Hundreds of thousands of college students will be asked about sexual assault on campus this spring

More than 800,000 students at 28 college campuses will be asked about sexual assault this spring, one of the largest surveys ever on the topic.

The Obama administration has made the issue a priority, and the number of federal investigations into how colleges investigate reports of sexual violence has increased dramatically. Many universities have made their own attempts to change campus culture and ensure that students are safe, but there are many students complaining that officials are too worried about bad publicity to tackle the problem head-on.

“Our primary purpose in conducting this survey is to help our institutions gain a better understanding of this complex problem on their own campuses as well as nationally,” said Hunter Rawlings, president of the Association of American Universities, which is organizing the survey. “Our first priority, and theirs, is to ensure that students not only are safe but feel safe. Universities will be using their data to inform their own policies and practices regarding sexual assault. We also hope the survey will help policymakers gain a better understanding of the problem, and that it will make a significant contribution to the growing body of research on sexual assault.”

Dartmouth College will join the following AAU schools: Brown University; Cal

ifornia Institute of Technology; Case Western Reserve University; Columbia University; Cornell University; Harvard University; Iowa State University; Michigan State University; Ohio State University; Purdue University; Texas A&M University; University of Arizona; University of Colorado Boulder; University of Florida; University of Michigan; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; University of Missouri-Columbia; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; University of Oregon; University of Pennsylvania; University of Pittsburgh; University of Southern California; University of Texas at Austin; University of Virginia; University of Wisconsin-Madison; Washington University in St. Louis; and Yale University.
28 Universities Will Participate in Sexual Assault Survey

January 23, 2015

Fewer than half of the elite research institutions that comprise the Association of American Universities will participate in that group’s effort to anonymously survey students about the prevalence of sexual assault on campuses. The association said Thursday that 27 of its 60 U.S. members and one non-member college will join the effort.

Some of the universities that declined to take part in the AAU project have said that they'll design and conduct their own surveys. Dozens of researchers and some victims' advocates also raised concerns about how the AAU was going about producing the survey.

The White House has called on all colleges and universities to conduct such surveys on their campuses. Several members of Congress have also proposed mandating a standardized climate survey so that prospective students could compare institutions to each other on student attitudes regarding sexual assault.

The AAU previously said that its survey project was, in part, an effort to ward off a federal mandate. “Our primary purpose in conducting this survey is to help our institutions gain a better understanding of this complex problem on their own campuses as well as nationally,” AAU President Hunter Rawlings said in a statement Thursday.

The association said that the following universities will participate:

Brown University; California Institute of Technology; Case Western Reserve University; Columbia University; Cornell University; Harvard University; Iowa State University; Michigan State University; Ohio State University; Purdue University; Texas A&M University; University of Arizona; University of Colorado Boulder; University of Florida; University of Michigan; University of Minnesota-Twin Cities; University of Missouri at Columbia; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; University of Oregon; University of Pennsylvania; University of Pittsburgh; University of Southern California; University of Texas at Austin; University of Virginia; University of Wisconsin at Madison; Washington University in St. Louis; and Yale University.

Dartmouth College, which is not an AAU member, will also participate.
MU employee rescued from well after being trapped by medical condition

The Columbia Fire Department rescued a man trapped in a well at the University of Missouri power plant on Thursday. The fire department was dispatched around 2 p.m. to extract a University Campus Facilities employee who experienced a medical issue while performing regular maintenance on the well.

The well is about 20 feet underground and is one of five drinking water wells on the MU campus.

MU News Bureau Associate Director Christian Basi said the employee’s medical issue allowed for enough time to call and utilize the fire department.

“There was a medical condition that was going to hamper his ability to get out safely,” Basi said. “That’s why we felt we had another way to get him out safely, there was no reason to risk anything, and that’s why we called the fire department.”

Battalion Chief Brad Frazier said the operation took about 30 minutes. He said firefighters used a pulley system with a cot to get the employee out.

“Our fire crews established some rigging, some roping, and we were able to go down into that area, package the patient and bring him up safely,” Fraizer said.

The employee was taken to University Hospital around 2:30 p.m. for further examination.
Firefighters lift MU worker from underground reservoir

Thursday, January 22, 2015 | 6:51 p.m. CST; updated 9:48 p.m. CST, Thursday, January 22, 2015

BY CAROLYN HEGE

Firefighters rescued an MU Campus Facilities worker from an underground reservoir Thursday at the MU Power Plant.

The worker was safe when he came out of the 20-foot-deep well and was transported to University Hospital, MU spokesman Christian Basi said. The worker did not suffer any injuries.

The Columbia Fire Department was dispatched at 1:45 p.m. to the power plant after receiving a call that a worker was trapped in a drinking water reservoir, Fire Department Battalion Chief Brad Fraizer said.

The worker had a medical condition that prevented him from exiting the area safely, Basi said. He declined to comment on the man's name or medical condition.

The rescue operation took about 35 minutes and involved using ropes and pulleys to lower a cot into the reservoir. Firefighters pulled the trapped employee to the surface on the cot.

MU and Cerner collaborate on health clinic

University of Missouri Health Care has opened a new state-of-the-art medical facility in Columbia, Mo., with a health information technology system designed by Kansas City-based Cerner Corp.
The 85,512-square-foot medical building expects to have about 100,000 outpatient visits this year dealing with family medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, pharmacy, radiology and imaging services.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UPDATE: Pedestrian hit by van on College Avenue

Thursday, January 22, 2015 | 8:35 p.m. CST; updated 10:03 p.m. CST, Thursday, January 22, 2015
BY JACOB BOGAGE

COLUMBIA — A woman was hit by a van at a crosswalk Thursday morning at the intersection of College Avenue and Rollins Street, blocking a lane of traffic for about 30 minutes just after 9 a.m.

As of 1 p.m., the woman was in good condition, Kathy Richardson, a spokeswoman for University Hospital, said.

Her identity was not being released until her family was notified, MU Police Department spokesman Capt. Brian Weimer said.

A silver Chrysler van was turning left from Rollins Street northbound on to South College Avenue when it collided with the woman walking toward MU, said freshman Caverly Manning, who was standing on a nearby corner.

"All of a sudden, you just heard, 'Oh my God,' and she was down on the ground clutching her face," Manning said.

At the scene, the woman's face was visibly bloodied as paramedics attended to her. Officers closed the left lane of traffic headed northbound on College Avenue.

MU junior Anna Wawrzyniak also witnessed the collision as she was standing on the opposite street corner walking away from campus.
"I don't think (the driver) even looked," she said. "Normally lots of people cross at once. I'm surprised more people didn't get hit."

The roadway was clear as of 9:30 a.m.

**Freshman in good condition after being struck by vehicle on campus**

The woman was struck by a silver van at the intersection of College Ave. and Rollins St.

Around 9 a.m. Thursday, Columbia Police Department officers were dispatched to the intersection of College Ave. and Rollins in response to a call about a pedestrian struck by a silver Chrysler van, MUPD Capt. Brian Weimer said.

**The pedestrian is a female freshman at MU. She asked for her name not to be released.**

An ambulance arrived shortly to transport the victim to University Hospital. The hospital said the student is in good condition.

Hospital staff contacted the victim's family after the incident. She said her parents are coming to Columbia to visit her and make sure everything’s okay.

The freshman said she had joked before about being hit by a car and having the driver pay her tuition, but never expected to actually be hit by a car.

“It’s obviously really terrifying to be hit by a car,” she said.

The victim said she had turned around to talk to her friends behind her and did not see the car coming. She said since she wasn’t the only one crossing the street, she was relieved more people weren’t harmed.

The victim said she thinks the driver did not have the right of way, based on the other street having a green light. One of her friends thought the driver was texting or distracted by something other than the road.

“People who are texting, you’re not only endangering yourself, but you’re also endangering everyone else around you,” the victim said.
Coming from Illinois, a "hands-free" state where drivers aren’t allowed to touch their phones, she said the issue of distracted driving in Missouri is frustrating.

“I really wish people would take distracted driving more seriously,” she said.

Since the incident, she said she is feeling a lot better, but is pretty sore.

“It could have been a lot worse,” she said. “I’m pretty lucky.”

Her injuries consist of minor cuts and bruises, she said. She’ll be in observation overnight for her internal injuries and she said the hospital staff expects her to be out tomorrow morning.

CPD has not released any more information at this time.

Woman hit, killed by car in Columbia

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
01/23/2015 6:56 AM

COLUMBIA, MO. - Columbia police say a 24-year-old woman died after she was hit by a car.

The woman was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident Thursday evening. Police say the driver did not see her as she crossed the street. Investigators do not believe the driver, a 30-year-old man, was impaired by drugs or alcohol.

KOMU reports the victim was the third person hit by a vehicle in Columbia on Thursday.

On Thursday morning, a University of Missouri student was hit by a van while she was crossing a street. She was taken to the hospital but no details about her injuries have been released. Later Thursday, a man was hit by a car and was treated for non-life-threatening injuries.
Woman hit, killed on Providence Road

Victim was third Columbia pedestrian struck in one day
Watch story: http://www.abc17news.com/news/woman-hit-killed-on-providence-road/30873558

COLUMBIA, Mo. - A female pedestrian died Thursday night after being hit by a car while trying to cross Providence Road just north of Green Meadows Road, police said.

An officer told ABC 17 News she was a foreign exchange student studying at the University of Missouri.

According to CPD, she was hit in the northbound lanes of Providence Road and either thrown or dragged several hundred feet before landing. The preliminary investigation found she was killed on impact.

Police said the driver of the vehicle will not face charges because the woman did not use a crosswalk, and witnesses said she ran out into the street.

The incident was the third vehicle pedestrian crash in one day.

The first was another University of Missouri student hit while trying to cross College Avenue at Rollins Road.

The second was a man struck on Providence and Nifong.

Both of those victims were taken to the hospital and are now in good condition.
Budget battle joined on supplemental spending, Medicaid expansion

By Rudi Keller

Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 2:00 pm

JEFFERSON CITY — State Sen. Kurt Schaefer is heading into work on the state budget spoiling for a fight.

Angry about continued large withholdings in the current budget and skeptical of the reasons why the money can’t be spent, Schaefer, R-Columbia, on Thursday morning grilled Budget Director Linda Luebbering during a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Schaefer, chairman of the committee, noted that Gov. Jay Nixon’s budget plan anticipates $110 million in unspent general revenue from accounts across state government and requests $140 million in supplemental funds for the year ending June 30.

“So if we don’t give you a supplemental and we have $110 million from lapsed funds, we basically have $250 million to start the year with,” Schaefer said.

The math is not that simple, Luebbering said. “We would have to look at what would happen in that situation,” she said. “That $140 million is for bills we have to pay.”

After Nixon proposed his budget Wednesday evening, Schaefer said he was unwilling to talk about new spending while items already approved by lawmakers are not funded.

“I would say the chances are slim that he’s going to get a supplemental,” Schaefer said. “Of any kind.”

House Budget Committee Chairman Tom Flanigan, R-Carthage, said he was not ready to say whether he would refuse to pass a supplemental budget.

“This is the first I’ve heard of it and I will have to learn more about what Kurt’s thinking,” Flanigan said.

On Wednesday evening, Nixon proposed his budget for the year that begins July 1. Officially, it is a $26.3 billion spending plan that includes a 1.3 percent increase for the
University of Missouri system — about $5.7 million — and $50 million more for public schools through the foundation formula.

Unofficially, it is a $28.4 billion budget that includes a 2.8 percent increase for the university system — about $11.9 million — and $150 million more for public schools, as well as $2 billion to expand Medicaid eligibility.

The difference is because of new constitutional restrictions on Nixon’s budget authority that mean he cannot propose spending any revenue dependent on a statutory enactment. Before lawmakers Wednesday night, however, Nixon described his budget as if those restrictions did not exist. He announced $150 million more for public schools, but did not tell lawmakers the plan requires Medicaid expansion.

“That means more technology in classrooms, smaller class sizes, more hands-on learning,” Nixon said. “It also means better pay for the folks that do the toughest, most important job there is: teaching our kids.”

Schaefer was critical of Nixon for not making it clear that his recommendation required Medicaid expansion. “He’s saying, ‘I’m going to hold every school kid in Missouri hostage so I can get welfare expansion and if I don’t, they don’t get the money,’ ” Schaefer said.

He also didn’t like how some budget lines are described — like calling a proposal for Access Missouri scholarships a $2 million increase in “current spending authority.” The $2 million is the difference between the $11 million Nixon withheld and the $9 million he wants to cut from the program permanently.

“The reality of it is, we will have to do what we did last year, which is frankly take a budget that is an insult to anyone who understands third-grade math, and redo it in the House and the Senate,” Schaefer said.

Thursday morning, as Schaefer criticized the budget, Luebbering said she wanted to explain it. “I was going to give an overview of where the governor wants the increase to go but if you don’t want to hear that, that’s fine,” she said.

The budget predicts moderate general revenue growth of about $300 million. Overall, the budget is one of adjustments — accounting for new costs in one area by reductions in others and putting most discretionary dollars into education programs.

The budget offers no pay raise for state employees, includes no rate increases for Medicaid providers and drops Nixon’s call — issued last year — to fully fund public schools through the foundation formula. Briefing reporters, Luebbering said the budget struggles to maintain services while providing a modest increase for education.

At this time last year, Nixon and lawmakers expected a small increase in revenue to finish the fiscal year. Revenues fell and Nixon has withheld more than $500 million in general revenue
spending for the current year. Lawmakers based this year’s budget on a growing revenue base and the year began with a $240 million gap.

“The fact that we are so heavily over-appropriated this year really puts a kind of dampening effect on your ability to add a lot of money to next year’s budget,” Luebbering said.

**BPA Exposure May Change Stem Cells, Lower Sperm Production**

BPA and other estrogenic compounds hamper development of the stem cells responsible for producing sperm in mice, which suggests such exposure could contribute to declining sperm counts in men, according to a new study.

The study, published online today in PLoS Genetics, is the first to suggest that low, brief exposures to bisphenol-A, or other estrogens such as those used in birth control but found as water contaminants, early in life can alter the stem cells responsible for producing sperm later in life.

Exposure to estrogens “is not simply affecting sperm being produced now, but impacting the stem cell population, and that will affect sperm produced throughout the lifetime,” said Patricia Hunt, a geneticist at Washington State University who led the study.

BPA is a ubiquitous chemical found in most people and used to make polycarbonate plastic and found in some food cans and paper receipts. People also are exposed to synthetic estrogens used in birth control as they are commonly found contaminating water, even after treatment.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration banned BPA from baby bottles in 2012 but maintains that BPA currently used in food containers and packaging is safe. And this week the European Food Safety Authority announced in a new assessment there is “no consumer health risk from bisphenol-A exposure.”

However, Hunt’s study adds to evidence that low doses of the compound may harm us.

Hunt and colleagues exposed some newborn mice to BPA and some newborn mice to a synthetic estrogen used in birth control pills and hormone therapy.

These exposures—comparable to human exposures to the compounds—caused “permanent alterations” to the stem cells responsible for sperm production, the authors wrote.
The researchers also transplanted the stem cells into unexposed mice and verified the impacts to sperm development.

It is “sobering evidence” for possible harmful impacts from short-term exposure, said Mary Ann Handel, a senior research scientist with The Jackson Laboratory, which specializes in genetics research.

Scientists previously found BPA exposure impacts mice testis size and sperm development and prostate growth. But what Hunt and colleagues did was different—they found a possible reason why these things happen: changes to the stem cells, which are vital for male reproduction.

“The negative effects of estrogenic chemicals on the developing male include an expanding list of subtle changes to the developing brain, reproductive tract, and testis,” the authors wrote. “Changes in all three have the potential to induce major reproductive repercussions and … the biological underpinnings remain unclear.”

Over the past few decades, researchers have noted declining sperm counts and quality in places such as Europe, Japan and the United States. In Denmark, more than 40 percent of young men have sperm counts associated with infertility or decreased fertility.

“When you show you’re impacting a stem cell—that’s a huge deal,” said University of Missouri scientist Frederick vom Saal, who was not part of the study. “This exposure could very well be the basis for transgenerational loss of sperm production.”

Sperm production is a continuous process: Once males hit puberty and start producing sperm, stem cells slowly divide and give rise to new cells to produce sperm.

And, while there are some limits in using mice and extrapolating findings to humans, the reproductive systems’ “fundamentals are the same,” Hunt said.

However, Steven Hentges of the American Chemistry Council, which represents chemical manufacturers, said in an emailed response that multiple large studies "consistently find no reproductive effects in males or females at any dose remotely close to the levels of BPA to which people are actually exposed."

He said Hunt's study is of "limited relevance to human health" and that the doses used were much higher than actual human exposure.

Hunt said that is not true.

"The levels we used are based on previous studies and produce very low levels in blood that are lower than those reported in humans," Hunt said.
Vom Saal said it’s important in future studies to see if the stem cell changes from exposure are passed to future generations. Evidence suggests that estrogenic compounds appear to alter the ability of genes to function properly, a phenomenon referred to as epigenetic changes.

When such changes happen, it can mean similar problems in sperm production for future generations. And “since most people are consistently exposed to BPA and other estrogenic compounds, each generation could have it a bit worse,” vom Saal said.

Hunt and colleagues did run into one problem—there are secondary impacts, such as fluid retention, which make it difficult to take the stem cell research to the next level and look at correlations in sperm cell counts and measures of reproductive ability.

“Exposure is not just affecting cells in testis but the whole animal,” Hunt said.

Hunt admits this is “complicated genetics stuff,” but said the consequences are quite important.

“This implicates cells way upstream” and could mean problems for “subsequent generations after exposure,” she said.

Obama idea to trim college savings plans hits GOP opposition

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama's proposal to scale back the tax benefits of college savings accounts is running into opposition from Republicans in Congress who say they have no intention of raising taxes on families trying to save money for their children's education.

Obama's plan would reduce the tax benefits of future contributions to the popular 529 college savings plans. Current accounts would be grandfathered, so existing funds could still grow and be withdrawn, tax-free.
The administration says all the additional tax revenue would be used to help expand and make permanent a $2,500 tax credit that families can use for education expenses. Under current law, the tax credit is scheduled to expire at the end of 2017.

"The president's plan would consolidate education savings incentives into one vehicle and redirect the savings into the better targeted" American Opportunity Tax Credit, the White House says in a description of the proposal.

Obama laid out the proposal as part of this week's State of the Union address. It is part of a broader effort by the Obama administration to simplify a sometimes confusing array of tax breaks designed to make higher education more affordable.

Obama is also proposing a $60 billion plan to make the first two years of community or technical college free.

Congressional Republicans have embraced the effort to simplify the education tax breaks, but key GOP leaders adamantly oppose scaling back college savings plans.

"Middle-income families that have worked hard and saved to send their children to college should receive our support, not a new tax bill to pay for (Obama's) agenda," said Rep. Lynn Jenkins, R-Kan.

Jenkins said she supports the American Opportunity Tax Credit, but said the $2,500 limit doesn't come close to covering the annual cost of a college education.

"I have two kids in college. It's about $20,000 per kid, at a minimum," Jenkins said. "Where are we supposed to get the rest?"

Contributions to college savings plans are not tax-deductible. But once the money is invested, it can grow and eventually be withdrawn with no tax on the earnings, as long as the money is spent on tuition, fees, books and supplies needed to attend postsecondary school.

The savings plans, which are sponsored by states, can also be used to prepay college tuition.

The Obama administration says college savings plans mostly benefit wealthier families.

"Tax incentives are more beneficial to families with higher tax liabilities, in part because these families have a higher marginal tax rate," the Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, said in a 2012 report.

About 12 million families take advantage of college savings plans. About half were held by families making more than $150,000, according to the GAO report.

About 30 percent of plans were held by families who make less than $100,000, the report said.
Families could continue contributing to college savings accounts under Obama's proposal. Students would have to pay taxes on the earnings, but not until the money is withdrawn.

Obama's proposal would make similar changes to Coverdell Education Savings Accounts, which are similar to 529 accounts but have income limits.

The president's plan for expanding the $2,500 tax credit for college expenses would make it available to families with incomes up to $180,000 a year. The amount of the credit would grow with inflation, and students could use it for up to five years, as long as they are attending school at least part-time.

Currently, students can only receive the credit for four years.