Report blames firefighter death on collapse, lack of data

COLUMBIA, Mo. (AP) — A federal review of a walkway collapse at a University of Missouri student housing complex has found deterioration of the walkway, a lack of information and lack of situational awareness contributed to the death last year of a Columbia firefighter.

The Columbia Tribune reports Lt. Bruce Britt was killed when a walkway at University Village apartments caved in beneath him on Feb. 22, 2014. The report issued late last month by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health says Britt's cause of death was suffocation due to being crushed by debris.

The report attributed his death to collapse of the walkway, the department's lack of knowledge of the building's condition and inadequate information from callers who reported the initial collapse that brought firefighters to the complex.

Report: Miscommunication an issue in death of Lt. Bruce Britt

COLUMBIA - Miscommunication and lack of on-site planning were contributing factors in the death of a Columbia firefighter, Lt. Bruce Britt, when a walkway collapsed at University Village Apartments last year, according to a new federal report.
The 35-page report from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) includes the initial 911 call and tracks the movements of Britt and other emergency responders from their arrival on the scene through Britt's death.

Britt was killed when the second floor walkway he was on gave way beneath him. But as events unfolded, the walkway was mentioned only once, during the 911 call, as a cause for concern.

The initial 911 call and resulting emergency dispatches contained multiple references to a collapsed roof.

Here is the 911 transcript:

Call Taker: 911 what's the address of your emergency?
Caller: Hello how are you doing? Hello?
Call Taker: Hi, this is 911.
Caller: Yes ma'am, actually umm, we have a problem with our apartment, the roof has just fell down to the ground.
Call Taker: Ok, what's your address?
Caller: Our address is _____, apartment 707
Call Taker: Ok and the roof fell in?
Caller: Yes, the sidewalk actually of the second roof fell down on the first roof.
Call Taker: Is anybody hurt?
Caller: I don't know ma'am actually we just actually woke up just suddenly like that, we don't we aren't sure yet, we just shocked."
The Call Taker asked for and verified a callback number and name for the caller.
Call Taker: Ok and you don't know if anyone is trapped or hurt?
Caller: Well we don't, we are not sure ma'am, but we cannot go out of our apartment actually we are trapped here.
Call Taker: Ok.
Call Taker: So you are trapped in your apartment?
Caller: Yes, ma'am...
Call Taker: And how many...
Caller: ...we are afraid...
Call Taker: How many are in your apartment?
Caller: Two.
Call Taker: And you're still, you're still in your apartment right? You haven't fallen through?
Caller: Yes ma'am, yeah we are really afraid because we are not sure if that will be fall again. The call taker verifies no hazardous materials are involved, advises caller that the fire department is on the way, and provides the caller with safety instructions (e.g., do not attempt to rescue any trapped persons or no one reenters the area).
Caller: ... it looks very bad.
Call Taker: Are you above or below ground?
Caller: We are the second floor?
Call Taker: Ok.
Caller: Yeah, actually it's just in front of our apartment.
Call Taker: Ok, and is anyone injured?
Caller: I told you ma'am we are not sure actually...
Call Taker: Are you or your wife injured?
Caller: No, no we are fine we are just shocked actually because you know we were sleeping.
Call Taker: "Ok, once, if it's safe to do so I want you to keep all bystanders away from the area. I know that you're trapped in your apartment but if anybody.
Caller: "Yes."
The call taker tells caller to stay away from hazardous areas, help is on the way, and to call back if things worsen.

Immediately after the 911 call, dispatch issued an alert for a "building collapse." In a message to Britt's unit shortly after, dispatch said, "We are getting reports of a roof collapse in apartment 707.

Several messages that followed between dispatch and emergency responders included references to a roof collapse or roof cave in.

When Britt and his crew arrived at the scene, they reported seeing no signs of damage and contacted dispatch to make sure they had the right address. Britt then said, "There's nothing wrong with building 707."

At that point, Britt and others did a visual inspection by walking around the building. On multiple occasions, Britt said he saw no signs of a collapse.

Britt, another firefighter and a university police officer then climbed a set of stairs to the second floor to begin knocking on doors until they came to the 911 callers. After determining the couple was not hurt, Britt moved ahead.

About the same time, from a fire truck below, another firefighter noticed what appeared to be rock or gravel falling from the corner of the building. He immediately concluded it was not the roof that was the issue, but the walkway. He yelled to Britt as more debris began to fall.

Up on the second floor, the other firefighter and university police officer heard a loud bang or cracking and turned to see the walkway collapsing, the brick façade pulling away from the exterior. They lost sight of Britt as he fell and the walkway detached from the building and landed on him.

Several emergency responders rushed over and determined Britt was trapped by debris. For 11 minutes, they used temporary supports and airbags to free him from the rubble. By the time Britt was extricated, he had no pulse and was not breathing. His cause of death was later ruled traumatic compression asphyxia.

The NIOSH report said "situational awareness" and "inadequate caller information" contributed to Britt's death, along with deterioration of the walkway, a situation dispatch did not communicate to responders.
The NIOSH report says two sentences from the 911 call could have made a difference, had they been communicated to responders:

Caller: Yes, the sidewalk actually of the second roof fell down on the first roof.

Caller: Yeah, actually it's just in front of our apartment.

According to the report, those two pieces of information "may have prompted responding firefighters to conduct further size-up of the building conditions."

The report notes the university's master plan had previously determined the building was in poor condition. The university ordered concrete deck repairs. In the plan, two other buildings in the complex had already been deemed a public safety hazard.

Many components of the walkway and its supports were "severely deteriorated," according to NIOSH, in part because the walkway was "exposed to the elements for many years."

A structural engineering firm that investigated the collapse is quoted in the NIOSH report. It said it was confident the collapse was the result of a concrete shear failure along the outer edge and the large "bang" initially reported by residents was probably the sound of that shear failure.

The firm also said the walkway was likely detached completely from the wall and sagged but was held in place by "membrane action" until the load on it exceeded its "bond and tension strength."

NIOSH is making several recommendations based on its investigations. It said higher education facilities should develop strategies for inspection of student housing complexes and immediately address potential hazards.

It said fire departments should train workers in situational awareness and consider designating incident safety officers. The report recommended fire personnel maintain a higher than normal degree of caution when operating around elevated walkways and exposed structural elements.

NIOSH also recommended dispatch centers should ensure 911 call takers clearly understand a situation and properly inform responders. It also said higher education facilities should work with fire departments to develop pre-incident plans for buildings within their jurisdiction.

The report said the Columbia Fire Department and the University of Missouri had a liaison, but it was not focused on structural engineering problems that posed a genuine risk for responders.

Battalion Chief Brad Frazier said, "The NIOSH report is written for all departments around the country, not written just for CFD. We are reviewing the report and we are always looking to improve the level of service we provide and that includes safety."

A spokesperson for MU said the university cannot comment on the report because a wrongful death lawsuit filed by Britt's family is pending.
Report links firefighter's death to walkway deterioration, lack of 'situational awareness'

By Alan Burdziak

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 2:05 pm

A federal regulatory agency’s report on the February 2014 death of Columbia fire Lt. Bruce Britt said deterioration to a walkway he was on as well as a lack of information, planning and situational awareness contributed to his fall.

The report was issued Jan. 26 by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, an arm of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The report attributes Britt's death to a combination of deterioration and collapse of the concrete walkway, the department’s lack of knowledge of the building’s condition, no site pre-planning, inadequate caller information “influenced dispatch information to responding units” and a lack of situational awareness.

Britt died when responding to what was first dispatched as a roof collapse at University Village, 601 S. Providence Road, at 4:44 a.m. on Feb. 22, 2014, when a walkway caved in underneath him. His official cause of death, the report said, was suffocation due to being crushed by debris.

The report lists nine recommendations for fire departments to avoid a similar incident in the future. Key recommendations, the report said, are for higher education providers and authorities to develop strategies for regular inspection of housing complexes to find hazards early. The report also suggests dispatch centers make sure all information taken from callers is “clearly understood” and reviewed by a dispatcher so all information is relayed to responders.

One other recommendation for higher education institutions is to develop pre-incident plans for their buildings to share with fire departments. The report suggests fire departments train firefighters to have better situational awareness, ensure incident safety officers are properly trained and consider appointing one person to serve in the role department-wide.

The University of Missouri ordered inspections on all its buildings and found the walkways at University Village were structurally deficient. Most of the complex was razed last year. The NIOSH report further details inspectors’ findings about the property and what happened to Britt during the accident.
Fire Department Battalion Chief Brad Fraizer said it’s important to note that the recommendations in the report aren’t for the department specifically, but are written for fire agencies nationwide to consider. The department received the report Tuesday afternoon and officials are still looking over it.

“We’re reviewing the report and we’re confident with our level of training and where that needs to be, and that’s no to say we can’t do things better,” Fraizer said. “We’re always looking at ways to improve.”

Britt, the incident commander, arrived on the scene and did a 360-degree inspection of Building 707, where the collapse was reported, and didn’t see any signs of a roof collapse. He, another firefighter and a University of Missouri police sergeant were on the second floor walkway moments later and Britt was talking with a resident when the walkway collapsed.

“Moments before this, the lieutenant’s driver noticed debris falling from the walkway and immediately tried to get the attention of the lieutenant before he continued walking on the walkway, but it was too late,” the report said.

The report also said miscommunication between dispatchers and people calling 911 contributed to the incident’s grave outcome. Had information that a caller gave saying the damage was in front of their apartment, after saying it was the roof, been given to responders, they may have re-evaluated the building, the report said. That information was not given to the first crews at the scene.

All firefighters in Columbia are trained as incident safety officers, Fraizer said, but Britt’s death in part led to a push for all personnel to go through a mandatory 12-hour training session to enhance the training. That is expected to finish by the end of the month.

“We looked at that before, the advanced training, but this certainly moved that along,” Fraizer said.

Britt’s widow, Leigh, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the university’s curators in March. Christian Basi, a spokesman for the University of Missouri declined to comment on NIOSH’s report, citing the lawsuit.

University records showed the complex received only patchwork repairs in the few years prior to Britt’s death despite being recommended for demolition in a 2008 draft of the Graduate and Family Housing Master Plan. The draft called “deteriorating metal decks” a safety hazard and identified other structural deficiencies, including termite-damaged wood structures, aging windows and interiors with inadequate waterproofing ventilation. Emails and other documents released last year show the complex’s myriad problems were a concern for years.

Basi said in March that University Village was a popular spot for graduate and married students because of its location and the university maintained it because of the demand.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Miscommunication contributed to firefighter's death, report finds

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 | 2:19 p.m. CST; updated 2:49 p.m. CST, Wednesday, February 4, 2015
BY CRYSTAL DUAN, JOE GUSZKOWSKI

COLUMBIA — Columbia firefighter Bruce Britt was walking along the second-floor walkway of Building 707 at University Village last February while responding to a report of a roof collapse when another firefighter on the ground had a sudden realization.

As the firefighter watched Britt, he noticed gravel falling from a walkway and realized that was the real danger.

Just then, other responding personnel heard a "bang" and a crack as the walkway gave way. The firefighter on the ground yelled to warn Britt. But it was too late, and Britt fell out of view with the walkway on top of him.

He was pronounced dead at University Hospital after efforts at the scene failed to revive him. Britt, who was 48, had been with the department for 23 years.

The details about how he died are part of a report released Jan. 26 by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, which investigates all firefighter fatalities. The agency conducted interviews and analyzed documents related to the partial collapse of the walkway at the MU-owned University Village apartment complex that killed Britt.

The report found several factors that contributed to Britt's death:

- Miscommunication between the initial caller, dispatch operator and the fire department.
- A lack of communication to the fire department about building conditions at University Village.

- A lack of "situational awareness" by the fire department in its response.

- A lack of pre-planning between the university and first responders in general about responses to emergencies in university buildings.

But according to the emergency dispatch transcript included in the report, it was the miscommunication about what part of the building had collapsed that might have contributed most directly to Britt’s death.

According to the report, the 911 caller, who lived in building 707, initially tells the dispatcher: "We have a problem with our apartment, the roof has just fell down to the ground."

But later in the call, the caller clarifies, saying, "...the sidewalk actually of the second roof fell down on the first roof."

"Had this information, although potentially confusing, been provided to responding units, it may have prompted responding firefighters to conduct further size up of building conditions," the report states.

The radio dispatch to the fire department called for a response "for a roof collapse... on the second floor," and didn’t mention the caller’s clarification, according to the report. Upon arriving at the scene, first responders saw no sign of a collapse. It was then that Britt and two other first responders ascended the stairway of building 707 and began knocking on doors. Britt was trying to open the 911 caller’s door when the walkway collapsed beneath him.

The report also cites a Feb. 22, 2014, inspection report by structural engineering firm Trabue, Hansen and Hinshaw Inc. that had found that the walkway support beams, metal deck and concrete slab were "significantly deteriorated." This deterioration, along with water and chlorides and freeze-thaw action, "deteriorated the concrete to the point where its shear strength could no longer support even the self-weight of the walkway."
The NIOSH report highlighted two "key recommendations":
- The university should develop formal strategies and programs to inspect and evaluate student housing complexes. They should also have proper programs and building codes, in partnership with law enforcement and emergency personnel, to immediately address potential safety hazards.
- Dispatch centers should clearly convey all information they receive to properly prepare dispatched personnel for the situation.

The report made seven additional recommendations:
- The fire department should emphasize situational awareness to responding personnel. In circumstances where the hazard is not immediately clear, firefighters ought to prioritize slowing down and reassessing situations before acting.
- The fire department should designate individuals who can be "incident safety officers" and gather a "broad, overall perspective" in emergency situations.
- The university should work with fire departments to develop "pre-incident plans" and make the information available on "mobile data terminals" within all fire department vehicles.
- The fire department should ensure that company officers visit buildings frequently with personnel to identify hazards that could pose future risks.
- The fire department should maintain more caution when walking around elevated walkways, fire escapes, and "exposed structural elements" that pose many potential dangerous situations.
- The fire department should ensure firefighters wear properly protective equipment and clothing at all times. Britt was wearing a ball cap, not a helmet, at the time of the incident but the report states that Britt’s "personal protective equipment" did not play a role in his death.
- Other fire departments that serve institutions separate from the city, such as universities, should make use of the information in the report.
Britt's family filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the university in March 2014, alleging that the university was aware of dangerous conditions at University Village but didn't take action to make the apartment complex safer.

The NIOSH report also mentions the university's awareness of problems with walkways as early as 2008.

Most of the buildings at University Village have since been torn down, though three remain and are being used for storage. Some of the space is now being leased for parking.

188,000 moldy materials destroyed at University of Missouri


COLUMBIA, Mo. • A University of Missouri faculty committee says it no longer has confidence in the director of the university's libraries after about 190,000 books, documents and journals that were damaged by mold were destroyed.

The libraries director, Jim Cogswell, acknowledged that he should have communicated better with the committee but says the destroyed materials were duplicates or documents that will be replaced, The Columbia Daily Tribune reported.

The 188,000 items that were destroyed were among 629,000 materials damaged by mold while being stored at an off-campus location. Since the problem was discovered in 2013, almost $850,000 has been spent to clean up 441,000 items, using mostly the library's self-insurance reserve fund, Cogswell said in a recent report to an ad hoc Faculty Council committee.
Of the destroyed documents, 108,000 will be replaced with the help of the $400,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation, and library leaders have access to replacement copies of federal documents.

The destruction began before a Faculty Council meeting at which Cogswell assured faculty members he would consult them in any decisions about disposal of volumes.

When committee members learned about the destruction of materials, they sent a letter to Faculty Council Chairman Craig Roberts calling Cogswell's lack of communication an "egregious violation" of trust.

"We should have done better in saying that the only books that were going to be destroyed were duplicates," Cogswell said Monday. "But I make no apologies for the outcome." He said more than 70 percent of the damaged items have been treated.

"This is the best possible outcome," he said. "I don't see how anyone can fault us for only destroying duplicates."

A follow-up letter from the committee to the Faculty Council chair said committee members have lost confidence in Cogswell's judgment and urged the council to either request a detailed accounting of the destruction or "consider proposing a vote of no confidence in the Director of Libraries."

UM Board of Curators gathers for two-day meeting

COLUMBIA - The UM Board of Curators are set to meet at the University of Missouri campus for a two-day session starting Thursday morning.

The board will hold its first public session starting Thursday at 11 a.m. One of the meetings happening early on is the finance committee meeting.

At the meeting, the committee will talk about financial aid for the next fiscal year, which starts this summer. Other fees the committee will talk about include housing and dining plans.
Later Thursday, there will also be a separate committee meeting to talk about a recent Title IX report. It's a topic that has gained attention over the past year following the controversy involving the case of alleged sexual assault involving former MU athlete Sasha Menu Courey.

Thursday’s agenda wraps up with an invite-only reception dinner for the UM Board of Curators and other guests. That event starts at 6 p.m.

The next public meeting will then begin Friday at 9 a.m.

UM Curators to vote on tuition, fees this week

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 2:00 pm

The University of Missouri Board of Curators will meet in Columbia this week to hear and vote on supplemental fee increases for students at all four campuses and consider changes to the governing rules addressing what happens if professors are accused of a Title IX violation.

The curators are set to vote on the supplemental fees, which are charges assessed on students in certain programs or colleges on the four campuses in addition to tuition costs. Some curators expressed concerns about fee increases during a special teleconference last month.

Though state law mandates tuition increases stay at or below changes in the consumer price index, that statute doesn’t restrict colleges from increasing supplemental fees.

“As I look through how these fees are being distributed and the spread between the highest increase and the lowest increase, it does seem to be supportive of the idea that different programs may cost ... different amounts and maybe ought to be priced differently,” Curator John Phillips said during the January teleconference. “But, I think it’s a Band-Aid approach to do it through fees as opposed to differential pricing on tuition. So, I sound that alarm, and I guess we’ll talk more about it in February.”

The curators meet Thursday in the Reynolds Alumni Center and resume meetings Friday morning.
At the board’s December meeting in St. Louis, administrators suggested a CPI-level increase for in-state undergraduate tuition — 0.8 percent — for all campuses except St. Louis, where a 9.1 percent increase was proposed because of a fee for a new recreation center approved by a student referendum.

“In general, supplemental course fee rates are proposed to increase at the rate of inflation,” according to board documents for Thursday’s session. There are exceptions, such as MU’s nursing school, which is increasing the supplemental fee by $90 per student, per credit hour.

The curators will also hear and vote on changes and additions to the Collected Rules and Regulations, the governing document for the UM System, addressing what happens when a faculty member is accused of gender discrimination or sexual assault under the federal Title IX law, which prohibits gender discrimination.

The proposals would add specific, uniform procedures to the complaint resolution process.

The case must be resolved within 60 days, a guideline passed down by the federal Office of Civil Rights.

Faculty across the UM System won a battle by having a hand in creating these procedures. Initially, the university’s consultant, the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, didn’t want faculty involvement because of the amount of training required of panel participants, the time commitment to be involved in hearing panels and because faculty involvement could create an uncomfortable situation if a student has to discuss a situation with a hearing panel that includes a professor they might later have in class.

“Faculty members must be involved in processes when a faculty member is accused,” Associate Professor Dennis Miller said to the Faculty Council at a January meeting on the rule changes.

Senate committee rejects one UM curator nominee; confirmation of two others uncertain

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 10:50 am
JEFFERSON CITY — The Senate Gubernatorial Appointments Committee on Wednesday rejected Mary Nelson, a St. Louis attorney, for a seat on the University of Missouri Board of Curators after raising concerns that Gov. Jay Nixon was appointing too many lawyers.

The same concerns were raised for two other curator nominees that the committee approved, with former state Sen. Philip Snowden of Kansas City passing easily through the committee and Maurice Graham of St. Louis squeaking through on a 6-5 vote.

The committee rejected Nelson, general counsel and chief legal officer for the St. Louis Community College District, on a 3-8 party-line vote. Members also raised concerns about a conflict between her current duties and the curator’s role.

The committee also held up the nomination of Columbia resident David Murphy for a seat on the Missouri Conservation Commission. Columbia resident Brian Jamison was approved as a member of the Missouri Gaming Commission.

All the nominees must be confirmed by the full Senate.

Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, was the most vocal about his opposition to Nelson and Graham. He accused Nixon of attempting to “stack the board” with “lawyer buddies” who might want to make Nixon the next president of the university.

“These are not just some disinterested lawyers,” Schaefer said.

Schaefer has filed a bill to prevent curators from hiring for a university position a governor who appointed them. If Nixon would announce his support for the bill, it would allay many concerns, Schaefer said.

Snowden, who appeared before the committee Wednesday, said he understands the concern about having eight of nine curators who are attorneys. Snowden, a lawmaker from 1967 to 1985 and quarterback of the MU Tigers’ 1960 Orange Bowl team, said he wanted to be known for his business activities during the past 30 years, not his 20 years as an attorney.

“If you look at those factors alone, that might make sense,” Snowden said of concerns regarding attorneys. “But if you look at the background of people, and they had a wide range of interests and knew about a lot of things, it might be the perfect board.”

Graham, president of Gray, Ritter & Graham, is a past president of the Missouri Bar and the St. Louis Bar Foundation. His law firm is a heavy contributor to Nixon, giving $100,000 to his 2012 re-election campaign. Graham personally has given almost $10,000 to Democratic candidates in the past three years.

Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Glendale, said Graham’s personal accomplishments outweigh concerns about his politics or his profession.
“He is very accomplished and well-respected, not just a lawyer, but of the community,” Schmitt said. “I think it would be shortsighted. I don’t think I can extract myself from dealing with the individuals as they come forth.”

Nixon has the option of allowing full Senate votes on Snowden and Graham or asking for their nominations to be withdrawn. Once the nominees are reported to the Senate, Senate consent for withdrawal. For Nelson and Murphy, Nixon can send letters to the Senate withdrawing their names without needing approval.

All four nominees were appointed before the session began. If any are not approved and not withdrawn, the Missouri Constitution bars them from being appointed to the same position in the future.

Since 2003, Murphy has been executive director of the Conservation Federation of Missouri, the state’s largest conservation group in the state. Before that, Murphy worked 10 years for the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Columbia man arrested for alleged 2012 sexual assault

By THE TRIBUNE'S STAFF

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 2:00 pm

University of Missouri police Tuesday arrested a 22-year-old man suspected of a sexual assault in December 2012.

Prosecutors charged Joseph B. Clamp on Jan. 26 with one count of sexual assault, a Class C felony punishable by as much as seven years in prison.

Clamp sexually assaulted a woman in the 800 block of Richmond Avenue on Dec. 7, 2012, while she was passed out, according to a probable cause statement, “knowing she was unable to give consent due to her being intoxicated at the time.” The victim called police at 1:37 a.m. the same day, and a rape kit was administered within an hour.

University of Missouri Police Capt. Scott Richardson said Clamp was arrested on the warrant for sexual assault at 1500 Fellows Place Apartment 5C, Clamp’s listed address, without incident. Clamp was released from the Boone County Jail after posting a $25,000 bond.
MU student charged with felony sexual assault

BY JACK WADDELL

COLUMBIA — A senior at MU, Joseph Bradshaw Clamp, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of first-degree sexual assault.

Clamp is accused of having sexual intercourse with a woman in 2012 in the 800 block of Richmond Avenue while she was intoxicated and could not give consent, according to a probable cause statement.

Clamp was a member of Delta Sigma Phi fraternity at the time.

The victim had a blood alcohol content of 0.126 percent at the time of the incident, which happened on Dec. 7, 2012, but was not reported until Sept. 17, 2014.

Clamp was charged under Revised Missouri Statute Section 566.040, which is now Section 566.030, stating that if the victim is incapacitated, incapable of consent or lacks the capacity to consent, the charge is rape in the first degree. Boone County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Jonathan Bertz said Section 566.040 was the law at the time, so that is what Clamp was charged under.

Clamp's bail was set at $25,000. He was released on bond Tuesday.

MU law professors write petition for attorney in sexual harassment cases
COLUMBIA, Mo. - Some faculty at the University of Missouri are proposing a change to Title IX rules.

Currently, the university does not allow a lawyer for faculty accused of sexual harassment of discrimination.

Two law school professors wrote up a petition to amend this, asking that faculty be allowed an attorney for such cases. So far, they have about 180 signatures.

Ben Trachtenberg, one of those professors, said the new Title IX rules are "well meaning," but said faculty should not be deprived of the rights they already have.

Trachtenberg speculates one of the reasons the university is barring attorneys for faculty in Title IX cases may be because it used the rules for students as a model; they are not offered an attorney.

He said attorneys should be offered to both the accused and the complainants due to the emotional nature.

The Board of Curators meets Thursday to talk about Title IX rules and ABC 17 News will have a crew to follow up on this story.

War of words erupts after UM President Wolfe says Missouri is in 'race to the bottom'

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 8:50 am

JEFFERSON CITY — University of Missouri President Tim Wolfe should stay home and take care of the school, state Sen. Eric Schmitt told the Senate Tuesday as he accused Wolfe of improperly questioning state tax and spending policy.

Schmitt, R-Glendale, was upset about an editorial in Friday’s St. Louis Post-Dispatch praising Wolfe for advocating an increase in state cigarette taxes and questioning state priorities. Wolfe visited with the newspaper’s editorial board Thursday as part of his Show Me Value Tour, touting the benefits of higher education.
“I think it is appalling the University of Missouri president is so opposed to people keeping more of their own money,” said Schmitt, a candidate for state treasurer in 2016. “It is my opinion that the University of Missouri system president’s time may be better spent doing a thorough review of the system.”

The editorial quoted Wolfe extensively. “If we don’t change, we will be in a race to the bottom and we will win the race. It is not what Missourians deserve,” Wolfe said. “The categories we are number one in are the categories we don’t want to be number one in.”

Later Tuesday, Wolfe testified to the House Higher Education Appropriations Committee on this year’s budget request for the university.

For the coming year, Gov. Jay Nixon has recommended a 1.3 percent increase in funding for the university, adding $5.7 million to a base of $428.5 million. In the House hearing, Wolfe asked lawmakers to try to match the growth in state revenue in the coming year — estimated to be 3.6 percent — which would add about $10 million to Nixon’s request.

Wolfe also asked lawmakers to approve bond funding for repair and maintenance needs and for consideration that university buildings be part of any bonds issued for new construction.

Wolfe said he needs to meet with Schmitt to explain his worries about the direction of the state and to show that the university system is saving $48 million annually through efficiency measures. Wolfe said he did not have time Tuesday to talk to Schmitt, but he hopes to do so next week.

Systemwide, 77 percent of the university budget is spent on teaching and research, compared to an average of 70 percent at similar schools, Wolfe said.

“You have to reach the conclusion that the University of Missouri system is very efficient,” he said, “and we have been doing it for quite some time, and we are very, very good at it.”

The “race to the bottom,” Wolfe said, is the result of trends that should worry people.

Missouri was 44th among states in per-student funding for higher education in fiscal 2014, according to a College Board report issued in October. The state was 32nd in per-pupil public school funding in the 2011-12 school year, according to a National Center for Education Statistics report released Thursday.

It is a matter of what Missouri wants to be known for, Wolfe said. “When you are at the top of the states relative to the lowest price per pack of cigarettes, is that what you want to be known for? Or if you are top in executions?”

At 17 cents per pack, Missouri has the lowest state cigarette taxes. Last year it tied Texas for the most executions with 10.
“What we don’t want to do is to continue to trend toward the bottom,” Wolfe said. “We want to see funding and outcomes at a different level than they are today.”

Schmitt, sponsor of a 2013 income tax cut vetoed by Nixon, said Wolfe should leave tax policy to lawmakers. “It was just a little bit insulting to working families out there,” he said.

Wolfe said he was not criticizing individuals in his comments to the Post-Dispatch.

“I was making a statement to all Missourians that we should rise together and challenge each other to prioritize on education and fund it at appropriate levels,” Wolfe said.

New South Providence clinic aims to treat 100,000 its first year

The new South Providence Medical Park clinic hopes to treat around 100,000 patients in its first year of operation, according to a recent projection by MU Health Care.

The 85,512-square foot facility, which opened Jan. 20, will serve a number of patients redirected from other locations as well as a number of new patients, MU Health spokeswoman Stephanie Baehman said in an email.

Convenience is a big focus for the new clinic, said Dr. Steven Zweig, chairman of the Department of Family and Community Medicine. He said the clinic will feature a team of about 100 resident and faculty physicians and an open layout to meet health care demand and to provide increased convenience for patients. MU Health services like Urgent Care, Family Medicine and Psychiatric Center are also being relocated to the new facility.

“It’s different from most clinics in that it is has an open, two-story stairway to encourage people to use the stairs instead of the elevator,” Zweig said. “It is convenient because it provides all sorts of services that a normal facility cannot, things that before were only available at a hospital.”

The clinic’s location on 551 E. Southampton Drive allows public vehicle access from four directions, Zwieg said. The city is also planning a CoMo Connect bus stop near the facility.

New digs

The clinic boasts a new 2,000-square-foot pharmacy with a drive-thru, which will help match patient needs by expanding its weekly hours and adding weekend hours, Manager of Outpatient Pharmacy Julia Chisholm said. Doctors can now send prescriptions electronically to the
pharmacy from exam rooms, so that prescriptions are ready to pick up through the drive-thru as patients leave the clinic.

Chisholm said the new pharmacy has already observed a 200 percent increase in over-the-counter sales.

“I am very excited for the improvement in patient care we are able to provide,” she said. “We have quadrupled our amount of space, and the increased space allows for a larger selection of retail over-the-counter items. We opened two weeks ago and our patients seem to be handling the transition well.”

The new clinic has 48 family medicine rooms, 30 pediatric examination rooms, 15 outpatient behavioral health care rooms and two conference rooms for group therapy. The facility also offers ultrasound, MRI, CT, X-ray and mammography scans through its imaging center, and medical testing through an on-site lab.

The increase in number of examination rooms allows room for more training and learning experience for staff and medical students, Zweig said.

“If students have a good place for training and experience, MU can provide a source of doctors who may stay in Missouri and practice,” he said. “In terms of staff, we can give them a healthy working environment and training that they may take with them to new jobs in other locations.”

The clinic will serve a number of patients who are redirected from other MU Health locations, as well as a number of new patients, Baehman said. She said MU Health generated its patient load projection using current productivity numbers and anticipated additions and departures of patients.

Zweig said he hopes the clinic’s focus on convenience of care will help attract new patients.

“The building of the clinic represents a big commitment to the community,” he said. “It shows that MU Health Care is willing to invest the money it takes to create a state-of-the-art facility to take care of you not just today, but for the rest of your life.”

Boone County commissioner challenges DNR's Hinkson findings

By Jodie Jackson Jr.
Elevated levels of E. coli and other bacteria in Hinkson Creek are among the reasons the stream is considered “impaired,” but a Boone County commissioner said the main sources of that pollution might not be something local governments — or taxpayers — should be responsible for.

After hearing an analysis on Tuesday of a Hinkson Creek habitat assessment, a citizens committee formed to help guide state- and federally-mandated improvements to the creek listened to a report about how the Department of Natural Resources measures E. coli and other bacteria in the creek. Human and animal waste are the main source of E. coli.

Lynn Milberg of DNR’s water quality monitoring section told the committee that Hinkson Creek has been listed as “impaired” since 2006 because of high levels of bacteria. She said current data indicates “there is still impairment” with regard to bacteria, and Hinkson probably will remain on the impaired waters list even after a new assessment in 2016.

That revelation prompted a protest from Southern District Commissioner Karen Miller.

“Prove to me that it’s sewer that’s creating those numbers,” Miller said. “I don’t think it’s fair to our community” to ask taxpayers to address bacteria levels caused by geese, wildlife and livestock.

“It doesn’t matter,” Milberg said. “E. coli is E. coli.”

“It does matter,” Miller said.

She asked whether DNR had differentiated what was causing the elevated E. coli levels.

“We do not have the capability to do that,” Milberg said.

**Miller asked what was required of the three parties — the county, city and University of Missouri — that share a stormwater discharge permit. Milberg said the creek will be listed as “impaired” until it does not exceed bacteria standards for three consecutive years.**

“That may never happen,” Miller said. “We may be on this list forever.”

Joe Engeln, a DNR water quality specialist, said the Clean Water Act aims that “every water body should be swimmable and fishable.”

After the meeting, Miller said she was not satisfied with the official response to her challenge about the source of E. coli and elevated bacteria.

“The response was that it doesn’t matter. We’re responsible” for meeting the standards, she said.
The primary focus of the citizens or stakeholders committee was a physical habitat assessment report, led by Jason Hubbart, University of Missouri associate professor of hydrology and water quality, and a field crew of graduate research assistants, including master’s student Lynne Hooper.

Hooper’s report said the research results will have “applicability for land use managers and agency planners” in the Hinkson watershed. The information also can be used to identify potential hot spots of disturbance and might indicate sites that would benefit from restoration.

The stakeholder group is one of three teams — the others are an action team and a science team — that are part of a collaborative action management process that gives the city of Columbia, Boone County and MU a way to improve Hinkson without using more drastic and potentially expensive pollution-control measures.

The process started in 2012 and came 14 years after a federal Clean Water Act lawsuit was filed against the EPA to clean up Hinkson Creek and more than 200 other lakes and streams that are considered “impaired.”

The EPA is under a federal court order to bring the creek, and hundreds of other water bodies, into compliance with the Clean Water Act’s requirements.

DNR agreed to collect data for three years, beginning in 2012, in conjunction with other ongoing studies, to determine whether sewer mitigation projects, stormwater runoff reduction efforts and city and county stormwater ordinances have improved the health of the creek that runs through the heart of Columbia.

City, county and university officials have pointed to a variety of stormwater reduction projects and regulations, including new methods to spread runoff so that it can evaporate or infiltrate the ground before entering the creek.

MU launches Women in Engineering Center to increase female ranks

By Steven Benna

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 2:00 pm
About 40 people, including students, alumni and faculty, gathered in the Ketcham Auditorium Lounge at the University of Missouri’s LaFerre Hall Tuesday to celebrate the opening of a new College of Engineering center meant to emphasize the importance of women in engineering.

An anonymous $300,000 gift to the College of Engineering helped launch the Women in Engineering Center, which will work to attract more women to the college and keep them in the program. The donation will fund the center for about three years.

“I view today as an important moment in our history as a college of engineering,” interim Dean Bob Schwartz said Tuesday to kick off the open house. “And I look forward to five years down the road when we look back at all the great achievements that this center has made.”

The center has four main objectives: assess the climate in the college as it relates to women and diversity, eliminate structural barriers, eliminate individual barriers and establish ways to ensure continued growth. Statistics from the Engineering Workforce Commission show only 18.6 percent of engineering bachelor’s degrees went to women in 2012.

“What’s really important is making sure that you have goals in place so that you’re not just doing random things,” said Jayme Gardner, programs coordinator for the center. “Everything we do is related to our four goals.”

Gardner will be doing a lot of the day-to-day work the center requires, such as planning programs and advising students. She said she thinks the engineering college is to blame for talented women leaving its ranks for other disciplines.

“Our research actually shows that the women who leave us have usually higher than a 3.0 GPA,” Gardner said. “So they’re very qualified. They’re going to study other math-intensive majors. So it’s us, not them.”

Gardner stressed the importance of showing students the environment of the College of Engineering is a good one and making sure it stays that way. She said it will probably take a few years to accomplish that.

The center likely will have the help of alumni. Barbara Meyer, an energy engineer of Missouri’s Department of Economic Development, is a graduate of the College of Engineering, and she said this program is long overdue.

“I think it’s going to really benefit the women here,” Meyer said. “Just helping women be more aware of the challenges ahead of them, if we as alumni can help them be prepared for the future in some way, I would love to do that.”

The center will be directed by Kate Trauth, who is an associate professor in the civil and environmental engineering department. Trauth is focusing on the larger picture, she said, and will be working with stakeholders, alumni, faculty and students in the college.
“I want to have a vibrant community of the women in the college who are here, and just to be sure that we have a place where they’re welcomed,” Trauth said.

Speakers discuss Charlie Hebdo massacre at MU symposium

By Steven Benna

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Freedom of expression is an important ideal, but some kinds of expression can lead to serious consequences, speakers at a symposium examining the Charlie Hebdo massacre said Tuesday night at a University of Missouri School of Journalism symposium.

MU’s Gannett Hall hosted speakers Sandra Davidson, Khalil Bendib, Aidan White and Martha Steffens to speak about the issue.

On Jan. 7, two armed Islamic extremists broke into a meeting at Charlie Hebdo, a satirical French magazine, and opened fire. Twelve people were killed in the attack.

Davidson, a curators’ teaching professor in the journalism school, offered insight about the legality of free speech. She raised a question for the audience to ponder: If you were the law, what you say is too far or too offensive?

Aidan White, director of the Ethical Journalism Network, said he considers the Hebdo cartoons that sparked the retaliation an example of hate speech. He said it’s important for journalists themselves to analyze speech that is potentially hateful and get it out of the story.

“The people that don’t think in journalism give us serious problems,” White said.

White was sitting at his desk when the attack occurred, and he watched the situation unfold on his Twitter feed. He said the main lesson he learned is that freedom of speech is much more complicated than we think.

“People need to recognize that we have limits of free expression and try to draw lines accordingly,” White said.
Professor Martha Steffens was in the Prague airport with a group of students when the attack happened and arrived in Paris later that morning. So far in 2015, 19 journalists have been killed, Steffens said, and there have been at least 100 journalists killed in each of the past three years. Her message was to have the courage to do what you love and to understand what it means to be a journalist.

“Every week, two or three journalists are killed for what they’ve said or what they’re about to say,” Steffens said. “We really need to tell these stories about bravery, about freedom of speech, and we need to talk to students about that.”

Kahlil Bendib, a French-born, Muslim political cartoonist, believes strongly in freedom of speech and does not think the cartoonists at Charlie Hebdo were being cynical.

“I think” the cartoonists “fell into that utopian abstract idea that this is France, we can draw anything regardless of consequences,” Bendib said.

Bendib said free speech is a complicated issue.

“Just like Gruyère cheese, freedom of expression is truly delicious, but it is full of holes,” Bendib said.

Symposium on Charlie Hebdo attacks, implications on free speech held at MU

For MU freshman Jack Herrick, the morning of Jan. 7 was unlike any other. In Paris at the time, Herrick was at the center of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attacks.

“I wandered into the city to find out where this had happened,” Herrick said in a speech at a symposium “Nous Sommes Tous Charlie” (We Are All Charlie) held Feb. 3. “I didn’t have a map, all I knew is that it was close to where our hotel was. When I got there, I was immediately surrounded by reporters of every nationality. I can’t even begin to describe the air of frenzy to you.”

At 11:30 a.m., two armed Islamist terrorists forced entry into the offices of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. Following the 50 gunshots fired, 11 were killed and 11 had been injured.

Held at the School of Journalism, the symposium was intended to promote discussion and shed light on these events from various perspectives.
“The Global Programs Office of Missouri really played a supporting role in this excellent idea,” said Fritz Cropp, MU School of Journalism Global Programs associate dean. “Anytime we have an opportunity to expose students to such a wide range of perspectives, we ought to do it.”

Offering these perspectives were MU professors Sandra Davidson and Marty Steffens, Ethical Journalism Network Director Aiden White, political cartoonist Khalil Bendib and Gareth Harding, MU School of Journalism Brussels Program director and panel moderator. The audience filled the auditorium.

“I think this was long overdue,” Harding said. “We held this, along with a moment of silence, for our fellow journalists who died for merely speaking their opinions. It’s about time.”

With Harding directing the conversation, the audience had an open dialogue with the panel regarding the implications of the Charlie Hebdo attack on free speech, free press, ethics and journalistic credibility.

Audience members asked a number of questions regarding general attitudes of Islamophobia and how the media deals with graphic content and visuals like that of the video recording of attackers shooting a police officer at close range.

“Graphic videos like the one of the shooting are handled differently by the media,” White said. “I think the most important thing is to give journalists the freedom to decide how to distribute these things without fear of restraint.”

Following the commentary on the necessity of consideration for distributing stories to the public, Davidson said media outlets must interpret how the information will be perceived and what boundaries should be put in place.

“How much is necessary to preserve your credibility and how much makes it too inflammatory?” Davidson asked. “Is it necessary or is it gratuitous?”

Also heavily discussed was the role of nationalism in creating a feeling of solidarity and support against these attacks on free speech.

“I had never seen nor expected such French nationalism,” Herrick said of the days following the attacks. “The solidarity is something that I really appreciated. What does this mean to me (as a young journalist)? I want to be Charlie. I want to continue to be Charlie.”

On the issue of free speech, Davidson wrapped up the discussion powerfully.

“Words have consequences and they can put people in fear of their lives,” she said. “‘But, as the saying goes, ‘I may disagree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.’”
As Alden’s lengthy AD tenure wraps up, search for replacement begins

Off I-70, by Kingdom City, there’s a gas station with an unlikely connection to MU athletics history.

The name of this station is Gasper’s Truck Stop, and it’s where on July 4, 1998, over a modest meal of eggs and coffee, then-Chancellor Richard Wallace offered a 40-year-old Mike Alden the position of athletic director.

On the evening of Jan. 29, 2015, after a long and accomplished tenure, Alden released a letter online to announce his resignation as athletic director.

“After several months of contemplation,” the virtual letter read, “I have decided that it is time for a change, both for me and for the University that I so dearly love. I have informed Chancellor (R. Bowen) Loftin of my decision to step down as the Director of Athletics.”

Alden said he’s been thinking about stepping down and “toying around with” transitioning into something new for years.

His resignation is effective Aug. 31.

As athletic director at MU, Alden saw five basketball coaches, two football coaches, three chancellors and 17 classes of athletes come and go.

Moreover, he successfully led the university’s transition from the Big 12 into the Southeastern Conference in 2011.

Under Alden’s leadership, MU athletics has improved both financially, with its budget growing from $13.7 million to $85 million, and academically, reaching No. 2 in the SEC after Vanderbilt.

But the Missouri football program has benefited the most.

Prior to Alden’s arrival, Mizzou football was barely on the map. However, his hiring of head coach Gary Pinkel has helped lead the team to two Big 12 North and two SEC East titles, along with a program-record seven consecutive bowl appearances.

“I was most impressed by Mike’s integrity,” Deputy Chancellor Mike Middleton said. “Mike and I learned very quickly that we shared a commitment to doing the right thing the right way. And I think that his commitment to that simple principle has led to his success as athletic director.”
Despite all of his successes on the field, the department has experienced its fair share of criticism under Alden.

There were multiple Title IX controversies, especially during the latter part of his tenure.

In March 2014, allegations against MU were brought to light by an ESPN’s “Outside the Lines” investigation that stated the university did not pursue a 2010 rape case involving swimmer Sasha Menu Courey.

After receiving little help from the university in dealing with the aftermath, Menu Courey committed suicide in June 2011.

In August 2014, another “Outside the Lines” report revealed allegations against Missouri tailback Derrick Washington.

Washington was investigated in 2008 for allegedly sexually assaulting a female student in an MU residence hall, according to the story. The football player was never released or penalized for his actions, though he was later convicted of sexual assault in a separate case and served four months in prison.

The university responded to the report swiftly. They modified MU’s Title IX protocol to designate all university employees as mandatory reporters of sexual assault.

“If you think over the course of almost two decades, there’s always things you’re going to go back on, look at and recognize,” Alden said. “You have mistakes, you could have done things better, you have some stumbles.

“You’re regretful that things happen, but what you hope is if they happen, and you know, inevitably, something is going to happen, how you’re able to approach that, learn from it and go forward. Those are the things that I really choose to focus on.”

Although he is leaving his position in the athletics department, Alden has no plans to leave the university. He will transition into the College of Education, where he will be an instructor in the Positive Coaching Program, as well as a teacher of leadership in higher education.

“It’s a great opportunity and something that’s pretty consistent for me,” Alden said of the Positive Coaching Program. “Those are things that I’ve been doing, at least on occasion, getting into a classroom and doing things. I’ll be doing it on a much more regular basis.”

Alden wears a wristband that was given to him by student-athletes. The keepsake displays a very clear message: “demanding not demeaning.”

“That, in itself, is the essence of positive coaching,” Alden said. “That’s what we’re trying to do with regards to that program.”
Additionally, Alden will have a key role in the launching of the Center for Global Service Learning Leadership.

The goal of the center, according to Alden’s letter, is to “harness the tremendous service interests of our students and faculty into leadership curriculum, (which will allow us) to take our campus to the next step in the development of our students and our positive impact on the world.”

Now that Alden has decided to step down, the search for his replacement is underway.

Loftin has been here before.

In 2012, while still serving as president of Texas A&M University, Loftin was forced to find a replacement for retiring Athletic Director Bill Byrne.

It took him just six weeks to find the man who would lead TAMU into the SEC.

Loftin said he has immense respect for Alden, but will begin to pursue a successor in the coming days.

“We will do the search right,” Loftin said. “It will be a careful process, but not terribly lengthy.”

The Maneater

Tour Team implements blind application to avoid exclusive ‘leadership culture’

MU Tour Team introduced a blind application system to eliminate any potential bias and unfair treatment toward applicants.

About 150 students applied for 15 to 20 tour guide positions this year, said Director of Visitor Relations LeAnn Stroupe, who makes all final hiring decisions for Tour Team. She said this year’s protocol of assigning a number to each application instead of name was aimed at addressing applicants’ common perception that campus connections influenced the hiring process more than what they brought to the table. The new process also prohibits applicants to mention their affiliation with a specific Greek chapter but allows general mentions like “Greek Life” or “Greek chapter.”

“Over the years, we’ve continued to tweak the (hiring) process to try to make it more balanced, more fair and more inclusive,” she said. "I think taking their name out of the process made us look more specifically at the individual characteristics and the skill sets they were bringing (without) necessarily carrying over potential knowledge of them from some other activity.”
The idea for this new process came from senior Poonam Sheevam, a member of Tour Team and the student coordinator for the Office of Visitor Relations. Sheevam said the idea originated from a discussion among her friends and colleagues about MU’s prevalent “leadership culture.”

“Ever since my freshman year, the pool of leaders on campus have gotten smaller and smaller as fewer people are taking on more roles,” she said. “As my friends and I were discussing this, we felt as if this culture became more and more prominent as the hiring groups would select people they already knew to fill those leadership roles.”

Sheevam said she had considered blind applications for some time because she believes the system would allow for a “more true” representation of campus.

“I really wanted to implement blind applications for Tour Team because we represent a large amount of the student body: We represent students who are out of state, in state, minorities, different majors, different backgrounds, et cetera,” she said.

Freshman Lindsay Hornecker applied to Tour Team this year. She said she believes the blind applications eliminate the possibility of a “big shot on campus” having preferential consideration when applying to campus positions.

“In the real world, a lot of times, you get hired based on who you know and what kind of connections you have,” Hornecker said. “In this process, you’re relying on the things you’ve done in your life other than who you know … The only disadvantage of the blind application would be to the people who are relying on who they know to get the job.”

Stroupe said she had seen the benefit of blind applications firsthand, when a colleague on campus contacted her to give feedback on an applicant.

“I said, ‘Great, but at this point, I don’t know if that person applied or didn’t apply,’” Stroupe said. “In our old process, that might give that person a slight advantage because someone that I know is also recommending this person.”

Sheevam said one of the challenges to implementing the new system was the large pool of applicants to Tour Team each year.

“With such a large applicant pool, it seemed like a pretty ominous idea to (get) rid of the names from the application,” Sheevam said. “Once we figured out the logistics, the response was rather positive from the group of tour guides.”

This year’s Tour Team hiring process includes three rounds: the blind application, group interviews and individual interviews with the pool getting smaller at each stage. Two student coordinators and two senior team leaders are on the front line of assessing the blind applications, Stroupe said.

Sheevam said the scores applicants received on their blind applications were “clean” scores with no baggage attached.
Sheevam said she is satisfied with the way the new process was implemented.

“As far as the implementation, I know it went very well,” Sheevam said. “The logistics could not have gone better and it was nice knowing that we were going in without a bias.”

Stroupe said while Tour Team has yet to see the full benefit of blind applications, she believes the process will help broaden the pool of applicants.

“My end goal for Tour Team is to be as representative of the campus as best we can,” Stroupe said. “Anything I can do to increase that is a good thing and thus far, I believe that’s what this blind process has done for us.”

Resolution would make July 1 Lucile Bluford Day in Missouri

July 1 would be named Lucile Bluford Day in Missouri under a resolution heard Wednesday by the Missouri House Trade and Tourism Committee.

*Bluford, a journalist who died in 2003, mounted a legal challenge that helped integrate the University of Missouri. She spent seven decades as a reporter, editor and publisher at The Call newspaper in Kansas City. July 1 was her birthday in 1911.*

“Lucile Bluford spent her long life fighting injustice in its many forms and was a strong and influential voice for Kansas City’s African-American community,” sponsor Gail McCann Beatty said in a statement announcing the resolution.

Eliminate unnecessary barriers to equal housing opportunity

By Rigel Oliveri
Rigel Oliveri is an associate professor and associate dean at the University of Missouri School of Law. She teaches fair housing law and formerly served as a trial attorney for the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division, in the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section.

Last week, the Supreme Court took up the question of whether so-called disparate impact claims are cognizable under the federal Fair Housing Act. The case, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, represents the third time this issue has been before the court in as many years.

Two earlier cases settled before oral argument, in large part because fair housing advocates feared that a conservative majority would disallow the legal theory that has been used for decades to bring cases that otherwise might not be possible. Their fear is warranted. The elimination of the disparate impact cause of action in housing cases would strike a serious blow against racial equality and integration, at a time when both are still sorely lacking in America.

Disparate impact theory is used when a facially neutral action disproportionately harms members of one racial or ethnic group but there is no evidence of discriminatory intent on the part of the actor. Here’s a recent housing-related example: After Hurricane Katrina, St. Bernard’s Parish near New Orleans enacted an ordinance prohibiting residents from renting their property to anyone other than a blood relative. While this ordinance didn’t ban blacks outright, it would have had that result because the parish was 98 percent white. To fair housing advocates, this supposedly “neutral” ordinance looked suspiciously like a smokescreen for discrimination and they used disparate impact theory to challenge it.

The power and meaning behind disparate impact theory derive from the fact that our society remains racially polarized. The wealth gap between blacks and white is staggering. Rates of residential segregation are unacceptably high. These patterns of inequality and segregation can be traced directly back to widespread legally sanctioned housing discrimination, engaged in by private and public actors alike, until relatively recently. And yet because overt racial discrimination is now illegal many conservatives (including the chief justice) cheerily insist that we are all on equal footing, and that to even consider the racial effects of social policy is itself discriminatory.

The result is a situation both sad and ironic, in which these very patterns of inequity and isolation make it all too easy for institutional actors to hurt communities of color without ever having to admit it — indeed without even realizing it. All a city needs to do is to single out a poor neighborhood for redevelopment and chances are this will displace a disproportionate number of minorities. Similarly, residential segregation is often furthered by exclusionary zoning policies and the persistent siting of low-income housing in poor (minority) neighborhoods (the latter of which is the allegation in the Texas case currently before the court).

Private entities can fall into this pattern, too, unwittingly or not. Take, for example, what happened to minority communities whose neighborhoods were redlined for years by both federal mortgage programs and reputable banks. With little access to credit and low homeownership rates, people in these communities were sitting
ducks for predatory mortgage lenders during the last decade. Guess which neighborhoods were hit hardest by the resulting foreclosure crisis?

Proving that these supposedly neutral institutional practices are intentionally discriminatory may be impossible. Intent becomes a slippery concept when multiple people are involved whose individual motivations may never be known. Or these may just be actions by unwitting bureaucrats who are oblivious to the consequences of their decisions. The presence or absence of intent is in some ways beside the point — thoughtless housing policies can be just as damaging to a community as a deliberate scheme.

Of course, there are valid reasons why a housing-related action might disproportionately affect a particular racial group. If an articulated reason is true, it can serve as a defense to a disparate impact suit. If there is a way of achieving the same result without creating the disparate impact, the defendant can be ordered to do that instead. The point of disparate impact theory is that it forces institutional actors to consider the racial effects of their actions, and in doing so helps to expose policies and practices that are unfair, unnecessary, and that have no legitimate justification.

While great strides have been made toward eradicating housing discrimination, truly fair and integrated housing remains an elusive goal. The Texas case will provide the Supreme Court with the opportunity to reaffirm a powerful tool for those who work toward that end. The legal question should be an easy one. All 11 federal courts of appeal have upheld the use of disparate impact theory, and HUD recently issued a set of regulations endorsing it.

From a moral and practical standpoint, the answer should be easy as well. Eliminating unnecessary barriers to equal housing opportunity is not just the right thing to do; we all benefit when our nation has plenty of diverse, thriving communities.

College students report more stress, less time to socialize

By LISA LEFF

SAFRANCISCO (AP) — Today's high school seniors aren't partying and socializing as much as their parents' generation — they're too busy trying to get into college, and when they get there, some don't feel good about themselves, a new survey reports.
The annual survey of college freshmen by UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute found that incoming students at four-year colleges and universities last fall devoted half as many hours to hanging out with friends during their final year of high school as students who entered college in 1987, when the institute first asked respondents about hobnobbing habits.

The findings rang true to Isabella Galeazi, 18, who is juggling a job at McDonald's and a musical production internship along with a full-time course load at California State University, Fullerton. Balancing her professional and academic responsibilities with her desire for a thriving social life has proven a challenge that sometimes leaves her feeling snowed under, Galeazi said.

"My parents are always saying, 'When they were in school, when they were in school,' but I can show them my math homework and they have no clue how to do it," she said. "The work load is a lot heavier and the work is a lot harder. There is so much pressure to do well in high school or otherwise you won't get into college and if you don't do well in college you won't get a job."

The survey found that first-year-college students' sense of emotional well-being is at its lowest since the institute first asked the question in 1985.

The results released Wednesday are consistent with other trends that indicate millennials face greater pressure to succeed academically and has less time to have fun, said Kevin Eagan, the institute's managing director and an assistant professor at UCLA.

"The declines we have seen in time spent partying and the frequency of alcohol use in high school and the increases we have seen in the number of college applications students are submitting and their reporting feeling overwhelmed are all signs students are internalizing this message that they need to take the last year of high school seriously," Eagan said.

In the survey, nearly 39 percent said they spent five hours or less each week socializing, compared to the 18 percent who mingled with others that much in 1987. During the same 27-year period, the percentage of students who said they passed six or more hours each week "partying" shrunk from 35 percent in 1987 to 9 percent in 2014.

When asked to rank their emotional health in comparison with their peers, half put themselves in the above-average category. Nearly 12 percent rated their emotional well-being as below average, a figure that stood at 3.5 percent in 1985.

Jack Foley, 18, a freshman at the University of California, Davis and considers himself neither happier nor less happy than other people his age, advised parents not to read too much into the survey. Sure, today's older teenagers may be spending less time chilling out with friends than their folks did in the 1980s, but they connect with others through social media and the clubs and extra-curricular activities they have been primed to participate in since toddlerhood, Foley said.
"It's kind of a competition: 'Oh, you are stressed? I'm stressed!' Which isn't to say people aren't stressed, but I think there is an element of talking about how stressed you are because there is this twisted self-fulfillment level to measure up with your peers," he said. "In some ways, talking about how stressed you feel is a way to quantify how well you are doing and how hard you are working."

Dr. Gina Fleming, medical director of the University of California's student health insurance program, has been lobbying the 10-campus system's board to provide more money for counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists at student health centers. Over the last three years, there has been a 20 percent increase in students seeking help for anxiety or depression, Fleming said, with many also complaining of stomach aches, headaches and insomnia that are likely stress-induced.

"There is a greater expectation that they need to succeed and do extremely well from the get-go at the same time they are dealing with the regular transitional issues of leaving home and adapting to the student environment," she said. "The pressure that starts in high school about 'What is your SAT score? What is your GPA? What are you going to study?' is so different from 1985."

The survey was based on the responses of 153,015 first-time, full-time students at 227 colleges and universities. The responses were statistically weighted to reflect the broader population of such students — approximately 1.6 million at 1,583 four-year schools.

February 5, 2015

**College Freshmen Seek Financial Security Amid Emotional Insecurity**

By Dan Berrett and Eric Hoover

**NO MU MENTION**

Confident in their academic ability but less so in their interpersonal skills, this year’s freshmen believe the main benefit of a college education is to increase their earning power. More than ever they aspire to be well off—and also to help others—while their emotional health has hit a new low.
That’s the portrait of students today, according to the annual Freshman Survey, released on Thursday by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program, part of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles.

The report, "The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2014," is based on responses from 153,015 first-time, full-time freshmen at 227 baccalaureate institutions who were surveyed during registration, orientation, or the first few weeks of classes.

Here are five insights the study offers into college freshmen. And here you can explore how students’ circumstances and beliefs have changed over time.

Students have less experience socializing, and they might want some help.

Whether they had helicopter parents or got accustomed to interacting with their peers on smartphones, today’s college freshmen report changing social habits. A few decades ago, they socialized a lot, with 38 percent spending 16 hours or more a week as high-school seniors hanging out with friends. This year only 18 percent said the same.

It comes as no surprise that today’s students are more likely to interact with their peers on social media. More than a quarter said they’d spent six hours or more a week on Facebook, Twitter, and other sites, up from 19 percent seven years ago. And they seem to realize that their ability to relate to other people may be suffering: About half said their interpersonal skills were either "a major strength" or "somewhat strong," far below the share of those who said the same of their critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

A trend of students’ looking to colleges to help them socialize has worried some observers, who say it detracts from academic rigor. Nearly half of this year’s freshmen said their college’s reputation for social activities was "very important" in their decision to enroll there. About three-quarters of freshmen told the National Survey of Student Engagement in 2013 that their college placed "very much" or "quite a bit" of emphasis on providing opportunities to socialize.

Students are open to diversity, but many lack experience with people from different backgrounds.

The hallways students walk in high school and the neighborhoods they grow up in shape their expectations for college life.

Although more than eight in 10 freshmen were confident in their ability to tolerate others with different beliefs and to work cooperatively with diverse groups of people, many lacked that experience. Nearly a quarter of this year’s freshmen came from neighborhoods that are either completely white or nonwhite.

Those students were much less likely than their peers from more-diverse neighborhoods to socialize frequently with someone from a different racial or ethnic group. Among students who had socialized often with someone of a different race in high school, 77 percent said they were likely to do the same in college, compared with 40 percent of students who’d previously socialized with someone of a different race only occasionally or not at all.
Which students rated their "ability to see the world from someone else’s perspective" as a strength?
Eight in 10 of those who had frequently socialized with someone of a different race or ethnicity, but just six in 10 who had not done so at all.

One notable difference: More than half of black students (57 percent) but less than a third of white students (29 percent) considered it important to help promote racial understanding.

Students increasingly see their undergraduate education as the first step in a long journey.

If the bachelor’s degree is the new high-school diploma, will a graduate degree become the new baccalaureate? Nearly half of freshmen this year said they planned to seek a master’s degree, up from about a quarter 40 years ago. A third of students now start college with plans to pursue a doctorate or professional degree (like a Ph.D., Ed.D., M.D., or J.D.). Four decades ago, 21 percent professed similar plans.

The growth in students’ aspirations has been most notable among first-generation students: Nearly three-quarters plan to pursue graduate degrees, roughly the same as their peers with at least one parent who attended college.

Signals from the labor market may be contributing to higher degree aspirations. Nearly a quarter of entry-level jobs in 2022 are expected to require at least a four-year degree, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Positions that demand a master’s degree are projected to grow the fastest. "Students," the authors of the Freshman Survey write, "may be recognizing that, in order to advance further, a graduate credential is becoming more necessary."

Academic reputation still matters most in choosing a college, but an early offer counts, too.

Today’s freshmen grew up in the early-bird era of college admissions. As competition for applicants has intensified over the last two decades, many highly selective institutions have created or expanded early-admissions programs, which can help nail down an incoming class. Along the way, more applicants have come to prize an early offer. In 1999, just 7 percent of freshmen said that an early acceptance was a very important factor in choosing their college. This year 16 percent said so.

That increase may reflect the growth of early-action programs, in which students admitted early are not obligated to commit early—or to accept the offer at all. Nearly a third of colleges now use early action, according to the National Association for College Admission Counseling’s most recent survey. On average, 42 percent of all applications to those colleges are submitted that way.

But the appeal of applying early varies. About a quarter of freshmen at highly selective public or private colleges reported on the UCLA survey that early admissions was very important in their choice of college. Significantly smaller shares of students at the least-selective colleges rated early admission as a major factor. Over all, the wealthiest students were much more likely than the poorest to say an early-admission program had greatly influenced their decision.

About one student in 10 is depressed.
Depression among students is on the rise, and it can have academic consequences. The share of freshmen (10 percent) who reported "frequently" feeling depressed in the past year is more than three percentage points higher than it was five years ago. The proportion is also higher than in the general population (5 percent), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Students’ ratings of their emotional health this year were the lowest since the Freshman Survey started asking.

Students who said they were frequently depressed were more likely than their peers to report being academically disengaged. In their senior year of high school, they were about twice as likely to have arrived late to class or fallen asleep sitting there. Nearly six in 10 said they were frequently bored in class.

Depressed students were also significantly more likely to say that they would seek counseling, which on campus has been seeing higher demand. About 40 percent of visits to campus counseling centers are prompted by concerns about depression, according to the most recent survey by the Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors. "It is clear," the Freshman Survey researchers wrote, "that campuses have more work to do to assist students experiencing emotional-health issues."