Colleges fall short on campus sexual assault cases, Sen. Claire McCaskill says

BY RENEE SCHOOF

MCCLATCHY WASHINGTON BUREAU

A survey of sexual violence on American campuses found that many schools fall short in how they investigate and resolve such claims, Sen. Claire McCaskill said Wednesday.

“This shows there are way too many schools that are failing,” the Missouri Democrat said at a news conference.

McCaskill said that perhaps the most disturbing finding in the survey was that 41 percent of the 236 schools that responded said they hadn’t conducted a single investigation on sexual assaults in the past five years. By law, every case must be investigated, she said.

“It is obviously a serious indictment that you have that many schools that have not investigated a single case,” McCaskill said.

The survey found that many schools did not take steps that would encourage students to report sexual violence, such as keeping the reports confidential. Schools also failed to provide training for students, faculty and staff on how to respond to reports of sexual assault.
On Twitter, University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe said he welcomed McCaskill’s work and said his school system “will continue to work with her in addressing this challenging societal issue.”

Wolfe has one of his four campuses — the Missouri University of Science and Technology — on the recently released list of schools under Title IX investigation for how sexual assault cases were handled. And last year a spotlight turned to the University of Missouri in Columbia after it was accused of not responding to allegations of the rape of former MU swimmer Sasha Menu Courey, who later committed suicide.

An independent investigation found university administrators had not done everything they should have to report and investigate the Courey case. Wolfe issued an executive order making every university employee a mandated reporter of sexual abuse, with the exception of legal and medical professionals.

Last month, MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin said the university is hiring a full-time Title IX coordinator and adding a full-time investigator to better address sexual assault allegations on the campus.

Among the findings from the survey:

More than 40 percent of the nation’s largest public universities allow students to help adjudicate sexual assault claims, which McCaskill said was a bad practice. In a criminal court, members of a jury can’t know the defendant, which she said was not the case in campus sex crime adjudications.

Nearly a third of campus law enforcement officials received no training on how to respond to reports of sexual violence.

About a fourth of schools in the sample allow athletic departments to oversee sexual violence cases involving student athletes.
“You cannot expect the athletic department, which is in charge of giving scholarships, or depends on the athletic prowess of young men or women, that they will be fair, or at least have the appearance of being fair,” McCaskill said.

Roughly half of institutions had a hotline for students who have been sexually assaulted, and slightly fewer provided the option of reporting sexual violence online. About one in 10 do not allow confidential reporting.

McCaskill said the survey and discussions with students, school administrators, law enforcement officials and advocates would help shape legislation. She said her proposal would ensure that adjudication practices are consistent nationwide and require campus surveys on sexual assault, among other changes.

Know Your IX — a group working to help students know their rights under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which prohibits all forms of sex discrimination in education — is urging the senators to revise the law so that schools can be fined for violations regarding sexual assaults.

The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights now can only punish a school by removing all its federal funding. With only such an extreme option available, it has never sanctioned any school.

_The Star’s Mará Rose Williams contributed to this report._

Disturbing Survey Shows Colleges are Terrible at Handling Campus Sexual Assaults

By Lindsay Toler

Three months after an independent report criticized how the University of Missouri's handled a scholarship athlete’s claim that she’d been raped by football players, a new survey from Senator Claire McCaskill reveals glaring shortcomings in how America's colleges and universities nationwide handle on-campus sexual violence.

McCaskill -- who calls the study results a "wake up call" for the 440 surveyed schools and beyond -- is leading the charge against campus assaults with the same fervor she brought to the fight against assaults in the military. Her bill to overhaul how the armed forces manage sexual assault allegations passed the senate in a rare unanimous vote in March.

Higher education institutions are required by federal law to investigate sexual assault claims from students. McCaskill's survey found 41 percent of schools hadn't conducted a single investigation in five years. Of the schools that did investigate, several reported that they had seven times more reported assaults than open investigations.

"Unfortunately, the disturbing bottom line of this unprecedented, nationwide survey, is that many (colleges and universities) continually violate the law and fail to follow best practices in how they handle sexual violence," McCaskill says. "These failures affect nearly every stage of institutions’ response to such crimes, and these results should serve as a call to action to our colleges and universities to tackle this terrible crime."

Here are some highlights from the survey, which you can also read online: "Sexual Violence On Campus: How Too Many Institutions of Higher Education are Failing to Protect Students."

- Twenty-one percent of colleges and universities provide no sexual response training for faculty and staff. Thirty-one percent don't provide training for students.

- Only sixteen percent of schools conduct confidential climate surveys to get an accurate picture of assaults on campus.

- Law enforcement officers at 30 percent of the schools receive no training on how to respond to reports of sexual violence.
More than 70 percent of schools don’t have protocols on how schools and law enforcement should work together after students report sexual violence.

Only half of the schools provide a hotline for student survivors of sexual assault. Only 44 percent of schools allow students to report sexual assaults online. Eight percent of schools do not allow confidential reporting.

Most schools do not provide access to a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, a specially trained nurse who can provide medical and other services to survivors of sexual assault.

More than twenty percent of schools give the athletic department oversight of sexual violence cases involving student athletes.

The survey hits close to home, and not just because Missouri’s senator’s name is on it. Sasha Menu Courey, a swimmer at MU, committed suicide in 2011 after claiming that members of the football team raped her.

After her story went public in an *ESPN Outside the Lines* investigation in January, an independent report found that MU should have investigated her assault in 2012, as Title IX requires, when university officials found two emails about it during a public-records request.

Mizzou's lawyers should have alerted the school's Title IX coordinator about the assault claims, but at the time, the assistant general counsel didn't even know the school had a Title IX coordinator, the Dowd Bennett Law Firm in Clayton found.

University of Missouri System president Tim Wolfe instituted sweeping changes after the report on Courey's assault.

"Now it’s time to get to work and make the university a model for victim support and accountability for thorough investigations," McCaskill said after the report came out.

Follow Lindsay Toler on Twitter at @StLouisLindsay. E-mail the author at Lindsay.Toler@RiverfrontTimes.com.

Senator: Schools in denial or incompetent on assaults

Deirdre Shesgreen, Gannett News Service 6:09 a.m. CDT July 10, 2014

WASHINGTON – Many of America's colleges and universities are failing to comply with federal laws and policies designed to combat sexual assault on their campuses, according to a new report released Wednesday by Sen. Claire McCaskill.
The first-of-its-kind national survey -- in which McCaskill's staff polled 440 institutions of higher education and received 319 responses -- reveals major problems in how schools report, investigate, and resolve allegations of rape on college campuses.

"There are schools that are working hard every day to protect their students, but this survey shows there are way too many schools that are failing," McCaskill, D-Mo., said at a news conference after unveiling the results.

The findings confirm the perception that sexual predators on campus "have little to no fear of any serious consequences," she said. "If we're going to turn the tide on this problem, we're going to need some policy changes and some institutional changes in how schools handle sexual assault.

McCaskill launched the survey earlier this year, as she and other Washington policymakers moved to shine the spotlight on the problem of sexual assault on college campuses. About one in five women have been the victim of a sexual attack during college, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The issue of college sexual assault has also received increased attention in Missouri. Last month, officials at the University of Missouri in Columbia announced they would increase resources devoted to fighting sexual assault. That move came after the suicide of a former swimmer at the school, who had told friends and health professionals before her death that she'd been raped by several football players. And in another corner of the state, federal civil rights officials recently revealed that they are investigating how the Missouri University of Science and Technology handles sexual violence complaints.

Wednesday's report highlights a bevy of hurdles to addressing such crimes. Among the findings:

- Sexual assault charges often are not investigated. More than 40 percent of schools said they had not conducted a single sexual assault investigation in the past five years, even though some of those same institutions reported sexual attacks to the Department of Education in that same period.

- Universities don't know the scope of the problem. Only 16 percent of schools conduct so-called climate surveys aimed at determining the prevalence of sexual assault on campus, even though experts say such questionnaires are one of the best tools to get accurate data about the problem.

- Many schools do not provide training to faculty, staff, or students. Thirty-three percent of colleges fail to even train those who sit on adjudication panels that handle sexual assault cases for their institutions.

- Many schools do not make it easy for victims to report attacks anonymously. Only about half of U.S. colleges have a hotline that victims can call to report a sexual assault. And 44 percent give students the option of reporting attacks online. McCaskill and others say victims need to be assured of confidentiality in reporting attacks. Even if they do not want to press charges, they can access counseling and other services that will help them cope with the trauma.
Advocates for sexual assault victims said the survey will help policymakers identify the most acute problems -- and possible solutions -- to addressing this problem.

"This survey provides much-needed insight into how colleges are addressing, and failing to address, sexual assault," said Scott Berkowitz, president and founder of RAINN, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network. "It will help us identify and fix systemic problems, such as the large number of campuses that currently provide no training for law enforcement, students or employees."

McCaskill said she was most disturbed by the finding that more than 40 percent of schools had not conducted any sexual assault investigations in the last five years.

Those schools are "either in denial or they're incompetent," McCaskill said. "There is no way that on 41 percent on our campuses there were no sexual assaults in the last five years."

She said it was also deeply troubling that more than 20 percent of universities let their athletic departments oversee sexual assault cases involving school athletes -- a situation that is rife with potential conflicts of interest. That allows athletic administrators, for instance, to determine the fate of a star athlete charged with rape.

"This is something we can put an end to," McCaskill said.

In the short-term, McCaskill said the survey would help educate parents and students about how to evaluate the safety of a prospective university campus. McCaskill’s office did not release any details about individual university responses or even disclose which schools were surveyed. She said they promised universities confidentiality because she was more interested in getting "good data" than in "calling out" specific schools. But she said the report offers a guide for what parents and students should look for at institutions of higher education.

"We are arming every parent in Missouri and across this country with the kind of information they need to ask questions" when they visit college campuses, she said.

In the longer run, McCaskill said the results will help shape legislation that she is crafting with other lawmakers to curb college sexual assault. She said the proposal -- which she is working on with a bipartisan group of about eight senators -- would be wide-ranging.

"We're going to look at everything from punishment for perpetrators to trying to make sure the adjudication process is consistent across the country," McCaskill said.

Reporter Deirdre Shesgreen writes about Missouri issues and lawmakers from Gannett's offices in Washington, D.C.
McCaskill criticizes colleges and universities on sex assault

By Chuck Raasch craasch@post-dispatch.com 202-298-6880

WASHINGTON • Many colleges and universities are failing in how they handle sexual violence among students, according to Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., who released on Wednesday a survey of colleges and universities.

But the American Council on Education, which represents more than 1,700 colleges and university presidents, was “greatly disappointed” in a survey that was not balanced and draws unwarranted conclusions, the organization’s general counsel said.

That pushback could mean that bipartisan legislation by McCaskill and other senators will receive heavy scrutiny from the nation’s colleges and universities.

Last month, ACE President Molly Corbett Broad, the former president of the University of North Carolina, wrote a letter to the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee asking that any legislation on sexual assault on campus provide more “clarity and consistency” as to how campuses should treat overlapping sex-crime laws and Title IX, the federal law banning discrimination based on gender, and provide funding for more research and enforcement.

McCaskill said she would like to help provide that clarity and said her legislation was likely to include funding. But she may not find a ready ally in ACE, based on the organization’s reaction to her survey.

The shortcomings on campus, McCaskill said, range from failing to have the federally mandated Title IX designated coordinator, to failing to follow federal law requiring institutions that receive claims of sexual assault to have a process to adjudicate those claims, to giving athletic departments oversight in cases of sexual violence involving student athletes.

She said the fact that 20 percent of campuses reported giving athletic departments oversight of sexual violence cases involving student athletes was “bordering on outrageous.”

McCaskill said that roughly 40 percent of the schools that responded to her office’s survey “have not reported a single investigation in the past five years,” despite a Centers for Disease Control 2012 study showing that
one in five undergraduate women has been the victim of “attempted or completed sexual violence during college.”

“That means they are either in denial or they are incompetent, because there is no way that at 41 percent of our campuses there were no sexual assaults over the past five years,” McCaskill said.

Her survey also found that more than 20 percent of universities provide no training in sexual assault for faculty and staff, and that more than 30 percent did not do so for students.

But Ada Meloy, general counsel for the college group, said McCaskill’s interpretation of her own numbers did not give enough credit to colleges and universities, which often are not equipped to handle “incredibly difficult cases” involving “word-on-word” situations that commonly stem from too much drinking. The survey “treats the rights of the accused as an afterthought, which colleges and universities clearly cannot do,” Meloy said. It also ignores “how hard colleges and universities are working to address a serious and complex societal issue,” she said.

McCaskill had earlier accused the ACE of trying to thwart participation in her survey by sending out Internet-based guidance on how to respond to it. The organization said the guidance was simply meant to help university administrations deal with an unfamiliar congressional inquiry.

McCaskill said Wednesday that she was pleased with the response of 236 returned surveys, about two-thirds of those her office sent out.

The senator said she would introduce bipartisan legislation later this summer to streamline laws governing sexual assault on campus and address investigative and prosecution protocols between universities and local law enforcement. Her bill is also likely to address training for people who take complaints of alleged sexual assaults.

Scott Berkowitz, president and founder of the advocacy group Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, said the survey would “help us identify and fix systemic problems, such as the large number of campuses that currently provide no training for law enforcement, students or employees, as well as the alarming number that leave oversight of some cases to the athletic department.”

Survey respondents were granted anonymity, and the institutions’ individual responses were not released. McCaskill said she was keeping the surveys secret because they were done for research, not to single out institutions for wrongdoing.
Senator’s Survey Finds Subpar Response From Colleges to Sexual Assault

By Monica Vendituoli

More than 40 percent of colleges have not conducted a single sexual-assault investigation in the past five years, according to the results of a national survey released on Wednesday by Sen. Claire McCaskill. The on-the-ground details of campus sexual assault and the capacity of officials there to respond to it should serve as a "wake-up call" for colleges, said Ms. McCaskill, a Missouri Democrat who recently held three roundtable discussions on the issue.

The survey results come as colleges are confronting their legal responsibilities to investigate and resolve reports of sexual violence, under pressure from activists and the White House. The Education Department is now investigating more than 60 colleges for possible mishandling of alleged sexual misconduct. Campus sexual assault was also the subject of a recent Senate hearing and proposed regulations.

"The disturbing bottom line of this unprecedented, nationwide survey is that many institutions continually violate the law and fail to follow best practices in how they handle sexual violence," Ms. McCaskill said at a news conference on Wednesday.

More than 10 percent of the 319 institutions that responded to the survey do not have a Title IX coordinator, which is a violation of the federal gender-equity law known as Title IX.
Effective practices for resolving sexual-misconduct cases include banning students and athletics departments from adjudication boards, says Ms. McCaskill’s report on the survey, prepared by the Senate Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight, which she leads. Yet at 27 percent of colleges that responded to the survey, students serve on such hearing boards, and at 22 percent of colleges, athletics departments oversee cases involving athletes.

The survey also identified deficiencies in training—for campus law-enforcement officials, faculty and staff members, and students. Each group did not receive any training on sexual assault at a significant minority of colleges (30 percent, more than 20 percent, and more than 30 percent of institutions, respectively). Also, most colleges—more than 70 percent—did not have protocols for working with local law-enforcement authorities on sexual-assault cases.

Developing such partnerships and training students and employees were two recommendations this spring from the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault. Another: that colleges conduct confidential climate surveys to gain insight into sexual assault on campuses. Ms. McCaskill found, however, that only 16 percent of colleges had completed climate surveys.

The senator promised confidentiality to colleges to encourage participation in the survey. In May she criticized the American Council on Education for offering a webinar in which a law firm warned colleges about responding to the survey. She was "extremely troubled," she wrote, by what she perceived as "a chilling effect on institutions’ participation," according to news reports.

Out of the 440 institutions contacted by Ms. McCaskill in three rounds of sampling, more than 70 percent responded to the 28-question survey, which adapted questions from the National Institute of Justice.

The survey results, as well as insights from the three roundtables, will inform bipartisan legislation, Ms. McCaskill said, that she plans to introduce in late August or early September.
WASHINGTON -- More than a fifth of colleges nationwide allow their athletic departments to oversee sexual assault cases involving student-athletes, according to the results of a survey released Wednesday by Senator Claire McCaskill.

In addition, more than 40 percent of colleges responding to the survey said that they had not conducted a single investigation of sexual assault in the past five years -- a finding that the Democratic lawmaker called "unbelievable." The survey included a range of institutions, including large public institutions, private colleges and for-profit institutions.

McCaskill is working with a bipartisan group of Senators to craft new legislation aimed at combating sexual assault. The results of the survey, she said, should serve as a "wake-up call" because they show that many colleges are violating the law and failing to follow best practices in how they handle sexual assault cases.
"We think it’s really important that this information be used aggressively to inform colleges and universities that they are falling short," she told reporters Wednesday.

Among her concerns, she said, was the fact that a majority of institutions do not have protocols for how they work with local law enforcement to handle sexual assault cases. Many are also failing to adequately train employees and students. About one-third of the colleges responding to the survey said they don’t provide any training for students on dealing with sexual assault.

In addition, very few institutions -- only 16 percent -- reported using annual anonymous surveys to gauge student views about the climate surrounding sexual violence at their institutions. Victims’ advocates have been pushing more colleges to adopt such “climate surveys.” Earlier this year, the White House urged all institutions to conduct those evaluations.

McCaskill said she was also disappointed to learn that nearly half of colleges responding to her survey reported that students were involved in the adjudication of sexual assault cases on campus. Such a system creates conflicts of interest and discourages victims from coming forward, she said.

**Special Treatment for Athletes?**
McCaskill said she was particularly struck that 22 percent of a national sample of colleges reported that they had a policy or procedure that gives the athletic department oversight over sexual assault allegations made against athletes. About 20 percent of the nation’s largest public institutions and 15 percent of the largest private institutions had such a policy, the survey found.

“This, to me, is borderline outrageous,” she said. “It is hard enough to get a victim to come forward when there is at least a perception that the process is going to be fair. It is hard to imagine a victim that would be willing to come forward if they knew that the athletic department is going to be making all of the decisions on the case when the alleged perpetrator is, in fact, a scholarship athlete within their department.”

Many prominent cases in which colleges have been accused of failing to take assaults seriously have involved athletes.
Mark Emmert, president of the National College Athletic Association, said Wednesday that he was “surprised and dismayed” that the survey suggested that some athletic departments are responsible for adjudicating the sexual assault allegations made against their players.

Questioned by McCaskill at a previously-scheduled Senate commerce committee hearing about college athletes, Emmert said that any such policies were “inappropriate” and created “enormous” conflicts of interest. Emmert pledged to raise the issue with NCAA leadership at their meeting in August.

“This is really inappropriate and we need to find ways to make sure that athletic departments are not the ones who are responsible for adjudication of these issues because of all of the obvious concerns that you raise,” he told McCaskill.

**Lack of Training**
McCaskill’s report also says that many colleges are not doing a good job of training the individuals who adjudicate sexual assault cases. About one-third of institutions reported that they do not provide such personnel with training in best practices on sexual assault prevention.

Alison Kiss, director of the Clery Center for Campus Safety, said that the lack of training on campuses is particularly troublesome. “That certainly raises concerns because the only way we can be proactive in dealing with sexual violence and sexual assault is with training,” she said.

One problem Kiss said she has encountered is the “lone-soldier syndrome” where sexual assault issues are the responsibility of just one person on campus. (McCaskill’s survey also found that more than 10 percent of colleges don’t have a designated Title IX coordinator, even though they are required by law to have one.)

Institutions often put a lot of resources behind campuswide training after someone has filed a federal complaint, but she said the challenge is to institutionalize that training before there are problems.

**Tensions with Higher Ed**
The American Council on Education, the main lobbying group for higher education, on Wednesday pushed back strongly against McCaskill’s report, calling it unfair and incomplete.

Ada Meloy, the group’s general counsel, said that colleges were “greatly disappointed” by the report, describing it as “a blanket indictment that draws unwarranted conclusions and ignores how hard colleges and universities are working to address this serious and complex societal issue.”

She said the report ignores how difficult it is for institutions to investigate and resolve the cases.

“There’s often word-on-word situations with little or no physical evidence, no witnesses,” Meloy said. “You have alcohol and drug use, and impaired memories and judgment. And they’re cases that even law enforcement authorities are unwilling to take on.”

McCaskill previously accused the American Council on Education of interfering with her efforts to survey colleges by sponsoring a webinar in which a law firm advised institutions about the risks associated with responding to the request for information.

The initial request for information from 350 institutions yielded 236 responses, McCaskill said, a response rate of 67 percent. The legislation is expected to be introduced in late August or early September, she said.
Plants Listen for Hungry Caterpillars, First-of-Its-Kind Study Suggests

The aptly named mousear cress may respond to caterpillar munching sounds.

Plants have long been known to react to changes in their environment, and may respond to light, temperature, and touch.

But are they listening too?

For the Arabidopsis plant, the answer is a loud and clear "yes."

The distinct, high-amplitude vibrations produced by a cabbage butterfly caterpillar munching on a leaf of this flowering mustard plant, commonly called mousear cress, throws its defenses into high gear, according to a study published in Oecologia this month by two researchers at the University of Missouri.

The study, which combined audio and chemical analysis, is the first to find evidence that plants respond to an ecologically relevant sound in the environment, said Heidi Appel, a senior research scientist in the Division of Plant Sciences at Missouri.

Appel, along with Rex Cocroft, a professor in the Division of Biological Sciences, used a laser and a small piece of reflective material to record the caterpillar's chewing vibrations, which moves an Arabidopsis leaf up and down about 1/10,000 of an inch. They then played two-hour recordings of the vibrations to one set of plants and left another set in silence.

The plants that heard the recording of chewing vibrations created an increased amount of mustard oil, a defense meant to deter an insect attacker.
"[The vibrations] trigger them to be better prepared for subsequent attacks," said Appel. "So they make more defenses, faster, when they've been primed by these feeding vibrations."

The plants were also selective about what type of vibrations they responded to. Shortly after the first experiment, Appel and Cocroft exposed the plants to other vibratory sounds, including those from the wind and nonthreatening insects. The other sounds did not trigger any response. (See "Plants 'Listen' to the Good Vibes of Other Plants.")

"We don't think it's anything as simple as some frequencies or pitches of sound are better than others," Cocroft said. "They responded to the chewing vibrations and not to the insect song, even though they had the same frequencies in them. It suggests that the plants' acoustic perception is more complicated than simply looking for a particular

**Little Plants Have Big Ears**

Appel and Cocroft predict that although their research focused on one plant and one predator, their results suggest a widespread response throughout the plant kingdom. The next phase of research will explore the phenomenon with other types of plants and herbivores. It is too early, they say, to speculate on what applications their finding may have for commercial agriculture.

Appel and Cocroft's results join "a growing list of really interesting pieces of information that we really never appreciated that is useful for plants," said John Orrock, associate professor of zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Orrock, who studies "the ecology of fear" between plants and their predators and has researched the effect snail slime has on a plant's defense system, said he believes the Missouri findings "open up a rich array of new and interesting questions" about the field of plant behavior.

"There are so many other forms of information that we know plants respond to," he said. "We know they pay attention to light; we know they pay attention to a vast array of chemicals both in the soil and in the air around them ... Plants are balancing a lot of information at any given moment in time. And now we know that acoustic information is something they're also balancing. It suggests that plants, in some ways, are listening."
NCAA President calls for 'scholarships for life'

By JOSEPH WHITE

WASHINGTON (AP) — NCAA President Mark Emmert told a Senate committee Wednesday he supports "scholarships for life" and other reforms in how athletes are treated, then did such a good job of casting himself as a powerless figurehead that one senator told him: "I can't tell whether you're in charge or whether you're a minion."

Emmert faced a skeptical Senate Commerce Committee and said he feels college sports "works extremely well for the vast majority" and that the overall current model of amateurism should be preserved.

But he listed several changes he'd like to see enacted.

In addition to the end of the standard year-to-year scholarships, he said scholarships should also cover the full cost of attending college, not just basics such as room and board.

He also called for better health, safety and insurance protocols and said universities must confront what he called the "national crisis" of sexual assault.

Emmert said such changes could come about if Division I schools decide to remake their decision-making structure in the coming weeks, giving more authority to the five biggest conferences.

He reiterated that the schools themselves are in charge of the rules and emphasized the challenge of creating a consensus among college presidents, coaches and athletic directors.

That led to sharp words from Sen. Claire McCaskill, who leveled the "minion" statement and added: "If you're merely a monetary pass-through, why should you even exist?"

The Missouri Democrat was particularly concerned with research that showed a significant percentage of universities allow athletic departments to handle sexual assault investigations of athletes.
Emmert said he was "equally surprised and dismayed by" McCaskill's numbers and that he would work to put an end to the apparent conflict of interest.

The hearing came as the NCAA faces pressure from multiple fronts to reform how athletes are treated and compensated.

The organization is awaiting a judge's ruling following a three-week trial in Oakland, California, in which former UCLA basketball star Ed O'Bannon and others are seeking a share of revenues from the use of their names, images and likenesses in broadcasts and videogames.

Also, former Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter is leading a push to form the first union for college athletes.

Emmert testified in the O'Bannon trial, where he opposed any effort to pay players because it would destroy the bedrock of amateurism on which college sports is based.

There have been moves, however, to pay more attention to the athlete's concerns. Emmert noted that multiyear scholarships were recently reinstated after being banned for close to four decades. The Big Ten last month came out in support of guaranteed four-year scholarships and improved medical coverage for athletes.

Also testifying was former University of North Carolina football player Devon Ramsay, who spoke of the red tape he had to endure to clear his name after allegations of plagiarism. UNC has been dealing with a long-running academics and athletics scandal, and Ramsay said he came to the conclusion that the school "was more concerned with penalties and losses of scholarships than protecting one of its own."

Ramsay also called for mandatory summer internships that would help prepare athletes for future careers. He said it's "almost impossible" to complete an internship at a competitive football school because of the time demands made by coaches.

"The NCAA as an institution no longer protects the student athlete," Ramsay said. "They are more concerned with signage and profit margins."

Committee chairman Jay Rockefeller also took the bigger view, questioning whether the amateur model is sustainable. He told Emmert: "I think I am just very skeptical that the NCAA can ever live up to the lofty mission that you constantly talk about."

"I don't see how a multibillion dollar commercial enterprise can merely be an amateur pursuit," the West Virginia Democrat said. "I don't see how the NCAA will ever be capable of truly making a safe, quality educational experience for students their No. 1 priority."
Rockefeller said he doesn't plan to drop the issue. He dropped veiled threats of using subpoena power and the committee's special investigation unit should the Democrats retain control of the Senate and the NCAA not move forward with reforms.

Near the end of the hearing, which lasted just under three hours, Rockefeller said too much of the hearing was conducted in "self-protection mode."

"My real feeling from this hearing," Rockefeller said, "is that we haven't accomplished much."

Emmert declined an invitation from Rockefeller to make a concluding statement. After the hearing, Emmert deflected questions from reporters while being led to a freight elevator to leave the building.

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**St. Louis Post-Dispatch**

Stopping 'summer melt' among high school graduates

by Derion Tabb, Jazmin Hoey and Daisha Tankins

**NO MENTION**

For the second consecutive summer, St. Louis Graduates is actively addressing one of the most challenging and initial obstacles facing low-income high school graduates and first-generation college students in St. Louis; that is, making it from high school graduation to college over the summer. This is a phenomenon known as “summer melt” among community leaders, and is an obstacle that gets in the way of many high school graduates before they step foot on a college campus.

St. Louis Graduates has this summer engaged as interns three college students who made use of the services of the High School to College Center last summer. All three of us are passionate about helping our peers overcome this next hurdle in their education.

Coming into the center last year, Derion was not aware of the term “summer melt” despite experiencing it himself. As a first-generation college student, all he knew was that he did not know enough and needed help. The High School to College Center is this help, which bridges the gap for high school graduates who no longer have easy access to their high school counselor and other resources over the summer. Visiting the center helped reassure Derion about his decisions and brought needed clarity to his college career. For the first summer since high school, Derion is absolutely certain UMSL is the university he wants to continue to attend.
Another intern became acquainted with the center because she had an unrealistic view of college. Daisha once believed college enrollment was a simple process that consisted of applying for admissions, receiving the golden acceptance letter, submitting your scholarships to that institution, then applying for a helpful loan that would cover the financial gap. She soon discovered that nothing, especially the college process, is ever that simple. The High School to College Center became her only available resource during the summer after graduation in 2013. It helped guide her to an institution that met her needs without creating financial problems that would last long beyond graduation.

Jazmin came to the center knowing where she wanted to attend college but needed assistance with details like registering for orientation and confirming housing. Managing these tasks made her a bit nervous due to her lack of knowledge of resources until she heard about the center. At the center last summer she met with a representative of Southeast Missouri State University and counselors who helped finalize her enrollment. Jazmin’s first year of college has been a transition as she changed majors, but Jazmin appreciated having help available when she needed it.

All three of us are working on site at the center this summer because we know first-hand that a little bit of help at the right time can keep students from getting frustrated and lost. We’ve experienced it ourselves and know how hard it can be to ask for help, find help, or have to change plans; but we also know how rewarding it is to work toward a college degree. We are honored to be a part of a community effort to fix a community problem. We are here to help our peers have the opportunity to a successful college career.

Leaving the System

July 10, 2014

By
Paul Fain

NO MU MENTION

The portion of first-time U.S. students who return to college for a second year has dropped 1.2 percentage points since 2009, according to a report that looks like bad news for the national college completion push.
The findings are the latest from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. The nonprofit group regularly releases studies based on the Clearinghouse’s data sets, which cover 96 percent of students nationwide.

According to the report, which was released today, 68.7 percent of students who first enrolled in the fall of 2012 returned to any U.S. institution the following fall. That number, which is the national “persistence” rate, was down from 69.9 percent for students who enrolled in 2009.

The 1.2 percentage point dip is substantial, as it applies to a total enrollment of 3.1 million students. That means an additional 37,000 students last fall would still be enrolled under the 2009 persistence rate. The largest decline was among young students who were just out of high school.

The biggest drop in the persistence rate among first-time students was at four-year privates, where it fell 2.8 percentage points, followed by four- and two-year publics, which both fell 2.3 percentage points. The persistence rate rose 0.7 percentage points for four-year for-profits.

Improving student retention was a heavy focus during the four-year period the center studied, with increasing attention by policy makers, accreditors and many college leaders.

Dewayne Matthews is vice president of strategy development for the Lumina Foundation, which plays a prominent role in the college completion agenda. He said the center’s findings were both surprising and disappointing.

"It’s a worrisome sign," said Matthews. "We just added a bunch of people with some college and no degree."

The new report also tracked the national retention rate, which refers to first-time students who return to the same institution after their first year enrolled there. That rate, however, remained virtually the same, holding at 58.2 percent.

Retention rates are lower than persistence rates because some students transfer or enroll at a new college after leaving their first institution. The relative dip in
persistence means more students are leaving higher education altogether.

“For each entering cohort year, the overall persistence rate is about 11 percentage points higher than the retention rate,” the report said “Thus, about one in nine students who start college in any fall term transfer to a different institution by the following fall.”

Tough Questions
Lumina has set a goal for 60 percent of adults to hold a degree or certificate by 2025. President Obama has set a similar target.

For several years the foundation has released annual reports on the progress made toward that goal. Gains have been incremental, and the updates depict the hard slog the completion agenda’s proponents face. For example, Lumina last year projected under current trends that 48 percent of adults would hold degrees or certificates by 2025.

Yet the completion push clearly has increased the focus on getting more students to graduation. State lawmakers have taken notice, and are increasingly tying funding for public institutions to performance metrics that include graduation rates.

While Matthews said the new persistence data raise challenging questions, they also add to the urgency around completion.

The report “reinforces the notion that we need to pay close attention to retention,” he said.

The center did not attempt to identify causes for the persistence rate’s decline. But the recovering economy is a likely culprit, experts said. The time period covered tracks along with the economy’s gradual improvement after the last recession. Some students likely are leaving college for jobs and not coming back.

Unemployment rates have dropped by 4 percentage points since 2009, said Jason DeWitt, the center’s research manager.
He said students may be “opting for a short-term employment option” rather than college. The problem with that choice, DeWitt said, is it “can leave them underemployed in the long run.”

That’s because non-persisting students have joined the 36 million Americans -- or roughly 1 in 5 of working age -- who hold some college credits but no degree, according to Lumina.

**For-Profits’ Gains**

The new report breaks out data across sectors of higher education. For-profits were the only segment to see a gain in their persistence rates. The biggest drop was at four-year private institutions, where the persistence rate for first-time students fell 2.8 percentage points. The rate declined by 2.3 percentage points at both four-year public institutions and at community colleges. Four-year for-profits saw a slight improvement of 0.7 percent.

As with the overall rate, the report does not include possible reasons for the gains at for-profits. The sector saw significant enrollment declines during the time period, however, which could be a factor.

Noah Black, spokesman for the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities, the industry’s primary trade group, said for-profits have invested heavily in boosting graduation rates.

“Our sector’s focus on retention and graduation is showing here,” he said. “They had the right support structures in place.”

Across all of higher education, traditional-age students fared worse on the new persistence numbers. First-time students under the age of 20 saw their rate fall by 1.8 percentage points, the study found. The 20-24 age group’s rate dipped by 0.6 percentage points, while students over 24 had a 1.4 percent decline.

It’s unclear why persistence is falling fastest for the youngest students. Not surprisingly, part-time students have lower retention and persistence rates than their full-time peers, according to the report. But both groups had a drop in persistence since 2009.
“Getting past the first year, either by staying put or by transferring to another institution, is one of the most important milestones to a college degree,” said Doug Shapiro, the center’s executive research director, in a written statement. “We need to find better solutions for keeping students on track to graduation, whether that means the student transfers or stays put.”