Administrators hear criticism at MU forum on Ferguson

By Ashley Jost

Monday, December 1, 2014 at 8:25 pm Comments (4)

The University of Missouri hosted an open forum Monday afternoon for the campus to discuss recent events in Ferguson.

Some of the speakers said the forum and university leaders' comments about the unrest happening a little more than 100 miles away were too little, too late.

“We’ve been carrying something in our spirits that makes it harder to even exist on a campus in the state that this happened in,” said Carl Kenney, part-time journalism professor.

Kenney noted that the forum was taking place two weeks before the end of the semester. Michael Brown was shot and killed by a Ferguson police officer Aug. 9, before the fall semester began at MU. Last week, a grand jury decided not to indict the officer who shot Brown to death, Darren Wilson. The notice of Monday’s forum went out to campus after the grand jury decision was made public.

Before announcing the forum, MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin sent out an email to students, faculty and staff expressing “support for all members of our community who may be directly or indirectly affected by the ongoing events in Ferguson.”

Kenney challenged administrators like Loftin not to wait so long to listen to students or make a public statement. This time, “we waited too long,” he said.

When Earnest Perry, associate professor at the MU School of Journalism who moderated the forum, attempted to engage students to start coming to the microphones for discussion, he posed a few questions: Where do we go from here on the conversation about race? A lot of students expressed anger via social media — are you still angry?

Several students said they’re exhausted, not necessarily angry.

“I’m tired that my school was literally rooted in the oppression against me,” MU student Naomi Daugherty said, referring to MU’s ties to slave owning families in its early days.
One student demanded that administrators listen to the students speaking and find a way to meet their needs.

“My name is Kayla Jackson Williams, I pay $22,000 a year for you to listen to me,” she said, addressing Loftin after pointing out that he was looking at his phone while she spoke.

The two-hour forum in Jesse Wrench Auditorium at Memorial Student Union went over time by more than 20 minutes. More than 150 people attended the event.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

At Ferguson forum, MU students fault administrators for lack of action

Monday, December 1, 2014 | 11:06 p.m. CST; updated 7:15 a.m. CST, Tuesday, December 2, 2014
BY ANNIE REES

COLUMBIA — Emotions ran high at MU's listening session about Ferguson, Missouri, and the myriad social issues it has become synonymous with.

Some speakers were heartened that members of MU's faculty, including Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin, were taking the time to hear students' views; others said it was past due. Some felt the event, which drew about 200 people, demonstrated an encouraging level of engagement; others felt that on a campus of more than 35,000 students, Monday's attendance was still pretty paltry.

The listening session was promoted as an opportunity for students to express their feelings and ideas about the Aug. 9 police shooting of unarmed teenager Michael Brown, who was black, and the unrest that has ensued. Campus organizations such as the MU NAACP and the Gaines Oldham Black Culture Center have hosted marches, vigils and forums, and Monday marked the highest level of administration involvement. Earnest Perry, a professor of journalism, moderated the event while Loftin, Vice Provost of
Undergraduate Studies  

Jim Spain and other administrators sat in the audience, listened and occasionally answered questions.

"I think administrators should be embarrassed and shameful of themselves," said Naomi Daugherty, student leader for MU4MikeBrown. She said Cathy Scroggs, vice chancellor for student affairs, was the exception.

"A couple of us have been tweeting at Chancellor Loftin since August," she said. "We've been doing this for a while now, and very few administrators have joined us."

As Kayla Jackson, a second-year law student at MU, was speaking, she noticed Loftin was on his phone at one point. "I pay $22,000 a year for you to listen to me," she said.

Loftin has been trying to listen. After the grand jury's announcement last week, he said via email that he spent hours on social media reading students' reactions. "I felt that it was important to provide an initial forum on the first day students were back to gather and to tell me and others on campus what their feelings were."

Many attendees said the event was the sort of thing MU should continue. "It felt good to be around black organizers and hear our stories and our truths," Daugherty said after the event.

People of many ethnic backgrounds talked during the event, and many asked the media to withhold their names in order to speak freely. MU faculty did not allow photographers into the event, saying it would've hampered the event's candid nature.

An invitation for the event said the listening session is one of many activities that will happen around MU, but administrators' involvement in future events was unclear.

"My goal is to communicate with the entire campus before the semester ends and have time over the semester break to work with a number of leaders to create action plans," Loftin said in an email after the event.

MU4MikeBrown is organizing a walkout at 11:45 a.m. Tuesday, followed by a noon demonstration in the MU Student Center.
MU talks Ferguson but students shed light on 'bigger issues'

Link to watch story:
http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=26729&zone=2,5&categories=2,5

COLUMBIA - MU students used the Chancellor's Ferguson listening event at MU to bring attention to complicated race relations and a "racial divide" on and off campus.

The University of Missouri held its first university-backed Ferguson event Monday, December 1, a listening session in an attempt to support MU students impacted by the events in Ferguson and the decision not to indict Officer Darren Wilson in the shooting of unarmed teen Mike Brown.

The event was only open to MU students and faculty members. Recordings and pictures were prohibited in order to create a safe space for those speaking and anyone within the MU community was able to speak. Chancellor Loftin and the provost and vice provost of student affairs, as well as a large sum of black students attended the event. Only a handful of those in attendance were from the Ferguson area.

Students stood up and shared experiences many unrelated to the actual events of Ferguson but related to race relations and experiences shaped by race either on or off campus. Several students directly addressed university personnel with requests, questions, or experiences that shaped their experiences as black students on MU campus.

Although the event was brought about in response to Ferguson the theme of the conversation surrounded several other things, three main points: Education, race relations and action. Most that spoke appealed to action, asking attendees and specifically professors to be proactive in educating instead of reactive. Students requested the university to make more authentic attempts to incorporate a cultural curriculum into the general education requirements, and create a representative voice for black students in major decision making.

Jennifer Pagan said the event was reactive and a marketing attempt to seem supportive.
"It's never too late but you're late," said Lecha Mottley president of the Legion of Black Collegians, the black student government on campus.

Students and faculty emphasized education as the root of the outcome.

"The central problem is that people know that racism is bad," MU professor Kristopher Ebard said. "But people don't really know what it is."

Loftin said he has always been supportive through all of MU's events in response to Ferguson, whether public or not. He said it was important to give students a forum to share, and the event was sparked after the decision no to indict Darren Wilson. Loftin said there will be several more events to come and there are more conversations to be had. Loftin sent out an email Monday minutes after the decision stating that there were resources on campus for those impacted.

The event was scheduled from 4-6 p.m. Monday but lasted about 2 hours and 45 minutes. Most people stayed to hear from everyone.

"Two hours is not enough time to talk about this or to share years of our experiences," Mottley said.

**RESPOND aims to provide mental health support training on campus**

The program is currently available to faculty, staff and graduate students.

By Derek Hawley

The Counseling Center has launched RESPOND, a new program to train faculty, staff and students to recognize and support people with mental illness.

RESPOND is an eight-hour course “designed specifically for university and college campuses,” said Christy Hutton, the programming and communications coordinator for the Counseling Center. She said the program is geared around supporting students, but also helps participants support colleagues and others.

RESPOND stands for the seven steps the program outlines: Recognize signs and symptoms; Empathize; Share concerns; Pose open questions; Offer hope; Navigate resources; and Do self-care.
Hutton said the program is currently only open to faculty, staff and graduate students in research or teaching assistantships, because training these groups is a priority.

The Counseling Center has been in talks with student groups to discuss training undergraduates in the future, she said.

“We’re just in the beginning phase,” Hutton said.

According to a 2013 study by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, about one in five young adults suffer from a diagnosable mental illness. **However, Hutton said, only 29 percent of MU students are aware of campus mental health services.**

Counseling Center Director David Wallace said the focus of RESPOND is to educate a large number of people to recognize those with mental health issues and direct serious cases to campus resources like the Counseling Center.

“(We want to) set up a culture where people can talk about mental health the way they talk about football,” he said. “My hope is that we could change the headlines away from ‘college students struggling’ to ‘college students learning new ways to cope.’”

Those who are eligible and interested in the program can sign up on its website.

The program is currently offering five dates for free 8-hour workshops: Dec. 19, Jan. 13, 2015, May 18, and July 28. Applications will close one week before each workshop takes place.

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**COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN**

First-generation students find new campus sanctuary

Tuesday, December 2, 2014 | 6:00 a.m. CST

BY ELLISE VERHEYEN

COLUMBIA — **At age 10, MU junior Ngan "May" Do moved to the United States from a rural village in Vietnam with her mother and younger sister.**

"My mom gave up a lot when we moved to the states, so that my sister and I can have access to education and a brighter future," Do said.
Neither of Do's parents attended college, making Do a first-generation college student. Her personal experience as a first-generation student began her junior year of high school.

"I had to figure out the whole application process on my own, including preparing for the ACT, what to look for in a university and filling out the FAFSA," she said. "The financial aid process was especially stressful because my parents made it clear since I was in sixth grade that I had to find a way to pay for my own education because they cannot afford it."

Learning to be so independent at such a young age can be difficult for many students, in particular first-generation college students. With no one in the family with prior experience to rely on for support, it's up to the individual to navigate the labyrinth of college applications and career decisions.

Once first-generation students make it to college, many don't take advantage of the resources offered by the school often because they don't know about them or are too intimidated to ask for help.

At MU, a new student organization known as the First Generation Student Association began when Nicholas Holladay, an adviser in the Department of Biological Sciences, reached out to a few upperclassmen to conduct a seminar for first-generation students. Of the five upperclassmen, Zeina Ziade, founding member of the First Generation Student Association, was chosen and answered questions for the attendees, which were mostly freshmen.

"The seminar was wonderful, and we agreed to start up a new organization," Ziade said.

The group adopted the mission to provide academic, social and emotional support, and resources and advice to help first-generation students succeed at MU. This includes study tips, organization involvement, advice about social life, family life, networking and anything else to help the students, Ziade said.
"When, if I were to struggle with a class or needed help with my career path, my family did not have the resources or the knowledge to help me," Do said.

First-generation students made up almost a fourth of MU's 2013 freshman class. With an organization to provide this support, future first-generation MU students will be able to rely more on their peers for these resources and support.

In addition to Do and Ziade, the other founding members are Luke Pierce and Cory Jonak. All are pre-med majors and have been involved in MU organizations and programs such as MU Greek Life, Jumpstart, MizzouThon and Mizzou Alternative Breaks.

At an October meeting of the first-generation association, the leaders shared the importance of involvement, explaining that it yields connections with others, forms a community, helps to discover passions and strengths, builds resumes and develops personal skills.

According to Do, the student organization is working with MU's Academic Retention Services and TRiOc, MU's Student Support Services program. Both programs are designed not only for first-generation students but also students with financial need, underrepresented ethnic groups and students with disabilities.

"We are very supportive of the FGSA and the purpose of the organization," Vicki Boyd-Kennedy, a TRiO academic adviser, wrote in an email.

The Missouri College Advising Corps is a branch of the national organization and works with high school students across Missouri to help lower that risk. Advisers, known as "near-peers," are sent into high schools to focus on college planning work with students and families. It is in its seventh year and caters to 37 high schools in Missouri.

First-generation students are at the most risk of dropping out during their first year, said Beth Tankersley-Bankhead, executive director of the Missouri College Advising Corps.
The group recently added a college transition and retention coach that works with previous advisees attending MU, Missouri Science & Technology, University of Central Missouri and Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley.

"Just having a support group is something I wish I had," said Victor Bradford, the advising corps' transition and retention coach. "I'm interested to see how (First Generation Student Association’s) structure is. I think the best thing they could do is form a network."

Bradford was a first-generation college student. He meets on a weekly basis with students and has found that a few of the common struggles include a lack of time-management skills and study habits, as well as difficulty self-identifying and self-advocating.

"As students, you identify each other as your majors or organizations you're in, but once you get onto campus you don't identify yourself as a first-generation student," Bradford said. "If each campus could talk about, 'Oh, I am a first-generation college student,' I think it might help everyone out."

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

New year will bring new, bigger planes to Columbia airport
Monday, December 1, 2014 | 4:38 p.m. CST
BY ETHAN COLBERT

COLUMBIA — Upgraded passenger jets that will boost the capacity of flights to and from Chicago and Dallas will start flying from Columbia Regional Airport in January.

Columbia Mayor Bob McDavid told Columbia and Boone County civic and business leaders Monday morning that the jets represent "the next step in the rebirth of the Columbia Regional Airport."
The new planes, **Bombardier CRJ-700s**, will hold 65 passengers and include both first-class and main-cabin seating. They will replace the ERJ140 and ERJ145 aircrafts, which have seating capacities of 44 and 50 passengers, respectively.

The inaugural flights will be to Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport on Jan. 6 and to Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport on Feb. 12.

Columbia Regional Airport will continue to have two nonstop flights to and from those airports, which are among the nation’s busiest.

**American Airlines began the flights to Chicago and Dallas in 2013, in part because of a $3 million fund established by the city, Boone County, MU and private investors to ensure at least a minimum amount of revenue to American Airlines. That guarantee, however, will expire in February, given the success of the flights thus far.**

The city made only one payment to American Airlines from the fund. In March 2013, it gave the company $22,562 to compensate for lackluster passenger numbers.

The city and American agreed on two incentives to bring the larger planes here. They are:

- Columbia will join with Zimmer Radio and Cumulus Media in a marketing agreement. Zimmer and Cumulus will match $2 worth of advertising for each dollar the city spends on marketing the American Airline service and Columbia Regional Airport.

- Columbia will waive landing fees for the additional seats. City Manager Mike Matthes said waiving the landing fees helped ensure the revenue guarantee would not be extended. McDavid said that while the city will be losing some money on the incentive, "we would be losing a lot more if there were no planes taking off."

McDavid said that the Bombardier CRJ-700 is as safe as the planes American is using now, despite being a complete new generation of aircraft.
"When we started the process of rejuvenating the airport, we dreamed of a day when we would have a modern jet fleet taking flight in and out of Columbia," McDavid said. "With this announcement that dream comes true."

McDavid said the plane upgrade is due to Columbia and mid-Missouri demonstrating significant demand for quality air service.

"We are on track to exceed 100,000 passengers this year," McDavid said, adding that his goal of having Columbia Regional Airport's market share grow to 20 percent by 2020 is reachable. The airport's current market share is 13 percent.

A news release from the city said there is a demand for 900 passengers per day from the mid-Missouri area.

McDavid said the city and interested parties, such as the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, MU and the Regional Economic Development Inc., will continue to discuss how the airport and American Airlines can expand service to other destinations.

"While it is no mystery that we want additional destinations, we need to continue to show demand for these flights and that Columbia is a profitable destination for American Airlines to provide flights," McDavid said.

A news release from the city indicated that passenger loads on the Chicago and Dallas flights were 87 percent in October.
ST. LOUIS — Five St. Louis Rams players entered the football field with their hands raised. A day later, people walked out of work or school showing the same gesture of solidarity with Ferguson protesters.

The pose has come to symbolize a movement, even though witnesses offered conflicting accounts of whether 18-year-old Michael Brown had his hands up in surrender when he was killed by Ferguson officer Darren Wilson in August.

The power of the symbol was evident again Monday. Protesters across the country walked off the job or away from class in support of the Ferguson protesters. Walkouts took place in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and elsewhere.

At the University of Missouri-St. Louis, not far from Ferguson, sophomore Amber Whitaker was among about 30 students who chanted "Hands up. Don't shoot!"

Whitaker, who is white, said the symbolism is what matters, not whether Brown literally had his hands in the air.

"There are black men and women who are shot with their hands up," Whitaker said.

"There are black men and women who are shot unarmed. It may not apply exactly to Mike Brown, but it still happens."

The exact circumstances surrounding Brown's death will forever be in dispute. Wilson, who is white, shot and killed Brown, who was black and unarmed, on Aug. 9. A grand jury's decision last week not to indict Wilson set off renewed protests, some of which turned violent.

Wilson told the grand jury that he shot Brown in self-defense. But several witnesses said Brown had his hands up in surrender. Within hours, "Hands Up. Don't Shoot!" became the rallying cry for protesters.

Witness accounts contained in thousands of pages of grand jury documents reviewed by
The Associated Press showed many variations about whether Brown's hands were actually raised — and if so, how high.

Some people were offended by the hands-up gesture.

The St. Louis Police Officers Association said the display by Rams players Tavon Austin, Kenny Britt, Stedman Bailey, Jared Cook and Chris Givens was "tasteless, offensive and inflammatory."

The group, joined by the St. Louis County Police Association, met with Rams leaders Monday. Rams coach Jeff Fisher said during a news conference that neither the team nor the NFL will discipline the five players for the gesture.

The NFL issued a one-sentence statement Monday from spokesman Brian McCarthy: "We respect and understand the concerns of all individuals who have expressed views on this tragic situation."

In Springfield, Missouri, Rodney Shetler, watched the players' action from his home. He said the move was "in pretty poor taste" and was divisive and disrespectful to law enforcement.

"It's a gesture proven by the grand jury not to be appropriate or accurate," said Shetler, the 44-year-old owner of a copying and printing business.

A similar episode unfolded more than four decades ago at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City.

John Carlos, the American 200-meter bronze medalist, set off a political firestorm on the medal stand when he and teammate Tommie Smith gave the black power salute. He stood by the Rams players.

"If they choose to come out and raise their hands in support of whatever their emotions are, they have the right to do that," Carlos told The Associated Press. "I don't think the whole story has been told about the Michael Brown tragedy, and the pros and cons on both sides. They can just go by their emotions. I don't think anyone got injured or shot by expressing emotions."

The White House on Monday announced the conclusion of a three-month review of the Ferguson situation. President Barack Obama wants more officers to wear cameras to
promote trust, but he is not seeking to reduce federal programs that provide the type of military-style equipment used to dispel the unrest in Ferguson and elsewhere.

Brown's family wants to see every police officer working the streets wearing a body camera.

Also Monday, the Ferguson Commission appointed by Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon met for the first time. The 16-person panel will study the underlying social and economic conditions — from failing schools to high unemployment— that have gained attention since Brown's death.

About 80 residents attended the group's first session, a five-hour meeting devoted primarily to organizational issues.

As the meeting lingered, several audience members ran out of patience, angrily imploring commission members to discuss practical solutions, not murky goals and vision statements.

"People have waited for three months stewing in anxiety and pain," activist Charles Wade told the panel.

The panel includes a Ferguson construction-supply company owner, two pastors, a university professor, a community activist and a St. Louis police detective who is also president of the state chapter of the Fraternal Order of Police. Two of the 16 members were in Washington meeting with Obama.

Nixon dropped plans Monday for a special legislative session to approve additional spending for the state's public-safety response to protesters in the St. Louis area. The governor reversed course after lawmakers said he could tap into an existing budget for the State Emergency Management Agency to cover the costs of the National Guard and Missouri State Highway Patrol.
University of Virginia President Teresa Sullivan on Monday acknowledged the role that excessive drinking and a social scene dominated by parties at fraternity houses have played in sexual violence on campus.

After a handful of recent high-profile stumbles by university leaders talking about the intersection of alcohol and sexual assault, Sullivan spoke about the issues in a way that did not appear to blame women.

Comments by other presidents that did appear to place some blame on rape victims were met quickly with criticism online and via social media. Yet response to Sullivan’s remarks has been, if not praised, at least not widely criticized in the hours following the speech.

Her speech to students Monday was the latest of several campus-wide letters and statements regarding the fallout from a *Rolling Stone* article published last month that described a brutal on-campus gang rape. The article also was highly critical of what it described as a campus culture that turned a blind eye to sexual assault.

Sullivan said that university leaders know much of the student population drinks and that binge drinking is a problem.

“Alcohol does not cause rape, but alcohol is often a tool of the predator,” she said. Women and men should know what they’re drinking and where their drink came from, and women have to understand that their usually smaller body weight means that smaller amounts of alcohol will have a bigger effect on them, she said.

“The predators certainly know this,” Sullivan said. “Serving sweet-tasting but high-proof punches to women, while the guys sip a few beers, is often described as the prelude for taking advantage of the women.”
She also touched on date rape drugs: “Let’s call this by its name: this is poisoning. And it should be legally prosecuted as such.”

Finding the right tone when addressing men, women, alcohol and sexual assaults has been problematic for university leaders at a time when colleges are under increased pressure to prevent and punish sexual violence on campus. Many have been accused by students, alumni or advocates for sexual assault victims of using words that either implicitly or explicitly blame women for making themselves victims by drinking too much.

Eckerd President Donald R. Eastman III was criticized for recommending that students limit their alcohol consumption and avoid casual sex. Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, the former president of George Washington University, also took heat for saying women need to drink less so they can be sober enough to rebuff unwanted advances.

Denise Walsh, a U.Va. associate professor of politics and women, gender and sexuality, said Sullivan set the right tone in her speech by expressing her concern about the issue, her gratitude for the responses of students and faculty so far, and her desire to have U.Va. be a leader in addressing its sexual assaults.

Sullivan noted that alcohol doesn't cause sexual assault, but also recognizes that alcohol abuse is still part of the wider discussion on preventing sexual violence since many assaults involve alcohol, Walsh said in an email.

“Studies show that college men think that when college women drink, that they want sex, but this is not true,” she said. “Drinking culture is thus closely intertwined with rape culture.”

English Associate Professor Victoria Olwell, who helped organize a “Take Back the Party” rally last week to protest sexual assaults on campus, said she hadn’t had time to digest Sullivan's speech yet. But she did caution against putting too much attention on the words and actions of high-profile university leaders.

Olwell said she’s concerned that the media focus on particular people distracts from the institutional problems that have allowed sexual assault to become such a problem on campuses, such as allowing colleges to adjudicate sexual assault claims or how the undergraduate social scene facilitates sexual violence.

In her speech, Sullivan outlined several changes that will take place starting next semester and said that her major priority in the coming months will be examining the campus's culture. The university will hire an additional trauma counselor for the Women’s Center and provide bystander training for all faculty and students to teach them how to intervene to prevent sexual assaults.

There will also be an anonymous student survey on sexual misconduct, and the administration will consider whether the university has struck the right balance between supporting survivors who confide in counselors and encouraging them to report the crime.
All social activities at fraternities have been suspended until January, and Sullivan said she’s working with the organizations to draft new agreements to keep students at social events safe. But Sullivan did say the university community has to be careful not to place the blame too broadly on Greek life and fraternities, since there are fraternity men on campus who are just as disgusted by the allegations.

She ended her speech by saying she would periodically update the community on the progress the university makes on those efforts.

"Rape is a national problem," she said. "...Now our university has been placed at the center of this crisis. We will not shrink from it. We will lead."

WHY COLLEGES HAVEN’T STOPPED BINGE DRINKING

*Decades of attention without much difference*

By Beth McMurtrie

December 2, 2014

**NO MU MENTION**

Despite decades of research, hundreds of campus task forces, and millions invested in bold experiments, college drinking remains as much of a problem as ever.

More than 1,800 students die every year of alcohol-related causes. An additional 600,000 are injured while drunk, and nearly 100,000 become victims of alcohol-influenced sexual assaults. One in four say their academic performance has suffered from drinking, all according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The binge-drinking rate among college students has hovered above 40 percent for two decades, and signs are that partying is getting even harder. More students now drink to get drunk, choose hard liquor over beer, and front-load, or drink in advance of social events. For many the goal is to black out.

Drinking is so central to students’ expectations of college that they will fight for what they see as a basic right. After Syracuse University, named the nation’s No. 1 party school by the Princeton Review, tried to limit a large outdoor gathering, outraged students labeled the campus a police state.

Why has the drumbeat of attention, effort, and money failed to influence what experts consider a public-health crisis? It’s not for lack of information. Dozens of studies show exactly why, when, where, and how students drink. Plenty more identify effective intervention and prevention strategies. A whole industry has sprung up around educating students on the dangers of alcohol abuse.
Many colleges focus on social-norming campaigns, telling students that there isn’t as much drinking on campus as they might think. It’s a message that can seem at odds with scenes like this tailgate at the U. of Maryland at College Park.

For the most part, undeterred by evidence that information alone isn’t enough, colleges continue to treat alcohol abuse as an individual problem, one that can be fixed primarily through education.

“Institutions of higher education are still really committed to the idea that if we just provide the right information or the right message, that will do the trick, despite 30 or 40 years of research that shows that’s not true,” says Robert F. Saltz, a senior research scientist at the Prevention Research Center, part of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation. “The message isn’t what changes behavior. Enforcement changes behavior.”

Yet many colleges still look the other way. Few have gone after environmental factors like cheap and easy access to alcohol. Or lenient attitudes toward underage drinking. A Greek system fueled by booze. Alcohol-soaked traditions like football tailgates and spring flings. They all remain staples of college life.

At some colleges, presidents are reluctant to take on boosters and alumni who fervently defend rituals where drinking can get out of control. Administrators responsible for prevention often aren’t equipped with the community-organizing skills to get local politicians, bar owners, and the police to try new approaches, enforce laws, and punish bad actors. And where profits and tax revenue are at stake, as with local bars and sporting events, colleges encounter resistance that they are unable or unwilling to overcome.

A student’s death or an unwelcome party-school ranking might prompt action, but it is unlikely to be sustained or meaningful. A new prevention program or task force has only so much impact.

Even at colleges that try to confront these issues comprehensively, turnover and limited budgets pose significant obstacles. When administrations change, so do priorities. Key staff members move on. Each year a new class of freshmen comes in ready to party. Monitoring drinking in dorm rooms, let alone sparking real change, can seem all but impossible.

If this is an era of resignation, the 1990s were one of possibility. College presidents declared alcohol abuse the greatest threat to campus life, and the federal government demanded that they do something.

The first large-scale examination of alcohol use among college students began in 1993. Run by Henry Wechsler, a social psychologist at the Harvard University School of Public Health, the College Alcohol Study surveyed 17,000 students at 140 colleges on why and how they drink.

The following year, Mr. Wechsler pronounced 44 percent of all college students binge drinkers, coining that use of the term to mean consuming four or five drinks in a row, and setting off a storm of news coverage. The results helped shift public understanding of college drinking from a relatively harmless pastime to a public-health concern. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which financed the first survey, invested millions in further surveys and research.
Mr. Wechsler and his team painted a complex portrait of campus culture, one in which the environment fuels excessive drinking. More than half of the bars surrounding campuses, they found, used discounts and other promotions to lure in students. Higher rates of binge drinking were associated with membership in a fraternity or sorority, a belief that most students drink, and easy access to alcohol.

At the same time, the studies made clear that much is beyond colleges’ control. Half of students had started binge drinking before they got to campus. In states where alcohol was a problem generally, colleges showed higher binge-drinking rates. On the other hand, strong laws against fake IDs and other restrictive measures were correlated with lower levels of drinking among young people.

Advocates and policy makers sensed an opportunity. The U.S. Department of Education established the Higher Education Center for Alcohol, Drug Use and Violence Prevention, which provided research, training, and technical assistance. Mr. Wechsler’s findings sparked a 10-campus experiment, called A Matter of Degree, to try to bring drinking under control. Focusing on colleges with higher-than-average rates of binge drinking, the project aimed to prove that by working with community partners to change the environment, colleges have the power to shift student behavior. The Johnson foundation put more than $17-million into the project, which was conducted with the American Medical Association over a 12-year period.

But attention doesn’t equal action, never mind progress. Early results showed that in the first few years, half of the colleges involved didn’t try much of anything. The other half reported “significant although small” improvements in drinking behavior. Meanwhile, a survey of about 750 college presidents found that they were sticking to what they’d always done, focusing on arguably effective “social norming” campaigns, which aim to curb students’ drinking with the message that their peers don’t drink as much as it seems. Today a number of colleges that participated in the lengthy experiment still struggle with students’ alcohol problems, even showing up on party-school lists.

The magnitude and complexity of the challenges facing colleges were clear. Thriving fake-ID industries. Endless happy hours. Limited enforcement of alcohol and noise ordinances off campus. Greek systems that revolve around drinking and dominate social life.

Several colleges developed new programs: training servers, notifying parents when underage students were caught drinking, and coordinating enforcement with the local police. Setbacks, however, were common. Louisiana State University found local bar owners hostile to the idea of scaling back happy hours or drink specials. At the University of Colorado at Boulder, the campus-community coalition had little authority. To appeal to local businesses, a new mayor in Newark, Del., weakened regulations on selling alcohol near dormitories at the public flagship university.

At Florida State University, a local partnership’s efforts were met with stiff resistance from the alcohol industry, The Wall Street Journal reported in 2003. Bar owners and distributors formed a competing group to oppose the quest for new laws and regulations to control students’ access to alcohol. The university eventually backed down. The president at the time said he didn’t want to spend his political capital given everything else he was trying to accomplish in the Florida Legislature.

The following years saw the end of several major projects. Mr. Wechsler’s College Alcohol Study wrapped up in 2006, having surveyed 50,000 students and produced reams of research. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation shifted its attention elsewhere. The Amethyst Initiative, a campaign by more
than 100 college presidents to reconsider the legal drinking age, came and quickly went. And in 2012, funding cuts eliminated the federal center that had guided colleges on preventing alcohol and drug abuse.

Jim Yong Kim, a physician with a public-health background who was president of Dartmouth College, attempted to drag the issue back into the spotlight, announcing an intensive, public-health and data-driven approach to dealing with campus drinking. He used his influence to drum up participation from 32 institutions in the National College Health Improvement Program’s Learning Collaborative on High-Risk Drinking, and secured money to keep it going for two years. But when he left Dartmouth to lead the World Bank, in 2012, the leadership and the money dried up. The project issued its first and final report this year.

Educators and researchers who lived through this period say a combination of exhaustion, frustration, inertia, lack of resources, and campus and community politics derailed the national conversation about college drinking. Taking on the problem proved tougher than anyone had thought.

“All those efforts caused some issue fatigue,” says John D. Clapp, director of the federal alcohol and drug center when it closed. The feeling, he says, was “Hey, we tried this, and it’s time to move on.”

The apparent paradox today is this: Colleges keep trying to reduce extreme drinking, but the numbers aren’t getting any better.

It’s hard to change the status quo by tinkering at the margins. Many colleges continue pursuing disjointed and short-term measures with limited impact and little staying power.

Almost all four-year colleges have alcohol policies and require incoming students to take some kind of course, often online, that warns of the dangers of alcohol abuse, according to surveys by researchers at the University of Minnesota. Most campuses provide alcohol-free housing and run party patrols. And half offer intervention or recovery programs for problem drinkers. Of the 32 campuses in the group started by the former Dartmouth president, most focused their energy on alcohol policies, social-norming campaigns, educational programs, and student surveys.

But that’s the relatively easy, noncontroversial stuff. Angry alumni won’t rise up over an online prevention course.

Here’s what colleges aren’t doing. Fewer than half consistently enforce their alcohol policies at tailgates, in dormitories, and at fraternity and sorority houses. Only a third do compliance checks to monitor illegal alcohol sales in nearby neighborhoods. Just 7 percent try to restrict the number of outlets selling alcohol, and 2 percent work to reduce cheap drink specials at local bars, according to the Minnesota researchers.

Yet restricting easy access to alcohol and penalizing students who break the rules do make a difference, studies suggest. One project, Safer California Universities, tested a series of community-based prevention strategies, and found that the number of people getting drunk at off-campus parties and bars dropped significantly. Participating colleges used DUI checks, underage decoys, party patrols, and enforcement of local ordinances that hold hosts liable for any trouble caused by their drunken guests.

So why aren’t more colleges taking such bold action?
Philosophically, many educators are resistant to the idea of policing students. They would prefer to treat them as young adults who can make good choices with the right motivation. Traci L. Toomey, who directs the alcohol-epidemiology program at Minnesota’s School of Public Health, recalls visiting a campus that had long prided itself on letting students monitor the flow of alcohol at social events. “As if somehow magically they’d do a great job,” she says.

That college was part of the Learning Collaborative on High-Risk Drinking, in which other participants also expressed resistance to designing and enforcing better prevention policies. “There was all this talk about protecting students’ rights and treating them like adults, and oftentimes it was really about protecting the students who were drinking,” says Ms. Toomey. “I tried to raise the question: Not all of our students drink, and not all drink heavily. Their rights are being violated, their ability to study, to sleep, to walk across campus safely. Why aren’t we protecting their rights?”

That institutional ambivalence can hamper enforcement. In the Minnesota surveys, only about 60 percent of campus law-enforcement officials said they almost always proactively enforce alcohol policies. Half cited barriers such as understaffing and students’ easy access to alcohol at private parties and at bars that don’t check IDs. Only 35 percent of colleges’ law-enforcement units almost always issue criminal citations for serious alcohol-related incidents, preferring instead to refer cases to other offices, like judicial or student affairs.

Students themselves say more-aggressive enforcement could change their behavior. One survey of those who had violated their colleges’ alcohol policies found that parental notification, going through the criminal-justice system, or being required to enter an alcohol treatment program would be more of a deterrent than fines and warnings.

Top administrators rarely carry the banner of prevention and make it a campuswide priority. Instead, efforts are shouldered by entry-level health or student-affairs coordinators, which can result in narrow approaches.

That makes structural change difficult. How do you limit excessive or underage drinking off campus without enlisting the support of the owners of liquor stores and bars? How do you deal with an oversaturation of bars without talking with politicians and state licensing agencies? How do you crack down on off-campus parties without working with the local police? How do you hold fraternities responsible for underage drinking without the cooperation of their national organizations?

Without high-level leadership and broad buy-in, students get mixed messages about what their college is willing to tolerate. The bookstore might stock college-licensed molds for Jell-O shots. Football stadiums may sell beer. Some colleges allow—even sponsor—blowout parties, spending serious money monitoring and cleaning up after drunk students.

Duke University was home to an all-day party known as Tailgate, which raged in a parking lot before and after every home football game. Wearing costumes, cranking up the music, and funneling beer, students left behind a mess so huge it required front-loaders to clear. Administrators tried all sorts of things—cars versus no cars, kegs versus cans, shorter and longer hours, food and entertainment—in a futile effort to rein in bad behavior.
Larry Moneta, vice president for student affairs, attended every Tailgate. In an oral history compiled by Duke’s student newspaper, The Chronicle, he estimated that it cost “probably hundreds of thousands of dollars” in staff time and maintenance.

“I’d say to folks, ‘You understand what you’re doing here? You’re representing the worst stereotypes of Duke. The wealthy, couldn’t-care-less, partying it up and leaving your shit on the ground so the lowest-paid employees can come and clean up after you. Doesn’t that message mean anything to you?’ It gets through when you’re sober, doesn’t get through when you’re not sober.”

The party lasted until 2010, when a 14-year old sibling of a student was found passed out in a portable toilet. “That was the final straw,” Mr. Moneta says in an interview. Administrators finally shut it down.

Fraternities and sororities remain a third rail for many college presidents. “Even though the Greek system was identified as the highest area of risk in terms of harm and rates of drinking, we didn’t have many schools touch that,” says Lisa C. Johnson, a former managing director of the Learning Collaborative on High-Risk Drinking. “It’s fraught with politics. It’s fraught with, Are we going to lose funding from alumni who value the traditions? Also, it’s complex because Greek houses may be owned by the fraternities, not the university.”

Dartmouth has had one of the more public struggles with its Greek system, the subject of numerous unflattering portraits. Ironically, while Dr. Kim was a national leader on the issue, at home he was perceived as going easy on fraternities and sororities, telling the campus newspaper, “I barely have any power.”

That may be changing. In April, after watching applications plummet 14 percent, Dartmouth’s new president, Philip J. Hanlon, spoke about how the college had succumbed to “extreme and harmful behaviors,” including hazing, racism, sexual assault, and dangerous drinking. The answer is “fundamental change” in the social scene, including the Greek system, he said. “Enough is enough.”

College alcohol-abuse prevention doesn’t have a powerful advocacy arm. But a dedicated group of people is determined to keep the issue on the national agenda.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, which three years ago formed a committee of college-president advisers, plans to come out next year with guidelines for colleges on which interventions work well.

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Drug Misuse and Prevention opened this year at Ohio State University, under the direction of Mr. Clapp, who led the shuttered federal center. He secured grant money, $2-million from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, to translate alcohol research into strategies that colleges can use, he says. “The idea is to give people tools that don’t necessarily need a ton of money to implement” or “50 to 60 staff people to run.”

Some state higher-education coalitions have been working with legislators. The Maryland Collaborative to Reduce College Drinking and Related Problems, a joint effort of 11 institutions, helped establish a ban this year on the sale of extreme-strength alcohol in the state.
Several colleges have also reached the breaking point with campus events, like Duke’s Tailgate, that had spun out of control. Last year John C. Bravman, president of Bucknell University, permanently canceled its annual House Party Weekend. Once a dress-up affair, it had devolved into a multiday bender during which students urinated in public, showed up drunk to class, and got belligerent with emergency-room doctors. A few students consumed so much alcohol that doctors thought they might not survive.

Mr. Bravman laid all of this out in a brutally honest letter to the campus, arguing that he couldn’t in good conscience allow such “self-degrading” behavior to continue. It will take more than eliminating one event to curb high-risk drinking, he said in a recent interview, “but we made our point. We made a statement about the values of this institution.”

A consortium of colleges in Maryland, including the U. of Maryland at College Park, helped establish a ban this year on the sale of extreme-strength alcohol in the state.

That kind of argument helped break down resistance to increased oversight among participants in the Learning Collaborative on High-Risk Drinking, Ms. Johnson says. “There was a lot of throwing hands up at first: ‘We don’t want a police state at our school.’ It wasn’t until they began to reframe the issue—that our institutional mission is to educate and provide a supportive learning environment”—that participating colleges saw the value in enforcement and control.

Some prevention advocates hope that scrutiny of sexual assault on campuses may result in more attention to alcohol abuse, because the connection has been well documented. It took a series of federal complaints and investigations, supporters say, for colleges to begin revising and better enforcing their sexual-assault policies.

Others are betting that money will talk. Jonathan C. Gibralter, president of Frostburg State University, calculated that alcohol abuse cost $1-million in staff time and lost tuition over a recent four-year period. Putting a price tag on the problem, he says, helps keep people motivated to crack down on off-campus parties, work with local law enforcement, and raise expectations among students.

Mr. Clapp, at Ohio State, wants to make a similar economic argument to college presidents. Those high dropout rates you’ve been wrestling with? The slacker students who study a little and party a lot? The liability risks you take allowing dangerous behaviors to go on? They’re not doing your campus any favors.

The different forces at play nationally may not be enough to focus attention on dangerous drinking in college, but culture change can happen. It’s just slow, says John Porter, director of the Center for Health and Well Being at the University of Vermont, which has grappled with alcohol abuse for more than two decades. Asked to lead a new campuswide approach to the problem, Mr. Porter remains hopeful. When he was a child, he says, he used to sit on his mother’s lap in the front seat of their Buick. She’d be smoking cigarettes. Nobody was wearing seat belts. “Today we’d be aghast,” he says.

A generation from now, will we feel the same way about binge drinking?

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