Police officers make their presence known outside bars near the campus of the U. of Missouri at Columbia. The university has met with bar owners regularly to try to cut down on underage drinking.

By Beth McMurtrie

**Trying to reduce high-risk drinking among college students is a never-ending process. New freshmen arrive, hot spots change, staff members move on. All of that requires nimble thinking. While the University of Missouri at Columbia may not have solved the problem, its progress over time shows how years of dedication can pay off.**

The campus has plenty of challenges: a hard-partying student body that rallies around athletics and fraternities, a thriving bar scene, and a lot of off-campus housing. In the past decade, enrollment has rocketed from 28,000 to more than 35,000, driven mainly by undergraduates. Most of them live off campus, concentrated in newly built apartment complexes.

The university’s Greek system draws one in four students, and the Tigers’ move to the Southeastern Conference plus a winning football record have brought more fans to tailgates. Downtown Columbia is another attraction, with dozens of bars and clubs within walking distance of the campus.
None of those elements are unique to Missouri. Most large public colleges are trying, to some extent, to limit dangerous drinking. They know the risks: poor academic performance, alcohol poisoning, accidents, sexual assault.

In downtown Columbia, just blocks from the U. of Missouri campus, an ambulance arrives outside a bar to take a young woman to the hospital while other partiers stream past.

So how can a college really make a difference? Kim Dude, associate director of student life and head of the Wellness Resource Center at Missouri, has been asking that question for a very long time. She opened the center in 1990 on a shoestring budget. Focused on alcohol as well as areas like stress and sleep, it has grown, through grants and university support, to eight full-time staff members and 12 graduate assistants. In recent years, the center and a much broader team of campus and community members have been able to reduce some risky behavior, like binge drinking, underage drinking, wild tailgates, and roaring neighborhood parties.

The university takes a carrot-and-stick approach, educating students on safe partying while increasing enforcement of laws and policies. Ms. Dude brings together disparate groups like the Columbia City Council, neighborhood residents, and police officers to tackle the complex problem. The athletic director calls her "a terrific head coach for all of us on campus."

Ms. Dude is more measured. "None of this has ever been easy," she says. "I have hit my head against the wall many times."

The Bar Scene

One early failure paved the way to later success. In the early 1990s, Ms. Dude met with a group of local bar owners and asked them to limit cheap drink specials. Price floors would benefit everyone, she said, with fewer intoxicated students, less police involvement, and more money for the bars.

The owners balked, telling her and the local press that she couldn’t run their businesses. "Kim took a lot of heat for what she did," recalls Richard King, a longtime club owner in town. "The crazy thing about it is if anyone bothered to sit and listen to numbers she threw out, you’d be like, Wow." But that sensible message got blurred, he says. "It sounded like: Shut down the party."

Ms. Dude realized she needed to work on relationships before regulation. So she formed the Access to Alcohol Action Team in 1995, drawing together administrators, campus and local police officers, business owners, and others. She began holding yearly meetings with bar and club owners. And she credits those relationships with some key changes.

The first was a reduction in the number of underage students who got into bars. In 2005, four in 10 students surveyed said they got in underage because nobody had checked IDs. That figure dropped to one in 10 in 2011. It wasn’t just that more bar owners were paying attention; the police also stepped up enforcement, including compliance checks.
Two years ago, the city council got behind one of Ms. Dude’s longstanding goals and began requiring "mandatory server training" to help prevent underage drinking and intoxication.

House Parties

With more students renting property, the university hired its first full-time coordinator of off-campus student services, Dionne George, in 2012. She acts as a liaison with apartment-complex owners, who must abide by the university’s rules to appear at housing fairs or advertise in its off-campus-living magazine.

One of those rules is to stay in good standing with a nuisance--party ordinance the City Council enacted in 2006, another achievement of the alcohol team. Anyone who holds an out-of-control party can be fined $500 to $2,000, with second offenders subject to higher amounts. Landlords are on the hook as well: If a tenant gets caught throwing three nuisance parties within a certain period, their certificate of compliance can be revoked, leaving them unable to rent out that unit for up to a full year.

The number of nuisance-party violations peaked in 2010, at 208, says Officer Melvin Buckner, of the Columbia Police Department. Last year it fell to a low of 57. Some of that decline could be because students clustered in large complexes are less likely to complain about their classmates than local homeowners might be, says Officer Buckner. But the fines are an important incentive, he thinks, to keep bad behavior at bay.

Apartment-complex owners with properties on other campuses tell Ms. George that Missouri is unusual in hiring a liaison. "The role that I play, most universities don’t have. So it’s awkward and almost intrusive," she says with a laugh. "But I don’t care."

Tailgating

The athletic director, Mike Alden, remembers the day about 10 years ago when he was walking toward Faurot Field two hours before a football game, and streams of fans were headed in the opposite direction. That’s when he discovered Frat Pit.

Every big college seems to have such a thing: a field or parking lot taken over by tailgaters intent on having the longest, loudest, biggest party. Frat Pit had become a giant headache for the campus by then. Many of the revelers never even went to the game.

In 2007 the alcohol team put them on notice and invited in the media. The idea was to convince boosters, alumni, faculty members, and students that tailgating needed more oversight. It can be embarrassing to publicize bad behavior, says Mr. Alden, but "we had to allow that image that says, Man, this isn’t cool."

When the university shut down the party, the drinking moved down the street, to Reactor Field. Officials cracked down there, too. "It was like a virus that was moving here, to here, to here," Mr. Alden recalls.
Administrators and campus police officers worked for years to find the right approach. They made more rules, tinkered with the ones people found too restrictive, and promoted a more positive image of Missouri fans.

The alcohol team sent faculty and staff members out to monitor tailgates and put up placards highlighting survey findings, like that most fans have at most four drinks per game — "subliminal messages," Mr. Alden says, to reinforce good behavior. (It’s a technique many colleges use, called social norming, to persuade students that binge drinking is not as common as they might think.)

Too few institutions try to regulate tailgating, says Mr. Alden, because they think it will drive people away. "Our attendance has never been higher, our fan base has never been better, our concession sales have never been better," he says. "Don’t turn a blind eye to it, because I think all of us have a tendency to do that."

Reality Check

If all of that makes it sound as if Missouri has dangerous drinking under control, it doesn’t. Ms. Dude and her team would be the first to admit that. Yes, the share of students who say they regularly consume four to five drinks in a row — the definition of binge drinking — has declined from nearly 60 percent in 1990 to about 41 percent today. But that means four in 10 students still drink a lot. Fraternity brothers party even harder: More than six in 10 regularly binge-drink. And about 10 students each week, Ms. Dude says, end up in the emergency room with alcohol poisoning.

Downtown, penny pitchers and bottomless cups are as ubiquitous as ever. The City Council has yet to support restrictions on drink specials or caps on liquor licenses. At an alcohol summit Ms. Dude convened last spring, which brought together 100 people from the campus and community, one bar owner was overheard saying that he relies on underage women to keep his business afloat, says Janna D. Basler, head of Greek life for the university.

Five years ago, the state slashed funding for the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Control, essentially turning over monitoring of bars and liquor stores to local law enforcement. The city police have had to rely on grants to conduct regular compliance checks.

For the alcohol team, the lesson has been to be flexible and innovate. The campus police have added three more officers to patrol Greek Town, just off campus, on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. The university has also ramped up bystander training to encourage students to look out for one another.

Alex Dyer, a fifth-year senior and past president of the Interfraternity Council, works in Ms. Dude’s office to develop alcohol—education programs that connect with fraternity pledges. Despite the persistent challenges, he says that in his time at Missouri, he’s seen a drop in out-of-control partying.

"When I first came, the perception of what’s acceptable was a lot different than what I’ve seen now," he says. Part of that, he says, may be because at 23 he hangs out with different people. But off-campus
parties are definitely smaller, he says. And these days tailgates max out at about 100 people, including parents.

Ms. Dude says she organized the alcohol summit last spring and another in the fall to remind the campus that everyone plays a part, and to help create new strategies to reduce dangerous drinking. Both the mayor and the chancellor attended. In January undergraduate deans began talking about adding more Friday-morning classes and eliminating syllabus week, when students get a light load to ease into the semester.

"A lot of people say if you push down in one area, it might pop up in another," Ms. Dude says of high-risk drinking. "That might be true," but it "sometimes becomes an excuse for doing nothing." Her approach is relentless and evolving: "Why don't we work on all areas?"

Protesters march through University of Missouri campus

Jessica Quick, Meteorologist & Digital Content Director, jessicaq@kmiz.com

COLUMBIA, Mo. - A group of protesters were marching through Columbia Thursday night. A group of 50-60 people were walking down Turner Avenue toward Jesse Hall on the University of Missouri campus just after 10:00 p.m.

While the group waswalking through the Francis Quad, they appeared to be chanting, "They think it's a joke, black lives matter."

Just before 10:30, the group arrived at Chancellor Bowen Loftin's home, saying "It is our duty to fight for our freedom."

ABC 17 News has a crew on campus and will continue to bring updates as this story develops.
Economic Angst, Rose-Colored Views on Race: A Survey of Presidents

March 13, 2015

By Doug Lederman

**NO MU MENTION**

Fewer than 4 in 10 college presidents express confidence in the financial sustainability of their institutions over the next decade.

Less than a third agree that sexual assault is prevalent on American college campuses, and just 6 percent say it is prevalent at their own institution.

And campus leaders really don't like the Obama administration's proposed system to rate the performance of colleges, with more than half giving it a D or F grade when asked to turn the tables and rate the concept.

Those are among the findings of Inside Higher Ed’s fifth annual Survey of College and University Presidents, which is being released today in advance of this weekend’s annual meeting of the American Council on Education, higher education’s leading presidential association. A report of the survey's results can be downloaded here: https://www.insidehighered.com/download/2015PresidentsSurvey.html.

A total of 647 college and university leaders from public, private, nonprofit and for-profit higher education institutions responded to the survey, which was conducted by Gallup Education, Inside Higher Ed’s survey partner. Presidents were granted anonymity to encourage candor, but their answers were coded by institution type, allowing for analysis of differences by sector.

Among the survey’s other key findings:

College presidents are divided on the wisdom of President Obama's recent proposal to help states provide two years of community college tuition free. Not surprisingly, 68 percent of community college leaders support the idea, while just 20 percent of private nonprofit college leaders and about a quarter of public four-year college presidents do
Fewer than half of chief executives describe the state of race relations in American higher education as excellent (1 percent) or good (42 percent). But 8 in 10 characterize the state of affairs on their own campus that way (18 percent excellent and 63 percent good).

Most presidents want to be more involved in decisions about the hiring and tenuring of faculty members, and not to defer to the recommendations of faculty panels. (See related article.)

Presidents are skittish about speaking out publicly about important issues, and skeptical about their impact when they do. Almost three-quarters (74 percent) agree that presidents "face significant risk if they take controversial positions" and half agree that they may offend trustees, donors and (for public college leaders) state leaders. And only one in five believes presidents have "real influence on public policy" when they express views on issues not directly related to higher education.

Perspectives on Politics

This has been a time of extraordinary federal activity in American higher education, and the survey sought to capture presidents' views on policy makers' concepts and their execution of the ideas.

It will probably surprise no one that presidents do not like the Obama administration's proposed college rating system; higher ed leaders have criticized the idea in many venues and forums since President Obama first mentioned it 19 months ago.

But support for the concept seems to be eroding rather than building as college leaders learn more about it (with the important caveat that there is still much more unknown than known about what the system might ultimately look like, if it ever emerges). Asked whether the Education Department's release of a framework aimed at fleshing out the ratings idea had helped or hurt their impression of it, 31 percent said they felt worse about the plan than they did before, and 11 percent said they felt better.

But few felt good. Given a chance to grade it, a third (33 percent) gave it a C, 32 percent a D and 24 percent failed it. Just 1 percent awarded an A grade and 11 percent a B. Just 10 percent agreed that the rating system, as currently conceived, would portray their institutions accurately.

Despite their overall disdain for the rating system, presidents differentiated among possible metrics for evaluating their institutions. Asked to weigh in on a set of measures that might be used in a rating system, almost half of campus leaders supported enrollment-related criteria such as percentage of first-generation students (49 percent) and percentage of Pell Grant-eligible students (48 percent), degree completion rate (47 percent) and net price (46 percent). About 4 in 10 backed the use of graduate employment rate (42 percent) and loan default rate (38 percent). They were much more skeptical about
possible dependence on the federal graduation rate (29 percent) and graduate income level (18 percent) as criteria.

Nancy Zimpher, president of the State University of New York, said she understood her colleagues’ skepticism about the rating system, given that it’s a “really complex and hard thing to do” competently.

But she says higher education leaders may err by so regularly and consistently opposing outright federal efforts to give the public a way to compare the performance of colleges and universities. “We seem to have one speed -- 'let’s not do this,’” she says.

SUNY has been rare among colleges and higher education systems in offering general support for the concept while pointing out specific problems and suggesting practical improvements.

The pressure to hold colleges accountable for their performance and value has sustained itself through the last two presidential administrations, of different parties; there’s no reason to think it will fade, as college leaders seem to hope, Zimpher says.

Wouldn’t it be helpful, she adds, for higher education to try to coalesce around its own system of accountability and consumer information, rather than just being “stuck on no”?

Another federal initiative -- President Obama's free community college proposal -- drew mixed reviews. Two-thirds of presidents (67 percent) agreed that the plan is likely to attract new students to higher education, a goal that virtually all of them would agree is worthy.

But about 7 in 10 presidents also agreed that the proposed program would draw students into community colleges and out of four-year universities -- and between a quarter and a half of presidents of four-year public and private nonprofit colleges (depending on type) said they believed the plan would lower enrollment at their own institutions.

Not surprisingly, the likelier presidents were to believe their own institutions would lose students under the president’s idea, the less likely they were to support it, as seen in the table below.

**Views on the Free Community College Concept, By Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>% Believing the Plan Would Decrease Their Enrollment</th>
<th>% Who Say They Don't Support the Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>11% 8% 12%</td>
<td>13% 12% 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>31% 30% 25%</td>
<td>19% 19% 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Nonprofit</td>
<td>25% 25% 20%</td>
<td>10% 10% 21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not surprisingly, the likelier presidents were to believe their own institutions would lose students under the president’s idea, the less likely they were to support it, as seen in the table below.
Falling Confidence in Finances

Bad budget news is breaking out all over right now. Politicians in Arizona plan to end all state funding for two major community college districts, officials in states such as Louisiana and Wisconsin are weighing huge cuts in support for public higher education, and the pending closure of Sweet Briar College shocked many observers of independent colleges, as the institution is far from the most financially vulnerable in the sector, at least currently.

Fittingly, then, presidential confidence in their institutions’ financial futures seems to be on the decline.

Inside Higher Ed’s 2014 survey found that nearly two-thirds of presidents expressed confidence about the sustainability of their institution’s financial model over the next 5 years, and half did so over 10 years.

This year, the numbers fell to 56 percent over 5 years and 39 percent over a decade, as seen in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution’s Enrollment</th>
<th>28%</th>
<th>42%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Doctoral</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Master’s</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Baccalaureate</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Associate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Doctoral/</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Baccalaureate</td>
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I am confident about the sustainability of my institution’s financial model over the next 10 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%5 Strongly agree</th>
<th>%4 Strongly agree</th>
<th>%3 Strongly agree</th>
<th>%2 Strongly agree</th>
<th>%1 Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13% 12% 18%</td>
<td>26% 24% 28%</td>
<td>31% 29% 34%</td>
<td>23% 20% 19%</td>
<td>7% 0% 3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All | Public | Private Nonprofit
And the table below shows that public institution presidents seemed to experience much bigger drops in their confidence than did their peers at private institutions.

**Presidents' Confidence in Sustainability of Business Model Over 10 Years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>% Agreeing Model Is Sustainable Over a Decade, 2014</th>
<th>% Agreeing Model Is Sustainable Over a Decade, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Doctoral</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Master's</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Baccalaureate</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Associate</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Doctoral/Master's</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Baccalaureate</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the year-over-year declines, several presidents interviewed said they still believed the presidents' assessments of their institutions' financial situations were overly optimistic.

Renu Khator, chancellor of the University of Houston System and president of its main campus, said the leaders' confidence probably stems "from their belief in the agility and adaptability of the university system" as a whole, which has found its way to adapt at various points in its history.

But Khator said she thinks many presidents are underestimating the impact of the "very serious disruption" that many institutions will see to their business models within a decade, "which will be more than we realize."

Patricia McGuire, president of Trinity Washington University, a private women's college in Washington, D.C., agreed that the responses may be overly rosy, which she attributed to presidents' disinclination -- even in an anonymous survey -- to acknowledge the severity of their situation.
"Presidents are paid to be boosters," she said. "And as I'm filling out this survey, I may be thinking, 'If I can't strongly agree that my college's business model is sustainable, should I be doing this job?"

McGuire also noted that Sweet Briar's decision drew so much attention in higher education because it "wasn't about money, it was about enrollments" -- and "all of us are pretty fragile with enrollments these days."

As has been true in past iterations of this survey, presidents expressed the most confidence in the financial sustainability of the wealthiest institutions: private universities with endowments over $1 billion (85 percent agreed that those institutions' business models are sustainable) and elite liberal arts colleges with endowments over $500 million (71 percent), followed by public flagship universities (61 percent).

They expressed the least confidence in nonelite private four-year colleges, with just 10 percent agreeing that their business models were sustainable, for-profit colleges (16 percent) and nonflagship public four-year universities (20 percent). The sector enduring the biggest drop in confidence from 2014 to this year was community colleges, though, with 34 percent of campus leaders agreeing that two-year colleges had a sustainable business model, down from 45 percent a year ago.

Rose-Colored Glasses on Race

The survey's release follows by just a few days the conflagration at the University of Oklahoma over a fraternity's racist video, although of course they answered the survey before that video become public. Maybe that's why the presidents' answers to a set of questions about race seem more hopeful than accurate.

Eighty-one percent of college leaders said that the state of race relations on their own campus was either excellent (18 percent) or good (63 percent). Far fewer (43 percent total) said the same about race relations on college campuses in general. And those numbers are both lower than last year's survey responses, when 90 percent gave a thumbs-up to race relations on their own campuses and 53 percent to colleges and universities in general.

Even so, the answers struck commentators as -- well, let's let Trinity's McGuire say it: "They're kidding themselves."

"I run a majority black college," she said, but race can crop up any moment at Trinity just like at any campus, she said. "As Oklahoma illustrates, racial issues gurgle through informal student organizations all the time."

And even when the issues are not as severe as the clear-cut racism evident in that case, the self-segregation and racial tensions that underlie society are abundantly in evidence on campuses, she said.

"Even here among my students of color, they're dising each other all the time," McGuire said. "Saying we don't have a problem, I think, is blind to how we relate to one another."
Sexual Assault

Colleges have been under intense scrutiny -- from Congress and the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights, advocacy groups, and the news media -- on their handling of campus sexual assaults. The survey asked campus leaders a broad set of questions about the topic -- and the answers suggest that presidents are unsure about just how big a problem they have and the viability of potential solutions to it.

Start with a basic premise put before the chief executives: "Sexual assault is prevalent at U.S. colleges and universities." Thirty-two percent agree, 26 percent disagree -- and 42 percent are right in the middle.

They are more confident that sexual assault is not a major problem at their own institution, of course, with 78 percent of presidents taking that view. And three-quarters strongly agree (24 percent) or agree (53 percent) that their institution is "doing a good job protecting women from sexual assault on my campus," and a full 90 percent say their campuses provide due process for those accused of sexual assault.

College leaders also express ambivalence about some of the approaches that regulators and lawmakers are pushing on them.

Fifty-seven percent of presidents say they support the federal government's requirement that in adjudicating sexual assault cases, they use a "preponderance of evidence" standard, which assumes a 50.1 percent chance that the accused is guilty of the charge, rather than guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. Forty-three percent of the respondents say the shift to the lower standard is not appropriate.

And respondents are skeptical that the "affirmative consent" approach legislated in California and increasingly adopted by colleges around the country -- which shifts the burden of proof by requiring those accused in campus sexual assault cases to show that their accusers had consented to sexual activity throughout -- will be effective. Twenty-seven percent of presidents said affirmative consent would not be effective at all, 44 percent said the standard would not be very effective, 27 percent said it would somewhat effective and just 1 percent said it would be very effective.

The results disappointed Laura Dunn, executive director of SurvJustice, a sexual assault prevention group. She said it was striking that fewer than three in five presidents supported the "preponderance of evidence" standard -- given that it's a federal government mandate. "I'm shocked that presidents aren't on board with federal law," she said.

Dunn said that unlike the presidents, many of the campus student affairs professionals she works with like the idea of affirmative consent, because it's a "bright line to help make decisions," she said.

The fact that fewer than a third of chief executives believe campus sexual assault is a prevalent problem -- and that 1 in 17 sees it that way on his or her own campus -- troubles Dunn.
"I guess I'm not surprised, given their positions, that it's more about salesmanship than perhaps the true reality of the campus," she said.

Molly Corbett Broad, president of the American Council on Education, said it would be a mistake to read the presidents' responses as a sign that "our institutions of higher education are looking away from this issue."

She noted Grinnell College's recent decision -- without the threat of a pending investigation -- to ask the Office for Civil Rights to review its handling of sexual assault cases. "They're taking it very seriously," Broad said, "because none of them know precisely what the rules are that they need to be held accountable to."

Speaking Out

The death late last month of the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, the legendary former president of the University of Notre Dame, renewed the time-honored discussion about why college presidents today do not seem to play the role of public intellectual and social issue heavyweight that higher ed leaders like Hesburgh, William C. Friday and Clark Kerr did a few decades ago.

The Inside Higher Ed survey may shed some light on that question, from the presidents' own perspective. About half (46 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that "presidents should speak out more on issues beyond those specifically germane to higher education"; only 22 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.

But the answers also provided some evidence on why relatively few do. Nearly 6 in 10 respondents said they believe presidents "have real influence on public policy" when they speak out about higher ed matters, but just 21 percent said the same was true when campus chiefs comment on nonacademic matters.

Three-quarters of presidents also said that presidents face "significant risk" if they take controversial public positions on issues, and about half agreed that they might offend state officials or trustees and donors if they "speak out about important issues."

Broad of the American Council on Education said she understood that few presidents today can match the public visibility of the Hesburghs and Fridays. But she noted that many presidents participate on White House commissions, chambers of commerce in their local communities and the like.

"There are many different ways in which college and university leaders are contributing to major social issues -- maybe not in as visible a way," she said.

And academic leaders may not be cut out for the environment in which much of public discourse plays out today, she said.
"When you are living at a time when social media and 24-hour news coverage are the norm, and you have to make instantaneous judgments about how to respond," Broad said, "these are not circumstances that are comfortable given the kind of deliberation academic leaders tend towards."

**Wanting More Say**

March 13, 2015

By Colleen Flaherty

**NO MU MENTION**

Do most presidents really want a bigger role in faculty hiring and tenure decisions? *Inside Higher Ed*’s annual Survey of College and University Presidents suggests they do. And some of them are playing a larger role than faculty leaders might find reasonable. Ten percent of private college presidents, for example, say they’ve blocked the hire of scholars whose views they strongly disagreed with. While those findings didn’t shock shared governance experts, some were uncomfortable with presidential sentiments.

According to the poll, some 55 percent of presidents say they should take a more active role in decisions about which faculty members to hire. Two-thirds agree or strongly agree that they should take a more active role in deciding who gets tenure. Just 8 and 5 percent of presidents strongly disagree with those statements, respectively.

The extent to which presidents currently get involved in such decisions varies widely. At many campuses, such authority is effectively delegated to faculty committees and academic administrators, while at other campuses, presidents interview everyone. Generally, faculty leaders tend to prefer a more minimal role for presidents in these matters -- and public interventions have been controversial.
Desire for more input is strongest among presidents of associate degree-granting institutions, with 64 percent saying they want a bigger role in hiring decisions, compared to about 40 percent of presidents at public, doctoral-, master’s- and baccalaureate-level institutions. Some 54 percent of presidents at both research and undergraduate-focused private institutions say so. There is more agreement among presidents regarding tenure: about 60 percent of respondents across institutions types say they want more of a role in tenure decisions, except the 70 percent of associate’s-level presidents who say so.

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<td>1-Strongly disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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That doesn’t mean presidents aren’t already involved in faculty personnel decisions, however. Some 58 percent of presidents say they have blocked the hiring of scholars whose competence they questioned, and 54 percent say they’ve blocked scholars from getting tenure for the same reason. Interestingly, presidents at doctoral-level public institutions were the least like to say they’ve blocked someone from getting hired due to concerns about competence (42 percent), but the most likely to say they’ve blocked someone from getting tenure over such doubts (76 percent).

Some 62 percent of presidents say they largely defer to departments in faculty hiring decisions (versus 38 percent of presidents who say they conduct their own reviews). Presidents get more hands-on for tenure decisions, with about half (48 percent) conducting their own reviews and the other half (52 percent) mostly deferring to department-level decisions.

Some 5 percent of all presidents say they’ve blocked the hire of a scholar or scholars with whose views they strongly disagreed. Presidents of private institutions are most likely to say this: 12 percent of presidents at private, doctoral- and master’s-level institutions versus zero presidents of public research institutions, for example. Some 2 percent of presidents -- mostly those from private, master’s- and doctoral-level institutions -- say they’ve blocked a candidate from getting tenure for having views with
which they strongly disagreed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All institutions by sector</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private nonprofit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have you blocked the hiring of scholars whose views you strongly disagree with?</strong></td>
<td>Yes (%)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>99</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have you blocked granting tenure for scholars whose views you disagree with?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have you blocked the hiring of scholars whose competency you question?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have you blocked tenure for scholars whose competency you question?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you conduct faculty reviews in hiring or do you largely defer to departments?</strong></td>
<td>Yes, I conduct reviews</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, I defer to departments</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you conduct faculty reviews in tenure decisions?</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No, I defer to departments</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questions on shared governance were particularly illuminating, given the precarious status of tenure across academe and recent, high-profile tenure and hiring cases -- such as that of Steven Salaita at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In that case, Chancellor Phyllis Wise intervened at the last minute in Salaita’s tenured hire to the American Indian studies program, citing his “uncivil” remarks on Twitter about Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. Wise was widely criticized for the move (while others
applauded her), and the case raised larger questions about the role of presidents in faculty hires.

Carol Christ, director of the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California at Berkeley, who earlier in her career was a tenured faculty member of English, has served as provost at Berkeley and president at Smith College. She said she was “not at all surprised” with the findings, and agreed with many of them.

“The president should have an independent role in reviewing the case, in the sense of looking at the department’s case, whatever outside faculty letters have been written and the recommendations of any committees involved,” Christ said of faculty personnel decisions. “It’s an important safeguard for the quality of the institution.”

In line with the survey finding that presidents direct more attention to tenure decisions than hiring decisions, Christ said presidents provide an especially important “check” on faculty tenure recommendations, since a positive decision is a kind of “lifetime commitment that this person is going to be an extraordinary faculty member. It’s a very solemn responsibility.”

A president might, for example, think that even a faculty-backed candidate “is just not up to standards for the college or university,” Christ said. “He or she might not think that the research case has been made, or teaching.”

Beyond being a backstop, Christ said the president also plays a critical role in promoting the institution as a desirable place to work to potential hires. “You’re assessing the candidate, but it’s also about trying to persuade the candidate that this is an incredible place, and to be enthusiastic about this job.”

Christ said any president who wants to get more involved in hiring and tenure decisions has a variety of models across academe from which to choose. More important than any one “right” model, though, Christ said, is “having a very carefully defined procedure set out for what the president’s role is in tenure or hiring decisions.” (Although Inside Higher Ed’s survey did not ask about Board of Trustees involvement in faculty personnel decisions, Christ said she strongly opposed any independent evaluation at that level.)

Of course, establishing a new, buffed-up role for presidents could be a hard sell to the faculty members who might have to approve any new shared governance structure. John K. Wilson, coeditor of the American Association of University Professors’ Academe blog and the author of several books on academic freedom, said he found some of the survey results concerning. He also disagreed with Christ’s stance, saying that the only right role for presidents in hiring and tenure decisions is to “make sure that the process is fair and correct.” He said he wasn’t sure, for example, what the point of interviewing prospective faculty members is if presidents -- who are in most cases not also experts in candidates’ fields -- “can’t judge their qualifications.”

“The problem is that most presidents will readily agree to the idea of taking ‘a more active role’ in almost anything,” Wilson added via e-mail. “And it’s possible that some of them might be taking an active role in assuring that faculty hiring and tenure decisions
are made fairly, without bias or discrimination.”

But the survey suggests that there also is “a strong danger of thought control,” Wilson said, citing the finding that 10 percent of private, nonprofit college presidents say they’ve blocked the hire of someone they disagreed with ideologically. “And the fact that a majority of college presidents admit to have blocked hiring as well as tenure due to ‘competence’ is particularly alarming, since it is doubtful that college presidents have the scholarly competence to judge faculty competence.” (Wilson argued that that’s what happened in the Salaita case, and that it was apparently happening elsewhere was a “matter of great concern.”)

Steven Bahls, president of Augustana College in Illinois, described his own involvement in faculty hiring and tenure decisions as somewhere between being hands-off and the ultimate gatekeeper. Bahls -- who has been president of the private, Lutheran Church-affiliated liberal arts college for 12 years -- said he spends about 30 minutes with each faculty job finalist. At up to 10 openings per year and 3 or 4 finalists per job, that’s a lot of time. But it’s worth it, he said.

“I engage with them about the mission at Augustana and, frankly, assess whether they’re a good mission fit or not,” Bahls said. “I also plant the seed in the minds of prospective faculty about obligations, meaning that Augustana is more than simply about great teaching and research, but also shared governance and advising and mentoring students and participating in the life of the college.”

Meeting with the president during an interview also gives the impression that he is “accessible” -- which can sometimes “seal the deal” for a desirable hire, Bahls said. “They’re interviewing us, and we’re interviewing them.”

During his interviews, Bahls is looking for basic kinds of competence, too -- but as a former law professor himself, he says he’d never judge a physics professor applicant’s portfolio, for example. He called that kind of presidential oversight “dangerous.” The same goes for tenure.

Ultimately, Bahls said, “I have more traditional views regarding shared governance, in that faculty members are primarily responsible for promoting and tenuring faculty.” What does that mean, in practice? Bahls said he usually communicates with the hiring department through the provost about obligations, looking most closely at cases where the vote is deeply divided.

Bahls said that he’s only intervened in a faculty hire once in his tenure, when the candidate’s background seemed more appropriate for a top research university (he declined to be more specific). Luckily, he said, the department was willing to start the professor out on a one-year contract to assess fit, and the candidate agreed. In tenure decisions, Bahls said he almost always concurs with the faculty recommendation, looking most closely at cases where the vote is deeply divided.

“I don’t want to be heavy-handed,” he said.
Renu Khator, chancellor of the University of Houston System and president of its main campus, said she strives to be hands-off -- unlike many of her peers. Even though the "job of president is becoming more and more external," she said, "people feel they need to be more involved in tenure."

Khator guessed that's because leaders know that "talent drives everything else," but said she didn't think getting personally involved in tenure decisions is the best way to drive talent. She said she does that by "setting expectations" for the institution, including that "when we hire people, [we] want to make sure they do have love for students, for teaching."

Bahls's best guess as to why so many presidents want more control was that it's a natural response to the many big, open questions about higher education’s future. “That’s where so much of the nervousness is -- ‘I’m nervous, and I need to control more.’”

But he cautioned against acting on that impulse, again calling too much presidential interference in faculty affairs “dangerous,” based in part on personal experience. “There have been candidates at Augustana that I’ve really wondered about who have turned out to be leaders of this institution, because the faculty saw so much more in them than I was able to see in the half-hour I spent.”

MU Journalism's Dean Mills celebrates 25 years of innovation

Watch the story: http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=27950&zone=5&categories=5

COLUMBIA - The Missouri School of Journalism celebrated 25 years of innovation with retiring dean Dean Mills Thursday.
Many professors and staff from the school met to go through the evolution of journalism at the university, including the development of the Reynolds Journalism Institute.

"It's a wonderful component of the school of journalism because it enables students to be able to learn about the future of journalism as well as practicing it in the present," Mills said.

Mills announced his retirement last year, but will remain dean until the school completes the search for his replacement, expected sometime this summer.

He said he had five themes that he felt characterized most innovations during his tenure. He said they are building new connections, creating new knowledge, developing new ways of teaching, embracing new technologies and establishing new benchmarks of excellence.

"The school's whole history is innovation," Mills said. "The school itself, of course, was innovative - the first school of journalism in the world. The very idea of teaching journalism at a university was a radical idea when Missouri did it first."

For a quarter century, Mills helped bring in more than $200 million dollars in gifts and grants, including $25 million in new student scholarships and nearly $7 million to create the Jonathan Murray Center for Documentary Journalism.

The school's endowment also grew from $17 million in 1989 to more than $122 million in 2015.

As for the future, Mills said you can't predict it. However, he said MU will always be at the forefront of innovation.

The school is establishing the Dean Mills Faculty Innovation Endowment to "honor the culture of innovation Mills fostered during his 25 years as dean."

Following his retirement as dean, Mills will remain with the university as part-time director of a fellowship program at the school's journalism institute.

Former NSA head presses for beefed up cyberdefense

By ALAN BURDZIAK

Thursday, March 12, 2015 at 4:43 pm
Universities should push to add academic programs designed to create skilled workers who can confront cybercrime, espionage and terrorism — particularly in the private sector — because of a growing threat, Admiral Mike McConnell, former head of the National Security Agency and Director of National Intelligence, said during a speech Thursday at the University of Missouri.

McConnell, who spoke as part of the Christopher S. “Kit” Bond Lecture Series, said a terrorist or extremist group that wanted to wreak economic havoc on the United States and Western World would only need to penetrate the network of one New York City bank where a majority of global financial transactions clear. Half of the $13 trillion that moves through the global banking system is cleared at this single bank, he said.

“There is no computer system on the globe that cannot be penetrated and manipulated” with the right skills and persistence, McConnell said.

McConnell is a retired vice admiral from the U.S. Navy who served as NSA director from 1992 to 1996 and was the U.S. director of national intelligence from 2007 to 2009. He urged the 100 or so people who attended the lecture to contact their elected representatives to urge them to push for more domestic education on cybersecurity. A cyberattack could cripple the nation’s infrastructure and bring people’s lives to a halt, he said, because of the massive reliability on digital tools and programs.

He mentioned recent infiltrations of major corporations like Target and Home Depot, when millions of people’s financial data was stolen, and at Sony, when data was stolen, disseminated and destroyed in response to the movie “The Interview.”

“I’m actually glad it’s happening because it’s causing us to get serious,” McConnell said.

Bond, a former Missouri governor and U.S. senator, introduced McConnell and said both individuals and the nation are far too vulnerable to having information stolen.

“I’m afraid, right now, the American public is still too complacent when it comes to the silent attacks, the silent threats that could take place in our nation and that is cyber attacks,” Bond said.

The Chinese continue to be a threat, McConnell said, with a force 100,000 strong devoted to cyberattacks that routinely penetrate American companies and steal data, information and ideas.
“The Chinese have penetrated every major corporation in the United States without consequence,” McConnell said. The Chinese, in an effort to be at the forefront of the digital revolution, have learned they can get all the information they want for free by hacking into other countries’ networks, he said.

Edward Snowden, the former NSA contractor who leaked details of the agency’s routine spying on millions of Americans, came up during a Q-and-A session at the end of the event.

“He didn’t understand the system and he made a lot of claims that were wrong,” McConnell said. “I think what he did” gave “a lot of material for people who have a particular point of view.”

McConnell also said he knows of a handful of higher education institutions that have cybersecurity programs. Universities around the country need to increase programming in the area so there will be enough people to fill the need to protect American networks, he said.

Former Director of National Intelligence to speak cyber crime at MU

Watch the story: http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=27945&zone=5&categories=5

COLUMBIA- Sensitive information is stolen from Americans every day. Former Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell will speak at the University of Missouri Thursday about ways for the nation to respond to growing cyber threats.

McConnell held office under President George W. Bush from 2007 to 2008.

"The Chinese are taking terabits of information each day from our country," McConnell said.

According to the FBI's 2013 Internet Crime Report, the bureau received a little more than a quarter million cyber crime complaints in 2013, resulting in about $781 million in losses. That is a 48.8 percent increase in reported losses from 2012.
McConnell said he expects the number of cyber crime incidents to increase and that universities could play a role in improving the problem.

"I'm going to make the case to the University of Missouri to implement a cyber security program," McConnell said.

The increased push for cyber security education could allow students the skills necessary to counter the growing cyber threats.

McConnell said once the programs are implemented on the national level he would expect noticeable changes in five to eight years.

He said many schools have already implemented such programs, but he still wants to increase the output of cyber security students.

He said cyber crime impacts the entire nation.

"We all have some level of risk and we need to understand that," McConnell said. "We all have a roll, students have a roll, and businesses have a role."

The free public discussion begins at 10 a.m. at the Reynolds Alumni Center and will be open to Q and A from about 11 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Mizzou alum explores the Great Migration from a young girl’s perspective

By ERICA SMITH • 13 HOURS AGO

Known as the Great Migration, 6 million African-Americans left their homes in the South after World War I and through 1970, moving north and west.

“The conditions in the South for the average African-American were unbearable and intolerable,” Georgetown University history professor Marcia Chatelain told “St. Louis on the Air” host Don Marsh on Thursday. “We have the rise of Klan violence. We have incredibly depressed wages. We have all sorts of labor conflicts. And we also have the confinement of the person.
Northern migration was an opportunity to try to see what it would be like to live as a free person.”

Chicago became an important destination during the Great Migration. In 1890, less than 2 percent of the city’s population was black. By 1970, there were 1 million African-Americans in Chicago — a third of the city’s population.

In her book “South Side Girls,” Chatelain, a University of Missouri–Columbia alum, focuses on the years between 1910 and 1940 in Chicago, when the city’s black population quintupled. During that time, the meaning of girlhood shifted to reflect anxiety about urbanization and racial progress, she said.

“‘South Side Girls’ is about the impact the Great Migration had on young women and girls, and their ability to find their place in a very changing and rapidly evolving world,” Chatelain said. “Girls’ lives matter, and we need to really invest in understanding girls’ history.”

Chatelain drew parallels between the Great Migration movement and the Ferguson movement.

“I think that what we see in Ferguson are the consequences of that mass migration of African-Americans into places that had very few — the consequences of housing segregation, segregation in education,” she said. “I think that Ferguson is the legacy, the negative legacy, of mass migration and communities willing to not really be open to newcomers.”

Girls and women played important roles then and now, Chatelain said.

“In every movement, even if the leadership, the people up front, are male, we know that there’s a critical mass of girls, young women and women who are not only sustaining the movement through their work, but sustaining the communities that are shattered by violence,” she said.
Related event:

“She was Fighting for Her Father’s Freedom”

- Marcia Chatelain will talk about and sign her book, “South Side Girls”
- **When:** 7 p.m. Thursday, March 12, 2015
- **Where:** MacDermott Grand Hall, Missouri History Museum, Lindell and DeBaliviere in Forest Park, St. Louis

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**Missouri House recommends $74 million K-12 budget increase**

*Watch the story: [http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=27955&zone=5&categories=5](http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=27955&zone=5&categories=5)*

COLUMBIA - The Missouri House of Representatives passed its budget for the 2016 fiscal year, including a $74.1 million increase to help fund K-12 education.

The increase in basic K-12 education still falls well short of the education foundation formula, the state’s education budget plan.

Gov. Jay Nixon recommended the budget allocate about $50 million increase to K-12 education, the house proposal exceeded that by $24.2 million.

Parent Kay Nsonso currently sends her eldest child to private school and plans to eventually send both children to public school once they reach the first grade.

She said she wants the money to be put to good use.

"Better technology, security for our children out there and more resources for the kids to learn," Nsonso said.
But not all are happy with the amount of money allocated toward the entirety of education.

Representative Stephen Webber (D-Columbia) put out a statement shortly after one part of the budget passed, criticizing the lack of funding in the budget for higher education which read:

"Our universities and colleges drive entrepreneurship and are the best job creation tools for Missouri. It's time to reject the business as usual approach of putting students and families last."

Susan Novinger worked in the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Missouri for more than 30 years. She supports the increase in K-12 education but said she understands the need for more funding with public universities.

"There's always a need for more in higher education," Novinger said. "It is disappointing they didn't get more funding than what they asked for."

Nsonso agreed that funding higher education is also important for the state.

"In the long run I would rather see it spread evenly from kindergarten all the way until university," Nsonso said.

Nsonso's husband Bernard also agreed and said he thought more money should go to ease tuition costs.

"Right now people are borrowing a lot of money to go to college, and it's been a problem to return all the money," Bernard Nsonso said.

The budget proposal will now move to the Senate.

Big bills to view public documents discourage public access

By MICHAEL FELBERBAUM
RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — The public's right to see government records is coming at an ever-increasing price, as authorities set fees and hourly charges that often prevent information from flowing.

Though some states have taken steps to limit the fees, many have not:

— In Kansas, Gov. Sam Brownback's office told The Wichita Eagle that it would have to pay $1,235 to obtain records of email and phone conversations between his office and a former chief of staff who is now a prominent statehouse lobbyist.

— Mississippi law allows the state to charge hourly for research, redaction and labor, including $15 an hour simply to have a state employee watch a reporter or private citizen review documents.

— The Associated Press dropped a records request after Oregon State Police demanded $4,000 for 25 hours of staff time to prepare, review and redact materials related to the investigation of the director of a boxing and martial arts regulatory commission.

Whether roadblocks are created by authorities to discourage those seeking information, or simply a byproduct of bureaucracy and tighter budgets, greater costs to fulfill freedom of information requests ultimately can interfere with the public's right to know. Such costs are a growing threat to expanding openness at all levels of government, a cornerstone of Sunshine Week. The weeklong open government initiative is celebrating its 10th anniversary beginning March 15.

"It's incredibly easy for an agency that doesn't want certain records to be exposed to impose fees in the hopes that the requester is dissuaded," said Adam Marshall, a fellow with the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, which sponsors Sunshine Week with the American Society of News Editors. "If the people don't know what's going on, either because they don't have direct access to information or because the media isn't able to provide them with access to information about what their government is doing, it's impossible for the people to exercise any sense of informed self-governance."

Fees can be charged for searching for records, making copies, paying a lawyer to redact certain parts of the information or hiring technical experts to analyze the data.

In most cases, the fees imposed are at the agency's discretion; those agencies sometimes waive the costs or requesters can appeal them to an administrative board. But in other cases, Marshall said news organizations and private citizens are faced with the "ridiculous choice" of weighing the costs and benefits of being a responsible public steward.

In Florida, the Broward Sheriff's Office told Jason Parsley, executive editor of the South Florida Gay News, last year that it would cost $399,000 and take four years to provide every email for a one-year period that contained certain derogatory words for gays. The reason, according to officials: The email system could not perform a keyword search of all accounts at once.
Parsley says he has talked to computer experts who disagree and say a modern email system could handle the request easily, but he doesn't have the money or the time to take the matter to court.

"It would be their word against ours," he said. "Even if we could pay that amount, it would be four years. What good would that do me at that point, anyway?"

If the goal was to keep him from learning that deputies used such terms, authorities won, Parsley said.

Broward County Sheriff’s Lt. Eric Caldwell said the department was not trying to be evasive. He said each employee's email is stored on a tape and kept at a remote archive facility. It has to be retrieved physically and then converted into a Microsoft Outlook file, which can then be searched.

"If we have it, we have to provide it," he said. "The reason this cost so much is that this person had a very vague request."

Virginia law allows reasonable charges not to exceed the actual cost of accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for the requested records. But to get electronic copies of Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe's daily calendar for nearly 10 months, officials told the AP that it would need to pay about $500 upfront. That's because McAuliffe's counsel said staff would have had to search, review and possibly redact certain calendar entries. Meanwhile, in California, daily calendar entries for Gov. Jerry Brown are routinely provided at no cost to the AP.

Another example: Iowa's newly created Public Information Board ruled in December that the state Department of Corrections could charge the Marshall Project, a nonprofit that reports on the criminal justice system, $2,020 for access to its federally mandated reports on sexual violence against inmates. Iowa officials said it would take an employee 108 hours at $15 per hour to review, redact and copy 2,672 records, plus a 15-cents-per-page charge for copies. Some larger states charge nothing or just a nominal fee for access to those reports.

"I think there's a genuine effort to be responsive, but there is a higher cost to fulfill these requests," said Dan Beavry, acting executive director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition, a nonprofit based at the University of Missouri-Columbia that works to protect the public's right to open government. "There are other times where there's a deliberate effort to circumvent the system."

Lawmakers in several states have proposed or passed laws seeking to address those fees.

Michigan lawmakers recently approved a law mandating that agencies cannot charge more than 10 cents a page for documents. Further, people can file a lawsuit if they believe they are being overcharged and can try to get the amount reduced. If a court agrees, it must assess $1,000 in punitive damages.

In February, Maryland lawmakers introduced a bill that would establish a compliance board to handle complaints and cap the fees agencies can charge for public documents.
Yet other states are considering actions that could restrict access or deter those making requests.

Following complaints from Tennessee's school boards association, a proposal in the state Legislature would allow agencies to charge for anything more than one hour of time fulfilling records requests. Current law allows them to charge for copies, but not for the time they spend collecting and redacting documents. A legislative analysis of a similar proposal that failed in 2011 estimated that local governments would collect about $1.6 million in fees under the change.

"If someone can't afford the fees, they can't see the records," said Deborah Fisher, executive director of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government. "There is nothing yet to safeguard against abuse by government officials who may want to block access by inflating fees."

An Indiana proposal would allow a searching fee for record requests that take longer than two hours to fulfill. After that time, an agency could charge up to $20 an hour and require payment up front. The search time would not include time spent redacting confidential information, but opponents said the fee will discourage more in-depth records requests and give officials another tool to fight transparency.

Most agencies in Washington state provide electronic records free by email, and state law caps charges for copies at 15 cents a page. But earlier this year, the Legislature considered a bill that would allow agencies to charge for digital public records, raising concerns among good-government advocates. The bill passed one committee but failed to get a vote in another, meaning it is likely dead for the year.

Agencies can be allowed to levy charges, says Toby Nixon, president of the Washington Coalition for Open Government, "but they should not be making a profit off of it."

Some government officials say they are unable to waive fees because their budgets are tight. Complicating matters further is a larger number of records being generated and the inability of agencies to maintain and process them, leading to more time and resources dedicated to researching requests.

In most instances, the price to fulfill requests comes down to what's being sought and the costs associated with responding to them, said Chuck Thompson, executive director of the International Municipal Lawyers Association, a nonprofit group representing local government attorneys across North America.

"There's probably a fairly low percentage of governments that are attempting to provide barriers to the release of information," Thompson said. "It's really important that the public have the ability to find out what their government's doing, but they can't bring their government to their knees."

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Associated Press writers Jeff Amy in Jackson, Mississippi; Curt Anderson in Miami; Jeff Barnard in Grants Pass, Oregon; David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan; Ryan J. Foley in Iowa City, Iowa; John D. Hannah in Topeka, Kansas; Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington; Judy Lin in Sacramento, California; Erik Schelzig
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