COLUMBIA — **It's Western night at an MU fraternity house, and young women filter through the straw-littered doorway into a dark, cavernous basement room.**

The only light comes from neon lasers, Christmas lights and the flash of cellphone cameras.

As the students dance on hay bales, young men mix a cocktail in large orange coolers — the kind you see on the sidelines at sporting events. The men add vodka and Kool-Aid mix until they find a palatable combination. They dip plastic cups into the concoction and hand them to the students who approach the bar.

Not everyone needs a drink. Some people have their own. A young man has a bottle of soda in one hand and a 60-ounce handle of vodka in the other. He takes a swing from each and hands them over to the young woman next to him, who follows his lead. Another young man carries two beers, drinking them and pouring them into the mouths of passing women.

For the most part, the young women are in clusters as they dance and take pictures. When a young man stumbles up and gets too close, they link hands to form a human chain and disappear into the crowd.

Outside, a group of five young women stand huddled together in the chilly night air. One has a phone pressed to her ear and she says, firmly, "Don’t ever do that again. I don’t want you walking home by yourself."

The idea of looking out for one another may seem instinctual, but it is also one administrators are working to instill in students at colleges across the country.
Nearly one in five women is sexually assaulted in college, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A much lower number of incidents are actually reported. Only two reports of "non-consensual sexual behavior" were made to MU's Office of Student Conduct in 2012, according to previous Missourian reporting. The offenders in both cases were punished.

The recently much-publicized case of Sasha Menu Courey, the MU athlete who took her own life after she was allegedly sexually assaulted, was typical of sexual assaults perpetrated by and against students. As described in a story published by ESPN, it involved heavy drinking.

The White House released a report April 29 that provides guidance for universities in addressing, preventing and reporting cases of sexual assault. The report cites bystander intervention programs, ones that train people witnessing violence to intervene on another person's behalf, as "among the most promising prevention strategies." At MU, that takes the form of the Green Dot Mizzou program, as well as Life Is Not A Spectator Sport.

The report contains one reference to alcohol, in a section on training campus officials who deal with sexual assault. Yet, alcohol plays a role in at least half of all sexual assaults involving college students, according to Wayne State University research. The challenge facing campus sexual assault initiatives is how to overcome the student culture of drinking and the belief that drinking leads to sex, according to the research.

Attitudes about social drinking can be formed in boys and girls as young as age 5, said Antonia Abbey, professor and chairwoman of cognitive, developmental and social psychology at Wayne State University. So, in effect, the green light for social drinking goes on long before young people become college students.

Red dot, green dot
The basis of Green Dot Mizzou is that any power-based personal violence — partner violence, sexual violence or stalking — leaves a metaphorical "red dot" on the campus map. The program emphasizes students' need to intervene before "red dots" are created, making those sites "green dots" instead, according to the program’s Facebook page.
A green dot represents any time a person witnessing violence has shown intolerance for the way another person is being treated. Green-dot acts can range from pulling a friend away from a high-risk situation to posting an anti-violence poster in a residence hall.

"Ultimately, the goal of Green Dot Mizzou is to prevent violence from happening on our campus and in our community," said Danica Wolf, MU Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center coordinator, in an email. "To accomplish that goal, we need to have 100 percent campus participation in the program."

Similar intervention programs are being promoted on college campuses across the country. For example, the University of Massachusetts' program uses posters, videos, residence adviser training and skits performed for freshmen to promote bystander intervention.

A letter issued by the U.S. Department of Education in April 2011 — often referred to as the "Dear Colleague" letter — said, among other things, "Schools should take proactive measures to prevent sexual harassment and violence."

Green Dot was launched at MU before the "Dear Colleague" letter. It began in 2009 after RSVP Center staff learned about the program at a national conference. The staff brought the creator to train campus personnel to implement the program, Wolf said in an email.

Bystander intervention programs, once just a trend in violence prevention education, have now become the national standard, Wolf said in an email.

However, researchers have suggested that efforts to change the societal messages that form beliefs about sexual behavior and the effects of alcohol that perpetuate sexual violence are needed, in addition to programs like MU’s Green Dot.

What Abbey's Wayne State University research, and others like it, considered to be sexual assault might not meet a legal definition of rape, but the definition included situations in which a man acknowledged knowing that a woman had not consented to sexual contact.
A wide range of sexual acts and types of force were included in the research, corresponding to the CDC's definition of sexual violence. The **CDC defines sexual violence** as any sexual act that is perpetrated against someone's will.

The researchers considered both physical and verbal strategies of coercion — including taking advantage of a person who was intoxicated — to be acts of sexual aggression.

Other studies have found that 10 percent to 15 percent of male college students have committed some sort of sexual aggression within the past year, Abbey said.

"A really important finding is that sexual aggression is much more common than people realize," Abbey said.

There is evidence that drinking alcohol contributes to the use of force, Abbey said. Studies have shown that when presented with written accounts of sexual violence, men who are intoxicated are more likely to think the man in the scenario acted appropriately. They are also less likely to consider the scenario a rape and more likely to say they would act in a similar manner.

"That doesn't mean that being drunk justifies the use of force or having sex with someone who is also drunk if they can't consent," Abbey said. "Perpetrators are always responsible for their own behavior."

Besides alcohol consumption, other factors predict whether a man could eventually commit an act of sexual violence. They include childhood abuse, an impulsive personality or an inability to empathize.

Still, Abbey said, people are ultimately responsible for their actions. At the same time, knowledge of the risk factors for sexual assault gives policymakers tools for addressing sexual violence and preventing assaults.

"Understanding causes lets us work on developing targeted interventions, so we can try and change that person's future behavior," she said.

**Education about consent**

The contribution that drinking makes to sexual violence goes beyond the intoxicating effects of alcohol. Men's and women's pre-existing beliefs about sex and alcohol include
expectations of having sex when partying and drinking, according to Abbey's 2002 study.

"If you know the research on self-fulfilling prophecies, then you know that beliefs have a lot of power over shaping how we perceive an event, how we act and the responses we receive from others," Abbey said.

Changing beliefs about alcohol and reducing sexual objectification are crucial to reducing men's sexual aggression against women, she said. That entails educating boys beginning in middle school and continuing throughout high school and college about the importance of consent.

"People in our society, and many others, tend to have developed beliefs about alcohol's effects by age 5. Youth learn these messages from parents, movies, billboards, songs, older siblings, etc.," Abbey said. "We need to take a societal perspective on heavy drinking and sexual aggression."

There is some evidence that society's perspective on sexual assault is changing, if changes in the law are any indication. Recent updates to Missouri's laws on sexual crimes represent the evolving way people view consent issues with respect to sexual assault, said Colleen Coble, chief executive officer of the Missouri Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Since August 2013, the law has defined first-degree rape as occurring when a person has sex with another person who is incapacitated, incapable of consent or lacks the capacity to consent. The use of force to compel another person to have sex is also first-degree rape.

Second-degree rape is defined as having sex with another person while knowing that the other person does not consent.

Before the changes, the law reflected an outdated conception of rape as involving physical force or drugging a potential victim, Coble said. But the law didn't speak to the issue that today is seen as defining rape: consent.
The changes to the law now mean someone who takes advantage of another person who is drunk and becomes unconscious can be charged with rape, Coble said.

But prosecutors may still not prosecute these kinds of cases, for example, because of perceptions that juries may have about the role of alcohol in such an incident. "Prosecutors will still rule," Coble said.

Another issue will be determining what level of intoxication a person has to reach before he or she becomes incapable of giving consent, she said.

"It will take a lawyer to develop the right kind of questioning to establish reasonable knowledge of consent or lack of consent," Coble said.

Jonathan Bertz, an assistant prosecutor in the Boone County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, said alcohol consumption is just one factor among many that has to be taken into consideration along with all other evidence in a sexual assault case.

There are cases that can be proved beyond a reasonable doubt where alcohol was consumed by one or two people involved, Bertz said. But every case is different.

**Is Green Dot effective?**
The MU RSVP Center heavily promoted Green Dot Mizzou through social media in April, Sexual Assault Awareness Month, to boost students' participation. Even MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin has been seen sporting a Green Dot pin on his lapel. MU spokesman Christian Basi said Loftin and MU are considering various new ways to address sexual assault and alcohol, but he was not more specific.

Green Dot is working to make students active bystanders, and Wolf, of the MU Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, said in an email that the most concrete feedback about the program comes from the stories people share about their experiences with Green Dot in person and via social media.

The other feedback about the program comes from a survey that MU’s Wellness Resource Center sends out to a random, 25 percent sample of the student population. Dan Reilly, MU prevention and research coordinator, said MU has done a
good job educating students compared to most prevention offices across the country. He said most offices fail to get their message out to students.

According to the survey sent out last fall, 73 percent of respondents had heard about Green Dot Mizzou. Of those, 76 percent understood the purpose of the program. Campuses that achieve 30 percent to 50 percent awareness of their prevention programs are considered effective, Reilly said.

The survey didn't ask students specifically about whether Green Dot had changed their attitude toward bystander intervention. Instead, it asked whether students would intervene in various situations.

"We ask a series of questions ... regarding student likelihood of implementing bystander behaviors," Reilly said in an email. "Then in subsequent years, we compare the percentage of students who responded favorably to these questions."

Reilly said he had not had time to analyze what the survey reveals about how Green Dot had affected bystander behavior, but he said preliminary results were positive.

Typically, about 1,000 students respond, Reilly said, and women are slightly overrepresented because they are more likely to respond than men.

At a minimum, Green Dot is a good concept that simplifies for students what they can do to intervene, MU sophomore Gian Wessel said. But some students don't take the program seriously.

"If there's a guy that's just bad with girls in general, we might just toss that word around and call him a red dot, but it's not like the textbook definition of a red dot," Wessel said. "We almost never mean it that way."

His fraternity brothers may take the title Green Dot as a joke, but Wessel said they do prepare to intervene, including designating four to five sober monitors at every party.

MU sophomore Emma Henderson said intervention may be complicated further by the personalities of the people involved. It takes an assertive personality to feel comfortable intervening. It may be difficult to approach someone in a busy social situation who is taller and intoxicated.
"You have to be mentally prepared to do that," she said.

MU senior Casey Platt said it might be difficult to get students to take Green Dot seriously when they are intoxicated.

"I feel like it's a Mizzou culture and also just a college culture where alcohol just is fun, and no matter what happens it's still fun," he said. "Even if something is going wrong, people are just in that fun state of mind. They can't focus on what's serious."

This culture can be seen most weekend nights at any downtown bar where students congregate.

Late one recent Thursday evening, young adults stumble out of Harpo's Bar & Grill at Tenth and Cherry streets. One woman is carried by her friends because she can no longer walk on her own. Another man weaves lazily across the road, seemingly unaware of the oncoming traffic.

A man and a woman stand near the back door of the bar, pressed up against the wall. The man puts his hands under the woman's shirt, and she pulls away. He reaches out and grabs her wrist in an attempt to make her stay. Passersby don't turn to glance back at the scene.

She finally pulls free and runs to the other side of the road. She calls a friend.

"The creepiest guy was just hitting on me," she says. "Yeah, I'm coming home now."

MU rents former furniture showroom as moldy books cleanup begins

By Ashley Jost

Tuesday, May 6, 2014 at 2:00 pm Comments (2)
The process of cleaning some 600,000 moldy books in the University of Missouri Libraries collection has started as MU prepares to move the books to a new location.

Professor Dan Hooley, an MU Faculty Council member who was part of a committee that provided input on what to do with the books, said Belfor, the restoration company hired by the university, is in the process of moving half of the books to a Texas location to be cleaned.

MU has leased the former Rust & Martin design showroom at the Midway exit to store the affected books. The lease started Thursday and costs $16,965 per month, said Shannon Cary, MU Libraries communications officer.

The building, at 6215 Cunningham Drive, is owned by D&D Investments and recently was renovated to meet the university's needs.

Cary said the building is significantly more expensive than the underground cavern space that MU leases at Subtera. The new location, however, has improved climate control. The books developed mold while being stored in Subtera.

Dave Drane, who owns D&D Investments with Dan Burks, said they bought the old furniture showroom in the fall. "We really had other plans for it, but they needed the space, and it worked out," Drane said.

The majority of the work that was required for the building was taking down walls so the space was one large warehouse. There are separate spaces for the clean and contaminated books, Drane said.

The university has to move out of its Subtera space by June 1.

Hooley said he is pleased with the outcome. Several members of the Faculty Council were upset because they didn't learn about the moldy books until a few months after the library staff became aware of the problem.

The remediation process is expected to last until at least June 2015. The cost for remediation is $2 per book.

Library administrators have applied for grants to help fund remediation and started a fundraising effort that has netted $3,230 of the $50,000 goal, according to MU's donations website.
Missouri lawmakers override veto, enact tax cut

By DAVID A. LIEB

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Missouri’s Republican-led Legislature enacted the state’s first income tax rate reduction in almost a century Tuesday by overriding the veto of Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon, who has denounced it as a reckless financial experiment.

The law will gradually cut Missouri’s top individual income tax rate starting in 2017 and make the state just the third in the nation to offer a special business-income deduction on personal tax returns. But the incremental tax cuts will occur only if Missouri’s revenues keep growing.

The tax cuts could benefit about 2.5 million individuals and families, with the wealthiest standing to gain the most, and would provide an extra boost to hundreds of thousands of people involved in business partnerships, limited liability corporations or their own ventures.

The override vote capped an intense, multi-year campaign that included millions of dollars of advertising by tax-cut supporters and scores of opposition events organized by Nixon. Republicans made the tax cut a priority after failing last year to override Nixon’s veto of a more expansive cut.

The GOP holds large majorities in both chambers but needed a little Democratic help to accomplish the two-thirds vote required to override this year’s veto. The House voted 109-46, with Democratic Rep. Keith English of suburban St. Louis joining all 108 Republicans. The GOP-led Senate voted Monday to override the veto on a party-line 23-8 vote.

Republicans cheered and House Majority Leader John Diehl raised his arms in victory as the override vote passed.

"Missouri is now truly saying we are open for business and ready to grow," House Speaker Tim Jones said.
Like colleagues in other states, Missouri Republicans touted the tax cut as a means of remaining competitive with their neighbors and boosting the economy as revenues rebound from the Great Recession. But the tax-cutting trend has not been limited to Republican states. About a dozen states passed income tax cuts last year and at least half that many already have voted to cut income taxes this year, including Democratic-led New York and Republican-led Oklahoma.

When he vetoed the Missouri measure last week, Nixon raised concerns that it could jeopardize funding for essential state services while providing a much larger benefit to the rich than the poor. He described it as "an unfair, unaffordable and dangerous scheme that would defund our schools, weaken our economy, and destabilize the strong foundation of fiscal discipline" in Missouri.

Nixon said in a statement Tuesday that the tax cut fails to protect public education and "remains a very real threat to the principles of fiscal discipline."

**Economists at the University of Missouri-Columbia have estimated that the tax cut will eventually reduce state revenues by $620 million annually. But Nixon asserted it could punch a $4.8 billion annual hole in the state budget. He contends the bill's wording could be interpreted to eliminate taxes on all income over $9,000, though Republican legislative leaders have called that "absurd."**

The new law is designed to gradually reduce Missouri's top individual income tax rate — currently charged on all income over $9,000 — from 6 percent to 5.5 percent. It also phases in a new 25 percent deduction for business income reported on personal tax returns. Each incremental cut would occur only if state revenues grow by at least $150 million over their high mark from the previous three years.

It also increases a tax deduction for low-income residents and makes annual adjustments to Missouri's tax brackets based on inflation, which could effectively result in perpetual tax cuts.

Republicans tout the revenue trigger as an important safeguard for Missouri's budget. But had the law been in place, a revenue increase in the 2008 fiscal year would have caused a tax cut to occur in 2009 as state revenues plummeted as a result of the recession.


When the law is fully in effect, a family of four earning $44,000 annually could get a tax cut of about $32, according to Department of Revenue projections. A family of four with a business owner making $100,000 annually could get a tax cut of more than $1,600.

The extra money could allow a small business owner to provide raises or fund employee health plans, said Brad Jones, the Missouri director of the National Federation of Independent Business.

Missouri's tax cut is a less aggressive version of measures recently enacted in Kansas, which also lowered its top tax rate and fully exempted certain categories of businesses from taxes. Last week, Moody's Investors Service downgraded Kansas' credit rating, citing its sluggish economic recovery. It said the income tax cuts were putting pressure on the budget and creating risk for the state's financial future.
Missouri’s tax cut: 4 things to know

By DAVID A. LIEB

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Who wins with Tuesday's vote to give Missouri its first cut in income tax rates in nearly a century?

As always, the answer depends on whom you ask.

Missouri’s Republicans who overrode Gov. Jay Nixon’s veto of the tax cut bill say the cut will spur economic growth by making it easier for companies to do business in the state.

Nixon says the cut will benefit the wealthy while annually punching a huge hole in the budget -- and that education will bear much of the cost.

Before you start planning on an annual bump in your state tax refund, here are four things to know about the cut:

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WHAT THE LAW DOES: The bill is designed to gradually reduce Missouri’s top individual income tax rate — currently charged on all income over $9,000 — from 6 percent to 5.5 percent. It also phases in a new 25 percent deduction for business income reported on personal tax returns. Each incremental cut would occur only if state revenues grow by at least $150 million over their high mark from the previous three years.

WHO GETS THE CUT: The tax cuts could benefit about 2.5 million individuals and families, with the wealthiest standing to gain the most, and would provide an extra boost to hundreds of thousands of people involved in business partnerships, limited liability corporations or their own ventures. The state Department of Revenue projects a married family of four earning $44,000 annually would get a tax cut of $32 once the law is fully in effect.
SLOWLY, BUT NOT SURELY: Tax cuts won't begin until 2017, and even then the reductions will be phased in -- so long as state revenues grow by at least $150 million over their high mark from the previous three years. Under the bill, the soonest the tax cuts could be fully phased in is 2021, meaning their effect would be felt on taxes due in April 2022.

History suggests the cuts will be anything but a sure thing. Had the law's criterion been in place during the past decade, the tax cut would have occurred in half of the years. Over the past four decades, the cut would have been triggered in 20 years, but not in 16, according to an Associated Press analysis of historical state revenue figures.

For instance, under this law, a revenue increase in the 2008 fiscal year would have caused a tax cut to occur in 2009 as state revenues plummeted as a result of the recession.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY: University of Missouri-Columbia economists estimate the tax cut will eventually reduce state revenues by $620 million annually. Republicans insist the cuts will fuel expansion, help Missouri compete with its tax-cutting neighbors and create new revenue. Nixon says the cost could be far higher, even claiming language in the bill could be interpreted to eliminate taxes on all income over $9,000. Republicans have called the claims "absurd."

House, Senate Negotiators Finish Work On Missouri Budget

BY MARSHALL GRIFFIN

NO MU MENTION

House and Senate budget negotiators have finalized the 12 remaining bills that make up Missouri's state budget for Fiscal Year 2015.

Both sides signed off on increasing funding for K-12 schools by $114.8 million. If Gov. Jay Nixon's rosier revenue projections hold true, school spending would get a $278 million spending hike. Higher education would increase by $43 million, about 5 percent. State Rep. Rick Stream, R-Kirkwood, chairs the House Budget Committee. He said they also put money in next year's budget to help finance a new state mental hospital at Fulton.
"There were two or three or four different ways to get Fulton (State Hospital) funded," Stream said. "We were moving 3 or 4 footballs down the field and hoping that one would pass … and this particular one, it's a plus in that it only spends $14 million per year, but it does go out (for) 25 years."

There was very little disagreement between the two chambers.

The Senate got its way on zeroing out a $6 million allocation for creating a potential new state park in place of the current Ozarks National Scenic Riverways. However, the House was able to maintain a one-dollar line item for the proposal, a figure that could be expanded in the future if the federal government were to ever surrender control of the park to the state of Missouri.

The GOP-led House and Senate have until Friday to send the 12 budget bills to Nixon, a Democrat. Floor debates on the 12 remaining budget bills are expected to take place Thursday in the Senate, and either Wednesday or Thursday in the House. House Bill 2001, which covers commissions that handle state bonds, has already been sent to the governor.

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**Education gets top billing on Capitol Hill**

By KIMBERLY HEFLING

**NO MU MENTION**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lawmakers looking ahead to the November elections are putting renewed focus on education, tackling issues on Capitol Hill this week ranging from expanding charter schools to paying off student loan debt.

And, a House committee will examine how higher education and college sports might be affected by a regional National Labor Relations Board ruling allowing Northwestern University football players to unionize.

Voters rank education high among issues of importance to them, and this week's activities are likely a nod to that.
House Majority Leader Eric Cantor has made expanding school choice options a priority. Reflecting that enthusiasm, the House as early as Thursday will consider legislation that would provide $300 million annually to expand charter schools. It would consolidate two existing programs, provide state grants to expand and replicate high-quality charter schools and fund the acquisition of buildings for the schools. Charter schools typically use taxpayer dollars but are run by outside organizations.

"America isn't working when our students do not have the opportunity to attend a school that best fits their needs," Cantor said in a statement.

Even as many Democrats adamantly oppose school vouchers, expanding high-quality charter schools is an area where the two sides have found some common ground. The charter schools bill, for example, has the support of Rep. George Miller, a California lawmaker who is the ranking Democrat on the House education committee. While it appeared to have a strong chance of House passage, its future was uncertain in the Senate.

Student loans, the subject of some contentious debate in 2013, are coming up again in both the House and Senate.

With the doubling of interest rates looming, Congress last year acted to keep them at low level levels for now — but linked those rates to the financial markets. President Barack Obama had trumpeted the issue in his 2012 re-election bid, and the legislation passed with bipartisan support.

Now, moving forward a Democratic agenda focused on college costs leading to the November election, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., on Tuesday filed a bill co-sponsored by more than 20 fellow Democratic senators that would open the door for potentially millions of federal loan recipients to refinance that debt at the same rate as current recipients. Undergraduates, for example, qualify for loans at a 3.86 percentage rate.

Warren called the $1.2 trillion in student loan debt in America a "crisis that threatens our economy." Her plan would fund the effort with a tax increase on wealthy Americans, but could potentially cost billions.

"I think bringing down the interest rates on existing student loans would be a huge benefit for young people who are trying to build some economic security and for this economy," Warren said.

Miller and John Tierney, D-Mass., planned to file a companion bill in the House, and the group Progressive Change Campaign Committee said it would hold grassroots events this week in support.

Rep. Luke Messer, R-Ind., said Republican lawmakers are open to refinancing student loan debt, but have to be mindful of the cost to taxpayers.

"It's also important we don't drown the future generation in debt," Messer said.

In a March Associated Press-GfK poll, education was one of the few issues where Democrats had an advantage over Republicans. In the poll, 25 percent of respondents favored the Democrats approach while 18 percent preferred the Republicans. But among a public disenchanted with both parties, more — 29 percent — said they trust neither party on education. Another 26 percent said they trusted both equally.
Despite the renewed focus on education, it does not appear that Congress is close to rewriting the No Child Left Behind law that's been up for renewal since 2007. The GOP-led House passed a rewrite of the law, but no vote has been scheduled on the Senate floor on a Democratic-run Senate education panel's version.

Because of the congressional stalemate, the Obama administration has been issuing waivers allowing states — and in some cases districts — to ignore parts of the law if they come up with their own reform plans.

Miller said he's getting less optimistic the law and another one up for renewal focused on higher education will pass this year.

"This nation has a lot of work to do on its education system but there's some belief by a lot of people that the federal government doesn't make any difference and we don't need to do this, but the fact of the matter is we're falling further and further behind internationally," Miller said.

But the House was expected to take up a bill focused on research in education that would reauthorize and update entities such as the Institute of Education Sciences.

The regional NLRB ruling on college athletes unionizing also is attracting some attention in the Capitol.

In announcing the Thursday hearing, House Education Committee Chairman John Kline, R-Minn., called the regional labor board's decision a "radical departure from longstanding federal labor policies."

The ruling in March said athletes were employees of the university and had the same rights to bargain collectively as other workers. Northwestern University football players cast secret ballots April 25 on whether to form a union, although the results aren't expected to be released until after the full NLRB rules on Northwestern's appeal.

Outside of Washington, lawmakers in several states are debating the future of the Common Core standards, which have been adopted in 44 states and the District of Columbia and spell out for each grade what math and English skills students should master.

On Monday, the group Collaborative for Student Success, which is backed by education foundations including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, said it would send representatives to Capitol Hill and to GOP congressional committee offices encouraging support for the standards even among opposition from the tea party wing of the party.
College graduation: 4 ways things have changed

By LEANNE ITALIE

NO MU MENTION

NEW YORK (AP) — There's still plenty of pomp and circumstance, inspiring words from lofty speakers and tossing tassels, but graduating from college today is very different from a generation or so ago.

Here are four things today's college graduates may experience that have changed from 30 years ago, when the parents of some of today's students were picking up their diplomas.

STUDENT LOAN DEBT

In 1984, according to some estimates, only half of graduates had debt from college loans, averaging about $2,000. Now, two-thirds of recent bachelor's degree recipients have outstanding student loans, with an average debt of about $27,000, according to a Pew Research Center report.

"Back in 1984, I was a fairly recent college grad. I had a $10,000 student loan and payments were $63.50 per month," said financial planner Judy McNary in Broomfield, Colorado. Rent on her apartment was $600, "so that loan payment was about 10 percent of the cost of our housing. Fast forward to 2014, and I have met many recent graduates whose loan payments are anywhere from $900 to $2,000 per month — easily matching or exceeding their housing costs."

SELFIES

Several schools are urging 2014 graduates to resist the selfie when they walk across the stage during commencement to get their diploma and shake hands with the college president or dean of students. But selfies are OK at other points in commencements at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island, and the University of South Florida in Tampa, two schools that banned selfies on stage in the interest of time.

How painful is the ban? "Nobody cares that we can't take selfies," said 22-year-old Ali Luthman, a Bryant senior graduating with a double major in sociology and marketing. "There's a time and a place when selfies are appropriate and that's not when you're crossing the stage."
Three decades ago, the analog version of selfies was to have someone else take your picture with a film camera, then head to the drug store and pay to have the film developed, hoping for at least one non-blurry shot to freeze the moment.

Interestingly, prices haven't changed that much for those who still use old-fashioned film cameras. A roll of 24 exposures cost about $3 to $5 in 1984, and developing 4-by-6 prints ran $8 to $15, estimated Matthew Schmidt, a spokesman for FujiFilm America. Today, a four-pack of 24-exposure FujiColor Superia X-Tra lists for $17.95 — less than $5 a roll — and Walgreens processes 24 color exposures of 35mm film for $11.99.

PET DIPLOMAS

It used to be a tearful farewell to Fido or Fluffy when you went away to school. But rules have loosened on some campuses, though dorm policies vary on type of pets, according to a 2011 survey of admissions officials by Kaplan Test Prep. Some schools allow pets in tanks, some have cat-designated floors and others have whole dorms dedicated to pet cohabiters.

Eckerd College has taken pet-friendly to a whole new level, holding its first "graduation" ceremony for the critters themselves last year, complete with treats, special diplomas and tiny mortarboards decorated with the initials EC.

Dean of students James J. Annarelli, who officiated at the school's commencement in St. Petersburg, Florida, said there were a few surprises. "Pet the snake. Watch the bird," said one student who showed up with a slithery buddy wrapped around one wrist and a sharp-beaked feathered friend perched on the other.

And a dog trained to high-five accidentally scratched Annarelli; he had to triage with a handkerchief for the rest of the ceremony.

But Annarelli, who has a dog and cat, is a fan of pets helping students acclimate to campus life, especially those living far from home. About 20 students in last year's graduating class of 500 participated in the pet commencement. "What's so heartwarming is that students with pets who are graduating had friends join them, just as though their children were graduating," he said.

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

The traditional march prevails, with some renditions harkening to the past and others looking to the future.

At Eckerd, for instance, graduating students walk from the center of the waterfront campus to a tent in a field, led by five professional bagpipers playing traditional Scottish music. They switch to huffing and puffing on "Pomp" as students enter the tent.

"The use of bagpipers goes to the earliest days of the college and reflects what a number of church-related colleges do," Annarelli said.
On the Atlanta campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology, by contrast, a band of dancing robots called Shimis perform at commencement. Shimi was developed at the school's Center for Music Technology in conjunction with a media lab in Israel. Controlled by Android smartphone technology, Shimi's dance moves match whatever music it senses, whether a selected playlist or a drumbeat. Three Shimis performed to "Pomp and Circumstance" from white pedestals during Georgia Tech's commencement ceremonies last December and will be front and center again this commencement season.

Developer Gil Weinberg explained the name Shimi is an ode to shimon, the Hebrew for "to hear," along with nice word play on "shimmy" to laud the robot's dance skills.

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**the maneater**

**MU nursing program ranked No. 1 in the nation**

By Covey Eonyak Son

**MU’s Sinclair School of Nursing was ranked the No. 1 nursing school in the nation, leading three other Missouri nursing programs** — Southeast Missouri State University (No. 4), Truman State University (No. 6) and Missouri Southern State University (No. 7).

*CollegeAtlas*, an online higher education evaluator, claims to rank each institution based on multiple criteria, including students’ pass rate in the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (a certification exam required for all professional nurses), academic quality, affordability and accessibility.

**Academic distinction**

According to the [school’s website](#), Sinclair’s NCLEX-RN pass rate is 96 percent for first-time test takers, which is above the national average of 90 percent.

Dean Judith Miller said Sinclair’s ability to keep up with the contemporary health care industry sets the school apart from competing institutions.

“Our faculty knows all of the latest diagnostics and treatment, and the pharmaceutical dynamics,” she said. “We also use Google Glasses to allow students to record their procedures and upload them to YouTube … then the faculty view them for evaluations.”

Students at the school are also immersed in the Essig Clinical Simulation Center, where they roleplay real-world medical scenarios.
“In that simulation center, we have all kinds of challenges that a student would encounter in the real world,” Miller said. “And it’s in a protected environment in which they need to plan, do interventions and prioritize their care.”

Lea Wood, a graduate teaching assistant and coordinator of the simulation center, said the center is an essential part of the students’ education that distinguishes the school from competitors.

“It’s one of the things that really puts us a cut above the rest,” Wood said. “We can recreate real-life situations and also protect patients, who might feel like spectacles to students ... It’s also a safe place for the students to learn and make mistakes without injuring anyone.”

Wood said she believes using the simulation center to train students better prepares them to become professional nurses.

“Not only do we teach our students how to be nurses and how to use their skills, we also teach them how to find their resources and use them effectively,” Wood said. “So, our students are able to give better care more efficiently.”

Junior Kendall Farnsworth said her experience at Sinclair has challenged and benefited her.

“My experience has been extremely difficult and rewarding at the same time, because we are learning things that apply to real-life situations,” she said. “And when you get into the clinical setting, you feel confident in the things that you learn in the classrooms and the (simulation center).”

Farnsworth also said that Sinclair’s educators add to her experience at the school.

“You can tell that they are very passionate about what they do and that rubs off on us,” she said. “It’s exciting that we’re in a profession that they care so much about and that they are teaching us the newer versions of everything.”

Entry to the school

According to Miller, Sinclair maintains an 8-to-1 student-faculty ratio.

While the other criteria — affordability and accessibility — are as important as Sinclair’s academic strides, Miller said, balancing those may be a challenging task.

“Affordability is important because college can be an expensive deal,” she said. “Accessibility may be more of a challenge, since we have a lot more students who want to come here for nursing than we can admit, so we admit about a third of the students.”

Miller’s focus, however, is less on the quantity of students than on the diversity of the population admitted to the school.
“I look at it (accessibility) in terms of having a diverse student body and giving chances to people who have not had a chance in the past,” Miller said.

On the map
Sinclair’s Director of Communications Brad Johnson believes the recent recognition helped attract more attention to MU’s nursing program.

“Within just three days that we have had the post up on Facebook, we have had 48,000 to 50,000 views on our page, which is something we have never seen before,” Johnson said.

The maneater
Renew Mizzou will displace over 400 seats in Ellis

By Covey Eonyak Son and Elizabeth Loutfi

Finding a quiet space to study for this year’s final exams may be challenging for many students, with construction taking place in major parts of Ellis Library.

The construction will temporarily convert two of the library’s reading rooms — the west reading room on the second floor and the former Current Periodicals Reading Room on the main floor — into office space for staff moving out of Jesse Hall while the Renew Mizzou renovations take place in Jesse and Swallow halls.

400 displaced seats

According to the MU Director of Libraries James Cogswell, more than 400 seats located in the two rooms will be impacted during the 2014 spring final exam week and become unavailable for student use throughout the summer and the 2014-2015 academic year.

“The two rooms will be open for students to use through the busy final exam week this spring,” Cogswell said in an email. “However, workmen may be present during the day, and those rooms will not be designated as ‘quiet study’ when workmen are present."

According to the Renew Mizzou plans, the offices of Admissions, Cashiers, Registrar and Student Financial Aid will occupy the spaces in Ellis.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said the offices will be relocated to Ellis in order to allow students to conveniently access services they would normally receive at Jesse Hall.
“It’s important to note that the offices moving to Ellis Library are those that are important for students to be able to access,” Basi said in an email. “Because of that concern, (Renew Mizzou organizers) made sure these offices remained near the center of campus.”

**Searching for replacements**

Members of the Missouri Students Association and Campus Facilities are working together to replace the lost spaces.

MSA Academic Affairs Committee chairman Ben Vega and Student Affairs Committee chairman Mitch Moonier resolved that the best course of action was to circulate information about the construction taking place in Ellis, and develop a list of alternative places where students can study, both on and off campus.

To construct the list, MSA Senate Speaker Ben Bolin, Vega and members of the two committees contacted several campus building coordinators, asking for permission to list academic halls, public buildings and private venues as alternative study spaces, as well as each location’s hours and available space.

As of May 5, the list includes over 200 “alternative” seats on campus, as well as 49 seats at Vida Coffee, 150 at the Columbia Public Library and 75 at the Hy-Vee located on 25 Conley Road.

“We received overwhelmingly positive responses,” Vega said. “However, there were some people who said they couldn’t do it for security reasons … which was disappointing, but we understand.”

Bolin and Vega have also been in contact with the Interim Vice Chancellor of Operations Gary Ward about designing a map showcasing the alternative study spaces.

Ward was unavailable for comment.

Campus Facilities spokeswoman Karlan Seville said student workers at the Sustainability Office are currently working on the map.

**Preparing for the future**

Moonier said the work that has been done so far not only helped to address the current problem, but has also laid the foundation for addressing the same problem for the remainder of Renew Mizzou.

“This is going to be an issue for the next two semesters, and I think we can take the groundwork that’s been laid moving forward, and plan to make more spaces for the fall and spring semesters,” he said.

The list will remain as a resource for students even after Renew Mizzou renovations are complete, Vega said, to make sure students know of alternative study spaces.
Vega said his concern originates from when Ellis fell prey to an arsonist in 2011 and students were unable to use certain parts of the library afterwards due to the repairs that took place.

“I’m sure there were steps taken, but as a freshman, I wasn’t very aware. I think it’s good we (now) have a safety net,” Vega said.

Police interrupt late-night jaunt; one arrested for marijuana

By Alan Burdziak

Tuesday, May 6, 2014 at 2:00 pm Comments (13)

University of Missouri police arrested a 19-year-old man suspected of distributing marijuana near the school and four of his associates for allegedly trespassing in a city park after they were found smoking pot in the woods just off campus, Capt. Brian Weimer said.

It began just after 2 a.m. yesterday when an officer saw a car with five men pull into parking lot AV 9 near Williams and Rollins streets in the northeast part of campus. Knowing that nothing in the area is open at that time of night and that youths are known to go to that area to smoke marijuana in the woods at Clyde Wilson Memorial Park, the officer went to check on the car, Weimer said. It was empty, but he heard the teens, all 19 years old, in the park, and they ran when he tried to make contact.

Another officer arrived, went into the woods and came back with Calvin J. Holmes. Holmes was taken to the MU Police Department, where he was cited for first-degree trespassing at the park and released on a summons. The park's hours are 6 a.m. to 11 p.m.

The other four eventually came back to the car and the waiting officer. George H. Farrell, Stephen P. Hagen and Dylan T.H. Smith also were given summonses for first-degree trespassing.

After a search of the car, the officer arrested Devin J. Schmitz on suspicion of distribution of a controlled substance near a school, possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and first-degree trespassing. The possession and distribution charges are both felonies. In the car, police found 54 grams of marijuana in four bags, an electronic scale, a glass pipe, a gas mask bong, numerous plastic bags and other paraphernalia, and $380, all of which allegedly belonged to Schmitz, Weimer said.
Schmitz was released from the Boone County Jail after posting a $15,500 bond.

Lack of electricity impedes progress in sub-Saharan Africa

by Stephanie Peace

If you were to make a list of the most important issues facing the poor in Africa today, you would probably include access to healthy food, clean water and improved health care, but may not think to add electricity. Nor would I, until I lived and worked in Sierra Leone with the St. Louis-based nonprofit organization Project Peanut Butter. From the first time I arrived in Sierra Leone and crossed the bay that separates the airport from the capital city of Freetown, I was most struck by the darkness. I could see nothing of the city that has a population of almost 500,000. Life in Freetown as an American used to electricity was one of choices: to take a cold shower or wait for water to heat on our gas stove; to go outside to fire up the generator to read at night or go to bed at sundown? And yet, these inconveniences are mild compared to the difficulties we faced as a small nonprofit doing business in Freetown.

A country that lacks electricity in many areas and has only intermittent, unreliable electricity in its capital, Sierra Leone is a formidable environment to try to run a business. Our factory in Freetown uses an industrial-sized mixing machine to produce a specialized peanut butter paste used to treat severe acute malnutrition in children. Another machine packages our product into individual sachets for distribution. Frequent power outages and rolling blackouts forced us to switch between running on a generator and the national grid multiple times each business day, which is expensive and wastes valuable production time. These outages can also damage the machinery, resulting in costly repairs and production downtime that delay the distribution of this life-saving malnutrition treatment.

The lack of electricity severely impacts business development in sub-Saharan Africa and impedes many Africans from gaining self-sufficiency. Ali, the production foreman for the PPB site in Sierra Leone, has dreams of helping his younger brothers support themselves, since their education was disrupted by the recent civil war. Through his job at PPB, Ali saved money to buy a computer so his brothers could open a small Internet café. Because Ali’s brothers live in a town that does not have electricity, Ali will have to save for a generator too, adding an extra barrier to opening a small business that could provide for his family.

These are just a few examples, but the problem of access to electricity is widespread. Seven out of 10 Africans living in sub-Saharan Africa lack electricity. Women give birth at night in complete darkness. Vaccines that must be refrigerated are spoiled due to power outages. Many Africans must rely on open fires and kerosene lamps, two heavily polluting and toxic energy sources, for lighting and cooking.

The Electrify Africa Act of 2013 (H.R. 2548) will provide 50 million Africans with access to electricity for the first time by providing a minimum of 20,000 megawatts of electrical power. No additional taxpayer
funds will be used as this bill will rely on a public/private sector partnership. H.R. 2548 directs the United States government to form a comprehensive strategy to “support affordable, reliable electricity to improve economic growth, health, and education in Africa, while helping job creation in the United States through greater exports.” The bill also directs developing nations to create better business environments for private-sector investments and urges international loan agencies to increase energy investment to the region.

This cooperation between government and the private sector has already begun to produce results. General Electric has committed to bringing 5,000 megawatts of new, affordable energy through provision of its technologies, expertise and capital, and Heirs Holdings has committed $2.5 billion of investment and financing in energy as well. The Electrify Africa Act can usher in a transformation in Africa providing a means to self-sufficiency for those living in extreme poverty and providing benefits to our economy at the same time.

I want to thank Rep. Ann Wagner for her support of the Electrify Africa Act (H.R. 2548) by agreeing to co-sponsor this bill. I urge our members of Congress to vote for this legislation when it comes before the full House of Representatives in the coming weeks and when a companion bill is introduced in the Senate.

*Stephanie Peace is a 2007 graduate of Villa Duchesne, a 2011 graduate of Harvard University, and a first-year medical student at University of Missouri School of Medicine. She has worked in Malawi and Sierra Leone with St. Louis-based nonprofit organization Project Peanut Butter. The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Project Peanut Butter.*