COLUMBIA, MO. - **U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill** told student advocates, **victims of sexual assault** and University of Missouri administrators at her alma mater Tuesday that she hopes to use their advice in a revised draft of **national legislation aimed at curbing sexual assaults on college campuses**.

Her talk at the school, which has been criticized for its past handling of student-athlete assault claims and just last week adopted policy changes, was part of a statewide tour to gather input on how to improve national sexual discrimination legislation introduced this summer.

"The step that's most important is making sure students are in that room and students are aware and that students are fully participating, that students take on some ownership of improving this whole system," McCaskill said in Columbia, where she earned her undergraduate and graduate degrees.

The Democrat has helped spearhead several national efforts to combat sexual assault, including one that passed with overwhelming support in the Senate addressing military sexual assault, which Pentagon leaders have likened to a cancer within the ranks.

The Campus Accountability and Safety Act so far has bipartisan support, McCaskill said. If passed as written, it would require annual anonymous surveys of students to get a snapshot of the school's "climate" and require schools to have confidential advisers on
University records provided to The Associated Press in August show the Rolla school disciplined six students for unspecified sex offenses between January 2009 and late July. One case led to an expulsion and four involved probation and lesser punishments.

Meanwhile, the University of Missouri-Columbia punished 14 students during the same time period, the records showed, with the sanctions including seven expulsions, two one-year dismissals and two suspensions.

Mizzou has made headlines over the handling of sex assault cases involving student-athletes. Former running back Derrick Washington in 2011 was sentenced to five years in prison for sexually assaulting a former tutor, and others made assault allegations against him before the legal proceedings.

And an outside review ordered by the school into the alleged off-campus rape of former swimmer Sasha Menu Courey by several football players in February 2010 faulted the university’s response and determined that the school’s Title IX coordinator and local police should have been alerted in November 2012 after a public records request by her parents produced documents that alluded to a possible attack. Menu Courey committed suicide in 2011 after leaving the school.

Since then, the university has adopted a number of policy changes that McCaskill said shows the school has "turned a corner," including an executive order from university President Tim Wolfe in April requiring most employees report violations and a tentative 60-day period to investigate sexual harassment or discrimination cases.
McCaskill said she hopes to change the legislation to funnel the money from Title IX penalties back into resources and other support for college victims, a suggestion from a Missouri student.

Some students at Tuesday’s speech said policy changes aren’t enough — a change in campus culture is vital.

Kelsey Burns, a presentation coordinator with the MU Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Center, said she was sexually assaulted her first week on campus and that survivors often don't report out of fear of how they'll be treated.

"I didn't think it would matter," the 21-year old senior said about not reporting her assault.

McCaskill says no need for pricey consultants

McCaskill says no need for pricey consultants
on her bipartisan legislation addressing campus sexual assault and other safety issues.

The Columbia Daily Tribune recently reported (http://ow.ly/Cpe1j) the University of Missouri system has spent $495,000 on the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, a policymaking guidance and training consultant.

University system president Tim Wolfe said such contracts are intended to help improve policies on sexual discrimination and assault.

But McCaskill said material from the U.S. Justice Department and other sources should be enough for universities to implement new policies in her outlined in her Campus Accountability and Safety Act.

McCaskill questions students, police about sexual assault at MU tour stop

Sen. Claire McCaskill talks to about 120 people Tuesday at the Reynolds Alumni Center as part of her “Claire on Campus” tour to discuss sexual violence on campuses. McCaskill is touring Missouri colleges and universities to seek feedback from students and faculty about sexual violence.

By ASHLEY JOST

Tuesday, October 7, 2014 at 12:10 pm

U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill asked pointed questions about sexual assault of students and police Tuesday morning at the University of Missouri.
McCaskill, a former prosecutor who specialized in sex crimes, has focused on reducing campus sexual assaults and is on a discussion tour this week of Missouri colleges to speak with administrators and students about the issue. Her visit at MU was the third stop.

Representatives from MU, the University of Missouri System, Columbia College, Stephens College, Moberly Area Community College and several other Mid-Missouri institutions attended Tuesday's talk, where McCaskill asked the audience questions. A sex crimes detective from the Columbia Police Department, two assistant prosecutors from Boone County and multiple victim advocates from different organizations were also in the audience. There were about a dozen total students present from all of the schools.

The meeting focused on the importance of educating students on the resources available to them in the event of a sexual assault.

“Right now on this campus ... there is a young woman who isn’t coming forward because she doesn’t know the right information,” McCaskill said. She said victims are unsure about how to report incidents, and figuring that out while dealing with the emotional toll of an assault “is just too hard.” “I can tell you this will continue to be the most underreported crime in America because of the nature of the crime.”

McCaskill asked students why they think this is not a defining issue for the current college-age generation.

One student said she thinks sexual assault is a “vague” subject. She said that many of her peers don’t understand where to draw the line between acceptable and criminal behavior.

“That’s a huge problem,” McCaskill said. “A lot of people don’t know where that line is.”

McCaskill asked law enforcement about the focus on training when addressing victims of sexual assault.

Columbia Police Department Detective Mitchell Baxley said patrol officers are taught to be sympathetic, nonjudgmental and to give the victim space. That first interaction with an officer can make or break future contact with the victim, Baxley said. Since he is trained in handling sex crimes, he is the person who typically asks the tougher questions, he said.

The University of Missouri Police Department also has officers who are trained to handle sex crimes. The whole team receives annual training on sexual assault from campus response groups.

McCaskill also discussed her recently filed legislation called the Campus Accountability and Safety Act.
So far, the bill has received bipartisan support. The bill changes punishment for universities who violate Title IX and Clery Act laws, among other things.

The input McCaskill is gathering at the campus tour stops will be used to tweak the bill, she said. The goal is to garner enough co-sponsors so the bill will be undefeatable when the time comes for a vote, McCaskill said.

McCaskill talks about campus rape culture and legislation

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Tuesday, October 7, 2014 | 2:01 p.m. CDT; updated 11:53 p.m. CDT, Tuesday, October 7, 2014
BY KENDALL FOLEY

COLUMBIA — Sen. Claire McCaskill said MU "has turned the corner" in its handling of sexual assault allegations, and it no longer matters who the accused is when it comes to fair handling of complaints.

The university has recognized "it doesn't matter whether you are the best basketball player who has ever been recruited by the University of Missouri — the same rules apply to you," McCaskill said during Tuesday morning's gathering of students, law enforcement, faculty and staff from eight area colleges and universities, and advocacy representatives.

Victims who make complaints against athletes need to have the same support system and range of services available to them that any other victim would, McCaskill said.

The discussion at the Reynolds Alumni Center was part of a statewide tour intended to get feedback and support for the Campus Safety and Accountability Act. McCaskill is a co-sponsor of the legislation, which is an effort to curb sexual assault on campuses.

An MU student attending the meeting expressed concern that students might not know what is a sexual crime, talking about the blurred lines of relationships, alcohol consumption and where consent begins and ends.

"Maybe this has gotten so blurred because of the sexual culture that you've grown up in that a victim doesn't even know if they're a victim," McCaskill said.
McCaskill said that it's important for students to understand the kinds of sexual assault.

She also called upon a Columbia police officer, Mitchell Baxley, to explain what happens when a person reports a sexual assault.

"We don't want to get too detailed of a (report) at first," Baxley said. The department waits to have victims speak to an officer with more training and experience in handling traumatic situations, he said.

The first contact with someone making a report is important because it sets the tone for whether that person is going to trust and cooperate with police, he said.

"We try to teach the officers is to give the victim space and to be on the same level with them," Baxley said.

**Campus Safety & Accountability**

McCaskill also asked for input from the audience of about 100 people on the components of the Act, including:

- Climate surveys
  
  Every campus would be required to proctor a survey every two years to gauge progress and problems with sexual violence resources. The surveys also would measure students' awareness of available resources and help provide an alternative to Clery Releases as a statistical platform, an idea that brought cheers from the audience.

- Resources
  
  The new law would help provide grants to fund advocacy projects and assist with training of advocates and resource leaders.

- Mandated memorandum
  
  The legislation would enhance communication between campus and local police, McCaskill said.

- Penalties
According to McCaskill, the only current penalty for violating Title IX is losing all federal funding. She called that an "empty threat." McCaskill said she hoped that would change to a penalty of up to 1 percent of a university's budget. For MU, this could mean up to $14 million, McCaskill said.

She also noted that 40 percent of colleges and universities have had no Title IX investigation in the last five years. With so much evidence that sexual assaults are occurring on all campuses, this statistic indicates they're not being handled properly, she said.

McCaskill said she hopes to change the legislation to funnel the money from Title IX penalties back into resources and other support for college victims, a suggestion from a Missouri student.

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Kelsey Burns, a presentation coordinator with the MU Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Center, said she was sexually assaulted her first week on campus and that survivors often don't report out of fear of how they'll be treated.

"I didn't think it would matter," the 21-year old senior said about not reporting her assault.

Representatives from MU, Central Methodist University, Columbia College, Lincoln University, Moberly Area Community College, Stephens College, Westminster College and William Woods University attended the meeting.

Campus Sexual Assault: Will Tragedy Bring Change?
Megan Lynch @MLynchOnAir October 8, 2014 6:30 AM

ST. LOUIS (KMOX) – As you’ve heard this week on KMOX, lawmakers are pushing for reforms in how colleges handle reports of sexual assault. It took a young woman full of talent and promise, taking her own life, for the issue to get traction.
Her Lifeline
“She was always saying that swimming was her life and I guess we find out later on it was more than her life … it was her lifeline.”
Lynn Courey, Mother of Sasha Menu-Courey.

The talented swimmer entered the University of Missouri in the fall of 2009. Just six months later, her life began to unravel. “Someone knows the truth … and someone was there too,” says Lynn Courey, “and no one wants to come forward.” She never told her parents. They have only been able to piece together details from Sasha’s personal journal, a transcript from an online crisis hotline and other records obtained from the university.

In February 2010, Sasha and a male friend went to his apartment after being out drinking. Later that night, at least one other man Sasha believed to be a Mizzou football player entered the room and forced himself on her. A lengthy investigation by ESPN also suggests the possibility other men – other student athletes – were involved in the rape, as well.

In the months that follow, Sasha does finally tell her story to counselors, therapists and medical staff. She’s hospitalized multiple times for depression and attempting suicide as her swimming career falls apart. After being told they would have a lengthy wait for treatment in Canada, her family finally gets her into a program in Boston. But less than two months later she dies of an overdose. Parents Lynn and Mike say they understand why Sasha kept her silence for so long. She saw examples of a system that failed other victims, “Seeing the victim trying to tell the story and going through a very difficult time,” begins Lynn as Mike adds, “being victimized again really almost by the system.” “Like the victim becoming the accused,” says Lynn.

They’ve had to endure the judgment of others as Sasha’s story went public. “She asked for it … or she should have known better or … she shouldn’t have drank like this.” And they’ve learned through Sasha’s writings that she lived in fear. “She was saying that she was seeing those guys on a daily basis on campus and she was afraid for her life that worse things would happen.” The family tells KMOX they believe there were serious gaps in the support given by the university.

“What Sasha was saying was that the system failed her. She had tried to seek help and the help wasn’t offered to her.” Adds Mike, “I really don’t think that Sasha got any sort of message from the university that this is unacceptable and you can have resources you can reach out to.”

In the News
In 2012, the Columbia Daily Tribune publishes the family’s story. But it wasn’t until the university came under national scrutiny from ESPN two years later that Mizzou officials took action.

Not even a month after that report aired, the University of Missouri Board of Curators hired a law firm to conduct an independent review. What the Dowd Bennett firm found was that while the school hadn’t necessarily violated the law, it also hadn’t followed rules outlined by the U.S. Department of
Education. The university lacked policies that would tell employees how to handle information about a possible sexual assault, and also lacked a set of procedures for how to investigate. The Dowd Bennett report also points out Mizzou should have launched an investigation as early as November 2012 when emails from Sasha Menu-Courey were discovered that referenced her rape allegation.

“It was obvious and clear that we had not been as explicit as we should on our reporting responsibility and reporting to a central figure which is the Title IX coordinator,” says University of Missouri System President Tim Wolfe.

University Response
The system has brought in a consulting firm to help craft and implement new policies and procedures. “What we have to do is through a very intentional education process that faculty, staff and students are aware of the resources and aware of the process,” adds Wolfe. For students who may not want to go public, but desperately need help, Wolfe says the university is working to coordinate essential resources. For victims who wish to report, he says the system is putting case managers and investigators in place, “trained individuals at each step of the process that are trained in terms of asking the appropriate questions as well as gathering the appropriate information.”

When asked by KMOX News if there are things that could have been done differently for Sasha Menu-Courey, Wolfe calls it a very complex situation, “unfortunately Sasha came to the university with mental health issues that we were working with her as best we could during this situation.”

He says the conversations with Sasha’s parents have been very difficult. “Though it was a terrible, terrible tragedy … it brought to light the need to invest more resources in mental health and more resources in sexual assault and that’s what we’re intending to do.” Sasha’s parents Mike and Lynn tell KMOX they’ve put aside blame. Their hope is that the University of Missouri and other institutions take her story seriously and change the way they handle mental illness and sexual assault.

Lynn Courey: “There’s not one moment I don’t miss my daughter and I don’t wish this to any parents… to lose a daughter this way.”

Sen. Claire McCaskill’s college tour gives sexual violence deserved attention

10/07/2014 3:21 PM NO MU MENTION

Using her national stature to focus on a troubling issue, U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill is touring Missouri to discuss how college campuses deal with sexual violence.
Problems abound. Many crimes aren’t reported or properly investigated, which means campuses are not as safe as students may think.

McCaskill earlier this year released a report that said colleges and universities often violate federal law by failing to investigate reported assaults. Staff lack training to properly respond to them, the report said.

The Missouri Democrat is scheduled to appear at Avila University at 2 p.m. today, meeting with representatives of that school, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, other area schools and local law enforcement.

At earlier stops this week, McCaskill has talked about her proposed Campus Accountability and Safety Act, which she hopes can pass Congress in 2015.

It’s designed to require schools to improve resources for sexual assault victims, boost training for campus staff, enhance cooperation with law enforcement officials, and put teeth in federal penalties for not aggressively investigating and reporting sexual violence.

These are worthwhile goals to better protect students and hold university officials more accountable for providing safer campuses.

Students and their parents would benefit from these outcomes.

City council approves parking lot rezoning, permit for MU smoking policy

By ANDREW DENNEY

Tuesday, October 7, 2014 at 10:45 am Comments (4)

The Columbia City Council approved a rezoning request at its regular meeting Monday night to allow the construction of a parking lot on the edge of the University of Missouri campus that it had previously voted to reject.
The council’s vote authorizes the rezoning of a roughly quarter-acre tract of land on Tiger Avenue from R-3 residential zoning to C-P planned commercial zoning, which allows the construction of a 33-space parking lot for use by the Alpha Chi Omega sorority.

The council voted in July to deny the same request, citing concerns that the construction of a new surface parking lot would further the perception of MU as a commuter campus.

But after council members learned more about the project, the council voted to waive the city’s one-year waiting period for resubmitting a rejected identical rezoning request.

The new parking lot would replace the Alpha Chi Omega sorority’s current parking lot at Fifth and Rollins streets and provide parking closer to the sorority’s chapter house, located at 900 Richmond Ave. The Phi Gamma Delta fraternity is transferring the lot to the sorority as part of a land swap deal to allow the fraternity to build a new chapter house at the Fifth and Rollins location.

The swap results in a net reduction in 13 parking spaces, according to a council report.

But while council members had voted to bring the rezoning issue back up for consideration, it appeared for a brief time at the council’s meeting Monday night that the request would not receive the four votes it needed to pass. Fourth Ward Councilman Ian Thomas was absent from the meeting, leaving six members to consider the proposal.

Before the final vote, Sixth Ward Councilwoman Barbara Hoppe said she took issue with the fact that the statement of intent for the request allowed for the construction of a parking garage at that location, saying that a garage would create “dead space” at the street level and would heighten safety concerns.

Third Ward Councilman Karl Skala said before the vote that he was wavering in his support, expressing concerns about “packing in” student housing at the site, while First Ward Councilwoman Ginny Chadwick said she was concerned that the lot would bring more traffic into the campus area.

“It’s really truly the safety of the students that’s holding me up on this project,” Chadwick said.

Mayor Bob McDavid proposed an amendment to the statement of intent to eliminate the parking garage provision, which was approved by the council, and which appeared to alleviate Hoppe’s and Skala’s concerns about the proposal. Chadwick cast the sole dissenting vote.

The council also approved a right-of-use permit for MU to allow enforcement of its smoke-free policy on city streets on campus. Chadwick, who has also proposed measures to raise the minimum age to purchase tobacco products in Columbia and ban the use of e-cigarettes indoors in public places, sponsored the bill.
The MU campus has been smoke-free for more than a year, and Chadwick said she worked with university representatives to craft the proposal. The proposal passed 5-1, with Fifth Ward Councilwoman Laura Nauser casting the dissenting vote, saying that smoking should be a matter of personal responsibility.

“Next week, we'll be talking making an illegal substance more legal, and now we’re talking about making legal substance less legal,” Nauser said.

Nauser was referring to a proposal sponsored by Hoppe to decriminalize the cultivation of small amounts of marijuana, which the council tabled to its Oct. 20 at Hoppe's request because of Thomas' absence from the meeting Monday night and to give the city's Law Department more time to review amendments to her proposal.

Hoppe had previously proposed to decriminalize the cultivation of up to six plants but has changed her proposal to two plants.

MU campus to have census research satellite office

Tuesday, October 7, 2014 at 11:00 am

The National Science Foundation has given the University of Missouri the green light to set up a satellite location of the U.S. Census Bureau’s new Research Data Center in Kansas City on its Columbia campus.

MU has dedicated $1 million from its general operating budget to finance the Research Data Center satellite, which will be located in Ellis Library, according to a news release from MU. The satellite location will have the same access to census data as the primary Research Data Center in Kansas City, the release said.

Currently, MU researchers have to travel as far as Chicago or Minnesota to access sensitive data kept by the census bureau. The satellite location means researchers don't have to leave campus to access that data, Colleen Helfin, associate professor in the Truman School of Public Affairs and co-director of the satellite research center, said in the release. Helfin said she expects the center to open within the next year.

Hank Foley, senior vice chancellor for research and graduate studies, said in the release that the opening of the satellite bolsters MU’s reputation as a research institution.
The opening of the Kansas City Research Data is expected in fall 2015, according to a news release posted on the Minnesota Research Data Center’s website.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU's Ellis Library to house new Census Bureau Research Data Center

Tuesday, October 7, 2014 | 9:39 p.m. CDT; updated 5:57 a.m. CDT, Wednesday, October 8, 2014

BY KOUICHI SHIRAYANAGI

COLUMBIA — A new center, one of fewer than 20 in the U.S., will give researchers across the Midwest easier access to confidential U.S. Census Bureau data for projects on topics such as public health issues and economics.

MU was named as a satellite location for the new Kansas City-based Research Data Center, which will house millions of files of sensitive Census Bureau data for academic research in many disciplines, including business, statistics and public health, according to a news release from the university.

The satellite facility will be housed in Ellis Library and receive $1 million in funding over the next five years from the university's general operating budget, according to the release. It will host the same data as the Kansas City center, which is funded by the Kauffman Foundation.

"This new research center will be a priceless resource for advancing scientific study here at Mizzou and around the Midwest," Hank Foley, senior vice chancellor for research and graduate studies at MU, said in the release.

The university money will fund the salary of a Census Bureau employee who will operate the facility, train doctoral students to use the database, create small grants for faculty to receive Census Bureau approval to operate the facility and begin a seminar series on the types of research the facility can supplement, according to the release.

Currently, only a few faculty members use Research Data Centers due to the long travel time needed to access the physical facilities, said Peter Mueser, a professor of economics at MU. The nearest existing facilities are in Chicago and Minneapolis, approximately 6- and 8-hour drives, respectively.
Once at a data center, a researcher is closely monitored by government officials to ensure that information about the data’s subjects remains confidential.

The new satellite facility will significantly increase the number of researchers using the data, Mueser said. As part of the application to the National Science Foundation and Census Bureau for the facility, MU faculty submitted 20 project proposals that would require usage of the facility, he said.

"I am working with a doctoral student now on a project looking at the impact of Missouri's minimum wage law on Kansas City, looking at differences between the Kansas and Missouri sides of the same metropolitan area," Mueser said. "The data we are currently using may not be as good as the confidential data available from the Census Bureau."

Economics professor Emek Basker travels to Washington, D.C., during the summer to access the data center there for her research. The associated costs will be greatly lowered by the MU facility. Using the data in Washington, D.C., for example, Basker discovered that businesses damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 were more resilient if they were part of a larger chain.

No opening date has been set for the RDC, but it should be operational within the next year, according to the release.

Health network adds Cape Girardeau system

By Ashley Jost

Tuesday, October 7, 2014 at 11:00 am

The recently announced Health Network of Missouri LLC, of which University of Missouri Health Care is a founding member, already is expanding.

The health network announced Tuesday morning that the Saint Francis Healthcare System in Cape Girardeau is joining as the network’s sixth member.

The founding members include MU Health Care, Bothwell Regional Health Center in Sedalia, Capital Region Medical Center in Jefferson City, the Hannibal Regional Healthcare System and Lake Regional Health System in Osage Beach. The group formed June 25.

The main goal of the collaboration is to improve access for the patients at each hospital. To accomplish that, the new health network gives each of the five providers the chance to collaborate on clinical services, recruiting physicians, contracted services and enhanced information technology
infrastructure. Contracted services might mean collective purchasing power, though that hasn’t been determined, MU Health spokeswoman Mary Jenkins said.

Many of the health systems already share patients and the information about those patients. Although Jenkins said the systems plan to share data on best business, clinical and operational practices, it has yet to be decided whether they will share data about all of their patients. Each of the members contributes a $40,000 startup cost with the goal of hiring an executive director for the network.

Jenkins said Tom Tisone, director of network affiliations for the MU Health System, is serving as the executive director of the network. Through his position, Tisone will manage the affiliation among the partnered groups and fulfill a leadership role overseeing the group.

There could be additional costs for member organizations as the network moves forward.

With the addition of Saint Francis, the network has more than 1,000 hospital beds, more than 10,700 employees and about 1,200 affiliated physicians.

“The Saint Francis Healthcare System’s goal in joining the Health Network of Missouri is to continue to ensure our patients receive exceptional care,” Steven Bjelich, president and chief executive officer of Saint Francis Healthcare System, said in a news release. “While remaining independent, the hospitals and health systems in this network will be in a position to drive positive change and improve health care for the patients in our communities.”

Ethanol group says St. Louisans aren't getting fair price on E85

By Jacob Barker jbarker@post-dispatch.com 314-340-8291

Big Corn is calling out Big Oil for its pricing of E85 in the St. Louis market.

The Renewable Fuels Association, which represents the ethanol industry, accused St. Louis gas stations of keeping the high-ethanol blend uncompetitive with traditional gasoline. It said the St. Louis area gas stations that sell the fuel all carry the brand of one of the country’s largest oil producers and accused them of trying to “discourage E85 consumption and negatively influence consumer perceptions about the fuel.”
In a study on the St. Louis market released Tuesday, the group compared summer gasoline prices here to conventional gasoline prices during that time. Regular gasoline uses a 10 percent ethanol blend, and only flexible fuel vehicles can run on the higher E85 blend.

At the nine stations that sell E85 on the Missouri side of the river, the RFA says that retail prices averaged $3.47 for the blend during mid-May to late August. That compares to $3.45 for conventional E-10 gasoline. The group took issue with the prices because at the wholesale level, the E85 blend sold for $2.58 per gallon, compared with $2.93 per gallon for conventional gasoline.

Geoff Cooper, a senior vice president of research and analysis at the RFA, said his group thinks one of the reasons is probably due to a lower number of independent gas stations in the market. But overall, he said St. Louis’ E85 pricing was different from markets such as Minneapolis-St. Paul and Des Moines. “We’re really trying to put our finger on why it’s so much different here than other Midwestern cities,” he said.

Already, E85 needs to be about 80 percent the price of regular gasoline because it has a lower energy content. Its competitiveness with regular blends varies by market and with the price swings of corn and oil, said Pat Westhoff, director of the Food and Agriculture Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

Still “there probably haven’t been all that many times” over the past several years that E85 prices have dropped enough to become competitive with gasoline, Westhoff said.