampa Bay Tigers Mizzou Alumni Association Day’

Posted Wednesday, February 05, 2014-8:28 am

As the University of Missouri kicks off the celebration of its 175th anniversary with an alumni event in Tampa, Mayor Bob Buckhorn issued a proclamation for the day calling it ‘Tampa Bay Tigers Mizzou Alumni Association Day.’ Local alumni from the University of Missouri known as the ‘Tampa Bay Tigers’ will welcome the school’s newly installed Chancellor, Dr. R. Bowen Loftin, to town at an evening reception tonight at Brio Tuscan Grille at International Mall to kick off the festivities.

With more than 1,400 graduates of the University of Missouri calling the Tampa Bay area home, the new chancellor chose Tampa to help kick off the celebration for the University’s 175th anniversary that will officially happen on February 11 known as ‘Founders’ Day’ on campus.

Locally, the Tampa Bay Tigers organization formed in 2008 and brings together local alumni through many activities of community service showcasing the University’s values of Respect, Responsibility, Discovery, and Excellence.

“We’re most proud of the fact that each year since we formed, we have been able to offer an area high school student a partial scholarship to attend our beloved University,” says Former Tampa Bay Tigers President Justin Herndon. “To see our local community recognized by the new Chancellor on such an important anniversary for the University really energizes us to keep finding students who can one day call themselves Mizzou alumni.”

Dr. R Bowen Loftin is known for his iconic bowtie collection and interaction with the student body as much as for his leadership. A true student’s Chancellor, Dr. Loftin officially took over in Columbia on February 1 and now visits the city of Tampa to start the celebration of the University’s milestone anniversary.

“We’re proud to call Tampa home, proud to be Mizzou grads and we can’t wait to share this special day with Dr. Loftin in Tampa,” Herndon said.

To view the Mayor’s proclamation online, please visit: http://www.tampagov.net/proclamations/20140205_Tampa_Bay_Tigers_Mizzou_Alumni_Association_Day.pdf

For more information about the local organization, please visit: www.mizzoualumnitampa.com
University of Missouri journalism dean to retire

COLUMBIA — The University of Missouri School of Journalism is looking for a new dean.

The university announced Thursday that its current leader, Dean Mills, plans to retire in August after 25 years overseeing the nation's first journalism school.

Mills will remain with the university as part-time director of a fellowship program at the journalism school's Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute. The research institute opened a decade ago under Mills' watch with a $31 million gift, the largest donation to the university. The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation subsequently donated another $15 million for operating expenses at the think tank and a $30.1 million endowment.

He also presided over a significant physical expansion of the journalism school and oversaw the relocation of two professional organizations to Columbia, the American Society of News Editors and the National Freedom of Information Coalition.

In a letter to faculty members, Mills recounted that he initially planned to keep the job for five or six years, a more typical tenure for academic deans. Instead, his quarter-century in charge left Mills as the university's longest serving dean.

"You may have noticed some procrastination," Mills wrote. "But now, nearly 25 years later, I realize I can't hold onto this job forever just because I continue to enjoy it. It's time (some of you might say way past time) for the school to have a new dean."

Mills is a former Moscow bureau chief and Washington correspondent for the Baltimore Sun. He has also taught at the University of Mississippi, the University of Illinois and California State University, Fullerton and was director of Pennsylvania State University's journalism school.
Mills is a member of the Missouri Newspaper Hall of Fame as well as the hall of fame at the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication, where he received his undergraduate degree.

Dean Mills, dean of MU School of Journalism, to retire this summer

By Ashley Jost

Thursday, February 6, 2014 at 11:03 am Comments (2) Updated: 5:12 pm, Thu Feb 6, 2014.

The dean of the University of Missouri School of Journalism announced that he is retiring after 25 years at his post. But, he isn’t leaving campus.

Dean Mills announced his retirement Thursday morning in an email to journalism faculty, adding that he is accepting a part-time job as the director of the Reynolds Fellows program and the Reynolds Journalism Institute. His retirement is effective Aug. 31.

Mills had never had a position for more than four, maybe five, years until he came to MU. In his email to faculty, he writes that he anticipated sticking around for five or six years, “a normal tenure for deans.” But that didn’t happen.

With a new chancellor and eventually a new provost, now just seemed like the time to go, Mills said. Mills chaired the search committee that brought in Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, who started this week. The provost search is in progress.

“I can’t be dean forever,” Mills said. “It seemed like as good a time as any so whoever the new dean is will have the chance to build those relationships with the new chancellor and provost.”

During his tenure as dean, the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute was launched with the help of a $31 million gift from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. Since then, the programs
that the Institute offers have expanded, including the area that Mills will now spearhead: the fellowship program.

Randy Picht, executive director of the institute, said Mills will be the go-to person for the coming year’s fellows, or researchers who are working in conjunction with the institute, and will help them with any research needs or contacts.

Additionally, Picht said this is the first time that the institute is accepting “institutional fellows,” or companies who are interested in doing journalism research who can work with the institute. Mills will help with that new portion of the program as well.

“I was sad to hear he was retiring, but I was happy to hear he was not going to be gone without a trace,” Picht said. “If he can’t stay on as dean, this is the next best option.”

Look for a longer story on Mills with comments from his colleagues in tomorrow’s Tribune.

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Posted in Local, Education on Thursday, February 6, 2014 11:03 am. Updated: 5:12 pm.

Retiring MU journalism dean leaves legacy of leadership, innovation

Thursday, February 6, 2014 | 9:22 p.m. CST; updated 10:40 p.m. CST, Thursday, February 6, 2014

Dean Mills, dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, talks with colleagues after the Reynolds Journalism Institute groundbreaking. | TASHA BJELIC/MISSOURIAN FILE PHOTO

BY MISSOURIAN STAFF
COLUMBIA — **When Dean Mills landed the opportunity to serve as dean of the Missouri School of Journalism in 1989, he expected he'd step down in five or six years.**

**He ended up staying for 25.**

Mills announced his retirement Thursday morning, effective Aug. 31. He is currently the longest-serving dean at the university, according to information from the MU News Bureau.

After he retires, Mills will work part time as director of the Reynolds Fellows program at the school's Reynolds Journalism Institute. The institute gives fellowships each year to journalists and scholars developing new approaches to journalism.

"They work on projects involving research on the future of journalism, and that's certainly an area I'm interested in," Mills said.

He said he thought the time was right for a new dean as MU changes its leadership in Jesse Hall.

"It just seemed to make sense to do this now so that a new dean will have a chance to build those relationships," Mills said in an interview. "It's time for a change."

Among Mills' accomplishments during his time as dean was the establishment of the Reynolds Journalism Institute in 2008, a large research and development center for journalists.

He also served as dean during the launch of online versions of KOMU, KBIA, the Columbia Missourian and Vox Magazine. MU's first online master's degree program was also established under his command.

**Mills** earned a bachelor's degree in Russian and journalism from the University of Iowa and a master's degree from the University of Michigan. He received a doctorate in communications at the University of Illinois in 1981.

Before arriving at MU, he had been director of Pennsylvania State University's School of Journalism and a coordinator of graduate study in communications at California State University, Fullerton.
He also worked as a journalist for the Baltimore Sun, where he was Moscow bureau chief in 1969 and a Washington, D.C., correspondent from 1972 to 1975.

In 1989, Mills stepped onto the MU campus as dean of the Missouri School of Journalism.

“I couldn’t believe my good fortune when I was offered this job,” Mills said in a news release. “Twenty-five years later, I can still barely believe it.”

Former Chancellor Brady Deaton arrived at MU as the chair of the agricultural economics department the same year as Mills. Deaton, who retired in November, praised Mills for his active presence in the School of Journalism and at MU.

"He has just been a tremendous leader in so many ways," Deaton said. "He's taken a great school of journalism and added luster to it."

Impact on individuals, MU, journalism school

Brian Brooks, who served as associate dean alongside Mills for 10 years, said the outgoing dean raised more money for the school than all previous deans combined.

"He gave direction to the school," Brooks said. "He left us in a really good position at the start of this century."

Brooks was on the search committee to appoint a new dean when Mills was selected. Mills had applied for the position once before, but the chancellor at the time deemed him too young for the job, Brooks said. Years later, when the hunt was on again, Mills was an obvious candidate.

"He left a really good impression on everyone," Brooks said.

With the founding of the Reynolds Journalism Institute, establishment of the Walter Williams Scholars program, and efforts to expand and strengthen the graduate and international programs, Brooks said, Mills has helped MU maintain its standing as having one of the top journalism schools in the nation.

"He took a great school and made it better," Brooks said.

Alecia Swasy, a Ph.D. candidate at MU, first met Mills when he was director of Penn State’s School of Journalism about 30 years ago when she was an undergraduate.
Swasy called Mills a terrific advocate for both young and female journalists, citing his work to help start a Reynolds Journalism Institute project that collects oral histories of female pioneers in journalism. Mills has also served as a mentor to Swasy, she said, editing both of her books.

“I have been privileged to have his guidance for 30 years, and I hope it continues after his retirement,” Swasy said.

Joan Gabel, dean of MU’s Trulaske College of Business, said she admired Mills’ leadership skills in the time they worked together, most recently on the search committee for a new chancellor.

“I learned so much from him that I hope I can emulate over the course of my own career,” Gabel said.

Michael O’Brien, dean of MU’s College of Arts and Sciences, saw Mills as someone who set the tone for the rest of the deans on campus.

“He is a tremendous role model on how to get things done at a major research university,” O’Brien said. “I have the utmost respect for him.”

**Industry and organizational impact**

Mills has left his mark on different organizations in the journalism industry, evidenced by his election to the Missouri Press Association Hall of Fame in 2012. The executive director of the Missouri Press Association, Doug Crews, has known Mills since 1989 and said the dean has fostered good relationships with newspaper publishers. He also commended the dean for maintaining strong ties with Missouri's journalism community.

“There is strong support for him and his good work for supporting the newspaper industry in the state,” he said. “He’s been a friend of the press association.”

Chris Martin, president of the Poynter Foundation and former dean of West Virginia University’s Perley Isaac Reed School of Journalism, said Mills was highly respected by other journalism school deans.

"Dean Mills was always known as someone who led Missouri to the forefront of journalism education," Martin said. "I think the thing about Missouri that was always of great interest and a point of admiration for the rest of us was the fact that Missouri
always held tightly to the important core values of journalism but was always responsive to the changes in how journalism is practiced."

**Embracing new ideals**
Randy Picht, executive director of the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute called Mills' retirement bittersweet. He said he was sad to see Mills step down but is grateful that he won't be leaving the school entirely. As director of the Reynolds Fellowship program, Mills will help choose the fellows each year and help them complete their research projects, Picht said.

"Mills had had a great impact on news companies in this country and journalism in general by ensuring a steady stream of talented journalists and the willingness to work with the industry on challenges and opportunities," Picht said.

"He has embraced new ideals during his time here. He knows how to accept changes, lead the way, and do things differently."

MU journalism school dean announces retirement

Thursday, February 6, 2014 | 10:44 a.m. CST; updated 9:28 p.m. CST, Thursday, February 6, 2014
BY RYAN HOOD

COLUMBIA – **Dean Mills, dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, announced Thursday morning his plans to retire at the end of August, according to an email he sent to faculty members.**

In the email, Mills wrote that his retirement will be effective Aug. 31, 2014. He will stay on half-time as director of the Reynolds Fellows program at the Reynolds Journalism Institute, according to a release from MU News Bureau. Mills
has been dean of the journalism school for 25 years and is the longest current serving dean at MU, according to the release.

Highlights during Mills' tenure as dean include the launches of the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute, online versions of the journalism school's media properties and the school's first online master's degree program.

“We will greatly miss Dean Mills' leadership,” MU Interim Provost Ken Dean said in the release. “He has guided the School of Journalism through a rapidly changing landscape in the profession. As journalism has adapted to new technologies and an explosion of information resources, Dean has been at the helm of the world's best journalism school, making sure that we are educating the next generation of communication specialists, building on the latest research and offering guidance to some of the most influential journalism organizations in the world.”

Mills received a doctorate in communications from the University of Illinois in 1981, according to the journalism school's website. Before coming to MU in 1989, he served as director of The Pennsylvania State University's School of Journalism and then as coordinator of graduate study in communications at California State University, Fullerton.

Mills also has worked as a professional journalist. He became Moscow Bureau Chief for the Baltimore Sun in 1969 after earning a master's degree in journalism at the University of Michigan and a bachelor's degree in Russian and journalism at the University of Iowa. From 1972 to 1975, he was a Sun correspondent in Washington, D.C. He was inducted into the Missouri Press Hall of Fame in 2012.

Here is the text of the email:

Dear Colleagues:

When I was given the extraordinary opportunity to serve as dean of this wonderful school, I fully expected to step down within five or six years—a normal tenure for deans. You may have noticed some procrastination. In my defense, I point out that I was distracted by the pure fun of working with the School's students, alumni, faculty and staff, and other supporters around the world, as well as my fellow deans, MU administrators and other great colleagues on campus and in the greater UM system.
But now, nearly twenty-five years later, I realize I can't hold onto this job forever just because I continue to enjoy it. It's time (some of you might say way past time) for the school to have a new dean.

I have told Provost Ken Dean that I will retire effective Aug. 31, 2014.

Fair warning: I won't be entirely out of your hair. In a moment of weakness, Randy Picht agreed to let me stay on as director of the Reynolds Fellows program. I look forward to working with you in that new job.

I promised Randy I wouldn't hold on to it for 25 years.

Dean

Head of Mizzou's J-school stepping down in August

By Joe Holleman jholleman@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8254

Dean Mills, longtime head of the University of Missouri School of Journalism, will soon step down. In an email to colleagues today, Mills announced he would retire Aug. 31 — after 25 years at the helm of the prestigious school for budding news reporters.

Mills said he intended to serve as dean only for five or six years. "You may have noticed some procrastination. But now ... I realize I can't hold onto this job forever just because I continue to enjoy it."
Mills will remain with the school's Reynolds Journalism Institute as the fellowship coordinator. "So I guess you could say I'm going part-time," he said. One project he will continue working on at Reynolds, which studies new forms of media, is the recent merger of St. Louis Public Radio (KWMU) and the St. Louis Beacon, an online news site. Part of that union involves Mizzou's journalism school offering classes at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, which owns the new KWMU/Beacon operation.

"I'm very interested in that experiment, finding ways that we can afford good public affairs reporting," he said.

Mills and his wife, Sue, who retired from the university last year, will remain in Columbia.

"But we'll likely be visiting California more often," Mills quipped. "Part-time, to me, does not include working in February."

**Rating (and Berating) the Ratings**

February 7, 2014

Doug Lederman, Michael Stratford and Scott Jaschik

**NO MU MENTION**

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration on Thursday released hundreds of pages of formal comments on its proposed college rating system, documents that mostly underscore the deep reservations that many higher education leaders have about the plan but also highlight pockets of support.

Nearly every major higher education group submitting comments on the rating system expressed concerns about the proposal.

Molly Corbett Broad, president of the American Council on Education, in a letter signed by 19 higher education associations, outlined a range of pragmatic concerns about how the ratings regime may harm higher education but also questioned whether producing such a system was an appropriate role for the federal government to play in the first place.
“Beyond the many questions and technical challenges that surround the development and implementation of a proposed rating system, rating colleges and universities is a significant expansion of the federal role in higher education and breaks new ground for the department,” Broad wrote. “Moreover, it is extremely important to note that a federal rating system will carry considerably more weight and authority than those done by others.”

Comments from other higher education associations largely echoed the concerns of many college leaders: they worry that a ratings system will create improper incentives for institutions, undermine the value of higher education and cut off access to institutions that serve low-income and underprivileged students.

But none were as forceful in criticizing the proposed ratings system as the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. David Warren, the group’s president, said that his members were fundamentally opposed to the concept of a college ratings system.

“Private, independent college leaders do not believe it is possible to create a single metric that can successfully compare the broad array of American higher education institutions without creating serious unintended consequences,” Warren wrote, adding that any rating system would reflect policy makers’ priorities rather than those of individual students searching for a college.

“By its nature, a metric is quantitative,” he wrote. “Whereas finding a ‘best fit’ college has qualitative aspects that are equally as, or even more important than, the quantitative aspects.”

The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities, for its part, embraced the notion that its member institutions should be judged based on certain metrics. The group said the department should pursue an alternative to a federal ratings system, in which colleges are judged based on a set of measures (including graduation, loan repayment, and employment rates) that are adjusted by a “student readiness index” that controls for different types of student populations.

The public-private divide was stark among the institutions responses, too. Private colleges clearly got their talking points from NAICU, with many of them echoing the group's arguments that a rating system would be reductionist and that tying federal aid to such a system would hurt, not help, the low-income students administration officials say they aim to help.
The president's plan, "while well intentioned," said Arthur Kirk, president of St. Leo University, "is inherently flawed in its strategy to tie the 'value' of a college education to federal funding for students through a single rating system. The purpose of the plan and proposed rating system is to increase access to higher education for all students, and especially to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Yet implementing a ratings system using data as it is currently collected through IPEDS will likely disenfranchise the very students it is supposed to help."

And to almost a person, the presidents of private institutions encouraged the administration not to bother creating a new system, but to depend on NAICU's existing University and College Accountability Network (U-CAN) instead.

Public universities were far from wholly united, and they are not enthusiastic about the idea of a federal rating system. But like their associations, APLU and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, several major public university systems essentially took as a given that the government plans to create a new accountability regime one way or the other, and went to significant lengths to lay out how such a system might work well -- and the pitfalls it might face.

"As a public system, the State University of New York knows that our responsibility to meet economic and social objectives lies at the heart of our duty to accountability and transparency," State University of New York System Chancellor Nancy Zimpher wrote in its submission. "As a public system, we embrace the rating system initiative as a tool for stakeholders, one that will enhance student success through more informed decision-making."

The California State University System's response, for example, which ran to 7,500 words (and two Excel spreadsheets), sorted among dozens of metrics that a rating system might incorporate, differentiating between those that are already collected (percent of students who are Pell recipients, net tuition by income level, annual completions, etc.) and those that aren't (proportion of need-based aid offered in loans, median indebtedness of graduates, first-year retention gap between minority and non-minority students).

One of the country's other large public systems, the University of Wisconsin system, departed from its peers by co-signing a letter with the state's private and technical colleges that argued for improving the current information that government collects through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System rather than creating a new rating system.
Accountability vs. Consumer Choice

Among the philosophical questions that the respondents were encouraged to consider was exactly what purpose the new federal system should strive to fulfill. The Education Department's own request framed the issue plainly, noting how different the metrics and approach might be if the system is primarily for accountability as opposed to providing consumer information.

Several commenters urged the department to focus on the former rather than the latter. "For practical and political reasons, the number of metrics used should be small and focused on accountability for minimum standards, rather than on comprehensive evaluation and comparison of institutions, which would be more important for consumer information," wrote Nate Johnson, a former state official in Florida who is now a consultant. "The Department should make clear that it is not attempting to cover everything of importance in higher education."

The New America Foundation, whose staff includes several former Education Department officials who work closely with the administration, generally agreed with that view -- with a twist. "A formal ratings system focused on accountability would be the best way to leverage the federal government’s unique position in the higher education system," the foundation said in its submission. "But the ratings system must be part of a larger effort around data and transparency that carries with it a strong consumer information component. We strongly believe that students and other consumers of higher education deserve high-quality, actionable data -- and believe that the federal government can help collect and play an important role in making data available to consumers."

The more the system is focused on institutional accountability over consumer choice, the simpler it can (and should) be, several commenters argued.

David A. Longanecker, president of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education and himself a former top Education Department official (with the bruises to show for it), said that "[t]he most critical information for students or prospective students and for policy makers is simple: how likely it is that the student will succeed and how much will it cost?"

He argued for a system based on just three metrics: "the completion rate from institutions with similar missions, roles, and characteristics;" "the success of students in subsequent employment," though he encouraged a broad definition of success and strongly discouraged any use of income data; and a measure of the "net price" for three categories of students: Pell Grant students, students with other federal grants, and students with no grants.
Appropriate Focus on Job Outcomes?
The part of the administration's ratings system that would evaluate colleges based on post-graduation success of graduates (measured by such factors as employment rates and average salaries) was harshly criticized by many college leaders (especially among private institutions). Many said that such a system would unfairly punish colleges that educate many people who perform essential jobs that don't make them wealthy.

Sister Carol Jean Vale, president of Chestnut Hill College, in Massachusetts, wrote that the "the most complex issue considered by the administration is the post-graduation income metric."

She wrote that "[i]f what is earned in the first few years of post-college becomes the major measure of 'value,' then the unintended consequence would be that society would lose much of its community-based occupations such as social workers or P-12 teachers because colleges and universities would compete to offer only the highest 'valued' degree leaning to highest income potential. On levels too many to mention, this vision is much too narrowly focused and harmful to the larger good."

Christina H. Paxson, president of Brown University, also noted concerns about the impact on colleges that trained teachers. Further, she said such a system would "undervalue graduate school attendance, which would appear as low wages in a rating."

Measuring post-graduation earnings (and debt levels) raised particular issues for some specialized institutions.

Grafton Nunes, president of Cleveland Institute of Art, wrote that graduates of his college (a nonprofit institution founded in 1882) "designed everything from the Tiffany lamps of the 19th century, to inventing the cab-over-engine truck, designing the first Mustang, Corvette and Thunderbird, the Crossfire and the Genesis, hold the patents on products such as the Dirt Devil, the spin brush and the Swiffer, designed the Moen fixtures in your home and all the lawn mowers from Sears and Cub Cadet that you ride."

But Nunes added that "none of these professions are reflected in the Department of Education lists of jobs available to students of art and design. And up to now, the DOE has shown no interest in correcting these omissions. If the professions available to this cohort of students cannot be accurately reflected in a simple list of professions, how can we who are presidents of
art and design colleges trust fair and accurate representation in a one size fits all metric?"

One might not expect opposition to the idea from medical schools, since many of their graduates go on to earn high salaries. But Atul Grover, chief public policy officer for the Association of American Medical Colleges, noted that many medical students graduate with lots of debt and (at least while they are medical residents) modest salaries.

"The median education debt for indebted medical school graduates in 2013 was $175,000. During residency training, physicians earn a stipend; however, that income is generally not sufficient to begin full repayment of educational loans, and is certainly not indicative of the future practicing physician's salary," Grover wrote. "As a result, medical residents depend on federal financial aid options such as forbearance and income-based repayment to postpone or reduce their obligations until they become licensed physicians. Any proposed rating system must not penalize borrowers who use these repayment options after graduation."

One college leader who urged a focus on post-graduation success was Joseph E. Aoun, president of Northeastern University, an institution known for its co-op program, which many graduates credit with getting them on the path to good jobs. Aoun wrote that it was important to broaden outcome measures beyond graduation rates and to consider "the work colleges are doing to prepare students for long-term career success."

But Aoun cautioned against simple measures and stressed the need to develop sophisticated ways to evaluate success. He noted alumni surveys not only of salaries, but of career satisfaction, "long-term return on investment," student loan debt-to-income ratios, and "sense of purpose several years after graduation." He said that Northeastern and some other colleges are working on such surveys, which could be useful.

Despite all the skepticism about measuring job placement and earnings post-graduation, a letter submitted by Young Invincibles, a group that advocates on behalf of young Americans, was much more supportive of the concept. The letter cited various national polls, and also focus groups that Young Invincibles has conducted of students -- and said that data on job placement and salaries are exactly what prospective students want.

"[E]mployment prospects were very important to respondents, as was graduates' ability to repay their debt," the letter said. "Students consistently ranked these two outcomes as most valuable to
their decision. Furthermore, in a survey of student leaders, we similarly found that 81 percent of respondents prioritized a school's job placement rate as the most important information, an overwhelming show of support for this metric."
And yet, the letter added, many students reported that this information was "difficult" for them to find at colleges today.

**For-Profits Focus on Demographics**
The executives of several for-profit education companies also submitted comments to the department, echoing many of the concerns raised by other higher education sectors that enroll large numbers of low-income and other underserved student populations.
The for-profit-college leaders focused their comments largely on how the department should adjust performance metrics based on student population. Officials at DeVry and Kaplan both said that the administration should look beyond the number of Pell Grant recipients at an institution and also weight outcomes based on a range of other factors, such as whether students are caring for dependent children, working full-time while taking classes, or have delayed or interrupted their attendance in college.

David J. Adams, the deputy general counsel at Kaplan, also said gender, race, ethnicity and immigrant status “should also be carefully considered in any rating system,” since those demographic characteristics are related to graduation rates and other outcomes.
The ratings system “must be based on meaningful metrics that enable like comparisons and allow students to judge the efficacy of institutions educating and preparing students like themselves,” Adams wrote. “That cannot happen unless there is accounting for the pivotal role that student demographics play in outcomes, independent of the types of institutions that students attend.”

Among other respondents who offered distinctive perspectives:

- The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators suggested that the government consider selecting 10 common metrics that would apply to all institutions, then give colleges flexibility to choose five more, say, from a set of 40 or so others that they believe "best reflect the institution and its students. This could provide valuable context to the standardized ratings done by the federal government."
- The Institute for College Access and Success called on the department to apply its rating system to institutions that primarily grant bachelor’s degrees before expanding it to other institutions. “While no data are perfect, the limitations of currently available data are far more pronounced at institutions serving a less traditional student population,” the group wrote, citing, for example, federal graduation rates at community college that leave out transfer students.
The Student Press Law Center said that the department should include several transparency metrics in its ratings system, such as how well public colleges are following state open records laws or how well all institutions properly report campus safety data.

February 7, 2014

A New Kind of Study Seeks to Quantify Educational Quality

By Dan Berrett

NO MU MENTION

Much of the debate about educational quality tends to pull toward extremes: Either America’s colleges are the envy of the world, or they’re of questionable worth. A new study that used an unusual methodology to quantify rigor and teaching suggests a more moderate and nuanced view.

"Our findings are showing we’re in between," said Corbin M. Campbell, an assistant professor of higher education at Teachers College at Columbia University. "There’s room to grow here."

Ms. Campbell was the principal investigator for the College Educational Quality project, a study of two selective, midsize research institutions. One was public, the other private. She and a team of 10 graduate students spent a week in the spring of 2013 observing 153 courses. They analyzed 149 syllabi.

The methodology allowed them to examine academic rigor and the quality of teaching in ways that conventional research tools, like student surveys, standardized tests, or faculty self-reports, often fail to adequately convey.
"We could see how the instructors engaged students," she said.

The graduate students observing the courses were pursuing degrees in higher education. As often as possible, they watched courses in the discipline in which they had earned their baccalaureate degree.

By reading syllabi and conducting classroom observations, they drew conclusions about two broad categories, academic rigor and teaching quality.

The universities both scored roughly in the middle of the scales for each category, and the two institutions’ scores were statistically indistinguishable. For both, academic rigor was 3.33 on a 5.5-point scale. Teaching quality was 2.97 out of 5.

Academic rigor depended on three factors. The first was the researchers’ assessment of the cognitive complexity of the course, which they based on the revised version of Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives. The second was the quantity and complexity of work assigned. The third was the level of expectations set for students' preparation for and participation in class.

The metrics for teaching quality reflected how well the instructor introduced central concepts, called forth students’ prior knowledge of the material, and helped students reconcile the differences between what they thought they knew about the subject and what they had just learned.

"We are seeing faculty doing a good job of teaching in-depth subject matter," Ms. Campbell said.

Class Size and Length

But most of the faculty members failed to use effective teaching practices. Just over half of the observed courses included in-class activities. About 40 percent had discussions. Classes with those attributes yielded significantly higher scores for academic rigor and teaching quality than those without them.

The length of the class also proved significant. Those that met for longer than an hour produced more benefits than those that were an hour or shorter.
Class size played a role, too. A clear dividing line emerged. Classes of 25 students or fewer were associated with significantly more academic rigor and teaching quality than those that were larger, they found.

No statistically meaningful difference could be seen between courses of 26 to 50 students, 51 to 100, or more than 100.

"If you’re going to have a small class size, it really matters that it’s pretty small," Ms. Campbell said.

She cautioned that her pilot study may not be broadly applicable because it looked at only two institutions. A follow-up study will look at 10 more.

Ms. Campbell added that she hoped that studies like hers could broaden the conversation about the outcomes of postsecondary education. Researchers and public officials have been focusing on how much money recent graduates earn.

"When you talk about outcomes, it can’t just be economic," she said. "It has to be educational as well."

MU students hope Russian anti-gay law spreads awareness of LGBTQ issues

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BY JOSH BENSON

COLUMBIA — As criticism of Russia's gay-propaganda law persists during the run-up to the Olympic Games in Sochi, members of MU's LGBTQ community hope the opposition leads to a positive outcome.
They think it could advance the discussion of human rights and endorse the value of tolerance worldwide.

"I feel like it is an excellent platform for human rights because the entire world is watching," said Jess Asher, 26, a student who identifies with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer issues. "Many people are outraged about their laws, and that's awesome."

Andrew Hanson, 19, who belongs to the university's LGBTQ community, applauded President Barack Obama for his position on the matter. Obama has been openly critical of President Vladimir Putin for the Russian government's stance on gay rights.

"I am glad for what he has done," Hanson said about Obama. "I think it will help spread awareness."

Intolerance of homosexuality in Russia has been increasingly contentious as the games, which open Friday, approached. On Thursday, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned persecution of gays. “Hatred of any kind must have no place in the 21st century,” Ban said at a meeting of the International Olympic Committee.

Last year, the State Duma, Russia’s lower house of parliament, passed and Vladimir Putin signed a bill that would ban the promotion of gay propaganda. The law makes it a crime to advocate or teach a topic that indicates homosexuality is acceptable. Putin has also signed a law that forbids adoption of Russian children by gay parents, or parents who live where same-sex marriage is permitted.

Another law, passed last summer, permits Russian police to arrest suspected homosexuals. Last month, Putin said no one affiliated with or attending the Winter Games would be targeted. "No one should be punished for talking about the policies of the government," Hanson said. "A fine for discussing the treatment of the queer community is targeted censorship and bigotry."

Delan Ellington, 19, another member of MU's LGBTQ community, said one of the best aspects of the Olympic Games is the global sense of togetherness. The Russian laws and subsequent punishment undermine this type of unity and support, he said.
In January, Obama announced that he would send a group of openly gay athletes to represent the United States in the opening and closing ceremonies. The delegation will include ice hockey player Caitlin Cahow and figure skater Brian Boitano.

Asher said she thought the upshot of the controversy could be wider acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles and beliefs.

"People are talking about LGBTQ issues now more than ever before," she said. "I hope this opportunity is used for positive change."