COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

UM System to spend $2.2 million on Title IX efforts

Thursday, April 9, 2015 | 8:17 p.m. CDT
BY TIMOSHANAE WELLMAKER

ROLLA, Missouri — The University of Missouri System will spend $2.2 million on Title IX education and prevention efforts during fiscal year 2016, the Board of Curators was told Thursday.

Spending measures include:

- An outreach plan through the MU Counseling Center, along with additional funding for the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center.
- Hiring an investigator, counselor and additional support staff at Missouri S&T.
- Training staff in trauma therapy at University of Missouri-Kansas City.
- Providing access to a 24/7 confidential reporting hotline for students, faculty and staff at University of Missouri-St. Louis.

Betsy Rodriguez, system vice president for human resources, updated the curators, meeting this week at Missouri S&T, about plans at all four campuses to comply with Title IX policies and federal mandates.

“Title IX touches every corner of our institution,” Rodriguez said.

In the fall, all incoming undergraduate and graduate students on the four campuses will be required to take online violence prevention training called “Not Anymore.”

The training is built around 19 modules designed to prevent sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and bullying. The intent is also to inspire students to take action against assault. The interactive training modules can be customized for each campus.

If incoming students fail to participate, possible repercussions include placing a hold on their university accounts, Rodriguez said.
All four campuses are also collecting data about campus culture through a climate survey on sexual assault and misconduct, to be administered from April 6 to 27. The survey asks for perceptions, understanding and prevalence of sexual assault issues.

According to Rodriguez, a random sample of students has been invited to take the survey, and the campuses hope for at least a 20 percent response rate.

“I think it’s important to understand we’re trying to meet the students where they are,” she said.

Results from the survey will be announced at the June 25 to 26 meeting of the curators in Columbia.

Faculty and staff are already required to take two Title IX-related training courses — one on harassment and another on mandatory reporting — and Rodriguez said 36,183 have participated. At MU, 97 percent have taken the first course and 95 percent have taken the second.

Last month, MU launched a safety feature on its GoMizzou app that gives students immediate access to 911, mental health support, sexual assault and Title IX resources and emergency procedures. It also provides information about MU alerts and warnings.

**MU faculty hear from Title IX experts**

By Ashley Jost

Wednesday, April 8, 2015 at 2:00 pm

*University of Missouri faculty had a chance Tuesday to discuss with outside legal counsel questions and concerns regarding one of the most contentious subjects on college campuses.*

Title IX policies had to be implemented quickly, and the policies include an opportunity for changes to be made during the next year with administrative approval. Faculty leadership saw
open forums with outside legal experts as a chance to ask what more needs to be done and what could be done.

Faculty Council leaders invited Gina Maisto Smith and Leslie Gomez, former sex crime prosecutors and attorneys with Pepper Hamilton LLP in Philadelphia, to visit campus after they were identified as legal experts in the area of Title IX.

The two attorneys have worked together on many projects, and both have been cited in national articles about sexual assault on college campuses and the policies put in place to combat campus sexual assault. Pepper Hamilton LLP has advised clients that, like MU and the UM System, have grappled with implementing Title IX policies after public fallout from a case that was not handled properly.

The university hosted two open faculty forums Tuesday — one at 8:30 a.m. and another at 1:30 p.m. in the Reynolds Alumni Center. Administrators and lawyers from the UM System and MU were present for the discussion.

Gomez and Smith addressed academic freedom concerns about whether there could be an exception to faculty members acting as mandated reporters when they learn via an assignment in a creative writing, music or similar course that someone on campus has been involved in a Title IX violation.

Smith told audience members at the morning forum that faculty members have to walk a fine line between protecting students by reporting and trusting the central reporting process and leadership to protect students’ anonymity.

When asked about the quality of the UM System’s adopted Title IX policies, Gomez and Smith agreed that the policies were up to par. The duo did say practices during the investigation phase could be clarified.

The two attorneys said many schools are “front-loading” the Title IX adjudication process onto the investigator. As a result, the hearing panel-like structure — which the UM System has adopted — becomes more of a validation or voice of reason after the investigator has submitted a lengthy report and recommendation.

Faculty Council Chairman Craig Roberts said the forums created “one of the most well-spent days” in his years on the council because faculty members were able to hear directly from outside experts what they thought of the university’s policies.

The new Title IX governing rules allow for revisions by system administrators — with an agreement that faculty members have significant input. The next step is for MU’s Faculty Council to create a committee to specifically address clarifications and recommend those changes to the council, which will then bring those ideas to administrators.

Roberts said he expects to have the committee formed before the end of the semester.
Board of Curators discuss mandated Title IX training, faculty retirement

The UM System Board of Curators discussed enforcement of student Title IX training and faculty retirement policies at its meeting at Missouri Science and Technology University April 9.

Title IX

Betsy Rodriguez, UM System vice president for human resources, updated the curators on the past, present and future changes to Title IX policies aimed at making the UM System a national leader in addressing campus sexual assault.

Starting this summer, new undergraduate and graduate students on every UM System campus will be required to complete the Not Anymore sexual assault prevention training, which was introduced in February. The training will become a part of freshman orientation and student training over the summer.

The four campuses are considering ways to enforce the requirement, such as placing holds on student accounts if students do not complete the training.

Rodriguez said there is not a plan in place to train all current students at this time.

“The focus right now is on the new students, but that’s not to say we’re not going to try to get them all trained,” she said.

Rodriguez said administrators are working to gather data from student climate surveys on each campus. MU’s survey, which was sponsored by the Association of American Universities, is open to students from April 6-27. The data will be analyzed over the summer and a report will be presented in the fall, she said.

Enhancing campus safety and security for students is another focus of system-level administrators.

Rodriguez said they are trying to increase the number of confidential reporters, or employees who aren’t mandated reporters, available to students. All university faculty and staff, including student employees, are mandated reporters with the exception of some health care workers and counselors.

Campus-level administrators are also exploring options for apps to make available to students. A crisis and safety module was launched on March 2 on MU’s GoMizzou app, Rodriguez said.
From the module, students can directly call 911 or get resources for different campus resources, including mental health, medical care, sexual assault and Title IX.

Rodriguez said the other system campuses are considering adapting MU’s app for their own use.

“We’re trying to have the campuses do what’s best for their student population, where their students are and what’s most effective for their students,” she said.

She summarized changes made since November 2014, including the hiring of full-time Title IX coordinators at MU and UM-Kansas City.

Mandatory faculty and staff training have also been implemented across campuses. She said 97 percent of MU employees have completed a course on harassment, and 95 percent of MU employees have completed a mandatory reporting training course.

Rodriguez said the UM System has also invested $2.2 million in Title IX efforts. MU is focusing its funds on improving education and prevention efforts through developing an outreach plan through the Counseling Center, as well as increasing funding to the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, she said.

The system hopes to continue to enhance Title IX infrastructure by hiring more staff in the future, Rodriguez said. Administrators also hope to improve case management software that helps Title IX employees document investigations and develop reports to measure effectiveness of policies.

Retirement

The curators unanimously passed all but two sections of an “umbrella” policy over retirement benefits.

The delegation of authority, outlined in sections two and six of the motion, will be postponed until the curators’ next meeting in June.

The new policy, presented by Rodriguez, includes the establishment of a committee on retirement planning. She said the committee would act in an advisory role to the board and UM System President Tim Wolfe. The creation of this committee comes after the board voted in February to disband a committee that worked directly with Wolfe.

The policy also delegates the power to revise the retirement policy to the president, Rodriguez said.

Under the new rule, major changes to system-wide retirement policies would be brought to the board for review, while minor ones and those required by changing law would simply be executed by Wolfe.
The board agreed that discrepancy over the delegation of authority is rooted in the lack of definitive, necessary language on what constitutes a major change to retirement policy.

Rodriguez apologized during the meeting for the lack of definitive language and said it was “definitely her intention” to keep the board informed on any substantive change to policy.

Rodriguez said that she and her team would write a more specific language regarding which policy changes would be brought to the board and which would be handled solely by Wolfe and present those revised sections at the board meeting in June.

Modifications to retirement policy are especially necessary now due to the growing pool of eligible retirees, Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said there were 1,500 employees eligible for retirement across the university system in 2005. By 2014, she said, that number had grown to 4,000. If the current rate of growth holds true, Rodriguez expects the population of eligible retirees to swell to 7,000 by 2019.

MU recently offered a voluntary separation plan to 261 faculty who are over the age of 62. Of the eligible faculty, 110 took the buyout and will receive a one-time payment equal 150 percent of their annual salary, capped at $200,000.

Rodriguez attributed the rapid growth of the retiree pool to the baby boomer generation aging out of the work force. The current pool of employees eligible for retirement across the UM System is now as large as the entire faculty population of MU, she said, calling the retiree pool the “fifth campus.”

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Subjects of 'The Hunting Ground' discuss campus sexual assault after screening

Friday, April 10, 2015 | 12:09 a.m. CDT
BY TRACEE TIBBITTS

COLUMBIA — Kamilah Willingham was a student at Harvard Law School when she and a friend were sexually assaulted after going out to a bar with a male classmate.

Her attacker was expelled but later allowed back on campus.

Her story and others like it are the subject of "The Hunting Ground," a new documentary about sexual assault on college campuses. It was screened Thursday night at the Missouri Theatre to an audience of about 400 people.
Following the screening, Willingham and Sofie Karasek, whose story was also featured in the film, answered audience questions via Skype. Colleen Coble, the director of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, and Danica Wolf, the director of MU’s Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center, were also there to answer questions. Katherine Reed, assistant professor of journalism at MU and an editor at the Columbia Missourian, moderated the panel.

The documentary follows male and female survivors’ experiences with sexual assault at universities across the country, including Harvard, the University of North Carolina, Yale, Stanford, the University of California-Berkeley and others.

According to the film, 16 to 20 percent of undergraduate women are sexually assaulted in college, yet 45 percent of colleges reported zero rapes in 2012. Rape survivors are often met with shame and told to keep their stories secret to preserve the reputation of the university and its monetary connections with fraternities — which produce generous alumni — and sports teams, and to keep crime statistics low.

The panelists discussed how sexual assault survivors have begun to advocate for change at their schools, and how to overcome the stigmas associated with having been sexually assaulted.

Willingham and Karasek also elaborated on their experiences and talked about their decisions to be in the film.

"I really wanted other people to see that I'm not ashamed," Willingham said of why she chose to be involved. "I don't think there should be anything to be ashamed of."

"I felt very compelled to come forward," said Karasek, who goes to the University of California-Berkeley.

"Four of us had accused the same man of sexual assault," she said. "The university didn't do anything. ... It was unacceptable, and it needed to stop."

Coble and Wolf discussed the resources and processes for dealing with sexual assault at MU and how the community can bring about social and institutional change.

"It takes this community to continue to put positive pressure for change," Coble said.
Universities across the country have come under increased scrutiny of the issue of sexual assault on campus. MU has dealt with several high-profile cases of its own, including the accusation that Derrick Washington sexually assaulted his ex-girlfriend in 2010, another allegation in 2014 that former Missouri swimmer Sasha Menu Courey took her life after she was sexually assaulted in 2010, and an allegation in 2012 that former Missouri basketball star Michael Dixon Jr. sexually assaulted a woman.

“I feel so fortunate that we were able to have something like this here,” attendee Jessica Garrison said afterward. “It may be a hard subject, but at least we’re opening a dialogue. That’s an extremely important first step.”

Ragtag Film Society, the Murray Center for Documentary Journalism and MU's Based on a True Story symposium presented the film. A dollar from each ticket was donated to the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Ragtag Cinema will show the film through April 16.

Campus sexual assault film brought specifically to MU

Watch story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=a8dc553e-b5d9-4001-89b1-5c3378021c5a

COLUMBIA - A special screening of the documentary "The Hunting Ground" premiered at The Missouri Theatre Thursday in the midst of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.
The film focuses on rape on U.S. college campuses. It follows several victims of rape and sexual assault, institutional cover-ups, the social toll of individuals who are raped and what they're doing to get justice.

Emily Collette, a recent graduate of Stephens College said the issue of sexual assault on campuses hits home for her.

"I've known personally some friends who have been victims on college campuses, and they are still having trouble getting heard," Collette said. "Neither of them-their assailant was ever prosecuted, nothing ever happened, they were never expelled, they were never even suspended. So, it's definitely important to talk about this and not make it such a secretive thing anymore."

Paul Sturtz, program director of Ragtag and founder of the True/False Film festival said after seeing the film at the Sundance Film Festival, it was essential to bring it to Columbia.

"We can't say because of this screening, 'that prevented this number of rapes', it's really hard to have a one-to-one relationship like that," Sturtz said. "But, I hope it's part of a larger series of discussions that are happening all over the community this year."

According to oneinfourusa.com, one in four college women report surviving rape or attempted rape at some point in their lifetime.

Since August 2014, there have been approximately 144 incidents, including sexual misconduct, harassment and discrimination, reported on MU's campus. 135 of those incidents fall under Title IX standards. MU’s Title IX campus coordinator, Linda Bennett, said there has been an increase in reported incidents.

Following the screening was an open forum for attendees to share their thoughts and ask questions.

The film can be seen at Ragtag Cinema's beginning Friday, April 10 for exactly one week.

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**COLUMBIA DAILY TRIBUNE**

**AT&T donates $350,000 for MU online K-12 program**

By Roger McKinney

Thursday, April 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm
**AT&T announced Thursday a $350,000 donation for mobile applications to enable Mizzou K-12 Online students to access courses.**

The mobile applications, yet to be developed, will allow Mizzou K-12 Online students to access courses even if they are in an area without adequate Internet service.

Mizzou K-12 Online offers more than 200 courses to about 3,500 students, including 2,500 in Missouri, 800 around the country and 200 international students.

Zac March, director of Mizzou K-12 Online, said more than 78 percent of the program’s students live in rural communities or towns with populations of less than 25,000. The program has students in 63 countries.

Courses include core subjects, electives and Advanced Placement courses. Students who will benefit from the mobile application include a girl in Washington, Mo., who has a disability that prevents her from attending her community school.

In a video shown at the announcement in the University of Missouri’s Townsend Hall, the girl said she can type “like mad” on her phone, but she can’t use a computer keyboard.

Another student is a 16-year-old girl from Ozark who is on a missionary trip with her parents in Guatemala. A 16-year-old boy from Kansas City is moving to Europe with his family and enrolled in Mizzou K-12 Online to continue his education.

March said a student in Ghana has an Internet connection only once a month.

Event organizers withheld names to protect the students’ privacy.

John Sondag, president of AT&T Missouri, said AT&T made the donation because the communications company wants people to be able to use technology in whatever way possible to benefit their lives. He said investing in a well-educated workforce is the most important thing AT&T can do to support the local and global economy.

“This indeed is a game changer for students in rural Missouri, in other states and all over the world,” said MU College of Education Dean Daniel Clay.

March said after the announcement the mobile applications are in the very early stages of development, and the College of Education is hiring programmers to develop them. He said an application for Apple devices would be developed first, then an application for Android devices. March said the first app will be ready in early 2016.
Kurpius prepares for J-School Dean position


COLUMBIA, MO -- A Louisiana State University professor prepares to become Dean of the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

Professor of Mass Communication and an Associate Vice Chancellor at LSU David Kurpius will replace Dean Mills.

Mills is retiring after 25 years of leading the journalism school.

KRCG 13 spoke with Kurpius on the phone at his office in Louisiana on Thursday morning.

He said he wants journalism students to be better entrepreneurs and innovators.

Kurpius said, “The most rewarding thing about my Dean job is going to be working with great faculty and staff and students to chart a course to move the School of Journalism forward. It takes a community to do that and lots of input.”

Kurpius will become the new dean of Mizzou’s J-School on July 1.

the maneater

MSA, ASUM-UMKC testify against HB 104

On April 7, Missouri Students Association President Payton Head traveled to Jefferson City to testify in a public hearing in front of the Missouri Senate Judiciary Committee. The main purpose of this trip was to voice his opposition to the passage of House Bill 104.

Haahr said the bill is intended to protect minority viewpoints on college campuses via prohibiting an institution of higher education from interfering with the exercise of religious freedom of on-campus religious groups. He believes the “all comers” policies adopted by many universities’ non-discrimination rules are hindering the right to free expression and association by implementing acts of de-recognition toward student groups that discriminate based on religious beliefs.

HB 104 has aroused heated controversy, as opponents of the bill claim the bill will legalize discrimination based on religious beliefs of certain student groups that receive state funds, especially toward LGBT community.

HB 104 passed the Missouri House of Representatives on March 19 by majority vote of 117 and is now in the Missouri Senate.

Representing nearly 28,000 undergraduate students at MU, Head spoke out against the bill in his testimony. He said that by passing this bill and allowing associations to freely discriminate, the lawmakers will be “doing (the students) great disservice,” since HB 104 could create an atmosphere of exclusion that goes against the diverse environment MU works hard to foster.

“HB 104 conflicts with the University of Missouri’s promise of fairness and inclusion, and instead will guarantee a student association the right to discriminate against students on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and religious observance requirements and beliefs,” Head said.

He also pointed out that HB 104 would come in conflict with the constitution of the state of Missouri, which “precludes the state from the business of religion entirely – from valuing any set or sets of beliefs over any other set of sets of beliefs.”

“HB 104 mandates public institutions like the University of Missouri to yield special consideration for religious organizations, exempting them from prohibitions on discriminations that apply to every other facet of campus life per the UM System’s Anti-Discrimination policy,” he said.

Head concluded his testimony by taking a determined stance on the current issue.

“I am in adamant opposition to the passage of HB 104 as it will be damaging to the values that our university strives to uphold each day,” Head said.

Head wasn’t the only student representative present at the hearing. Legislative Director of the Associated Students of the University of Missouri Joel Longanecker from the University of Missouri-St. Louis, and Andrew Miller, the administrative vice president of the Student Government Association from University of Missouri-Kansas City along with many others also testified to voice their concerns.
“We want to ensure that all of our students, no matter their race, religion, or sexual orientation, feel safe on our campuses ... we do not feel that (HB 104) will accomplish this effectively,” Longanecker said. “It seems as though it was fashioned without inclusion of student groups, and we ask that student groups be included in this with such legislation.”

Head visited the MSA Social Justice Committee meeting Tuesday night to talk to senators about the reasoning behind his testimony.

“In reality, there’s a subliminal message,” he said. “Which would exclude LGBT students from the conversation going on at these organizations, and that’s one of the main reasons why I spoke out about it. And I think it was really important for (the Committee) to see that students are against this. A lot of times, I think that … in Jefferson City, they want to talk about the universities all the time but not actually ask the students how they feel.”

MSA also passed its own legislation, Bill 54-38, Wednesday night during full senate with 17 votes in agreement, 10 nays and 7 abstentions, which is titled “A Resolution to Declare the Missouri Students Associations Opposition to the Passage of HB 104 and SB 248 in the Missouri General Assembly.”

The legislation asserts MSA’s stance of opposition against the passage of HB 104 and SB 248 – both are identical.

SJC chairwoman Greer Wetherington co-authored the bill with Campus and Community Relations Committee chairman Syed Ejaz.

Wetherington said the fact that HB 104 was exclusionary between religious organizations and people of other identities prompted her to pen this legislation.

“For me, it’s a matter of allowing students equal opportunity and allowing their identity to not hold them back,” Wetherington said. “I hope to accomplish, by writing this bill, that Mizzou should be an all-inclusive campus, and that all of its organizations hold the same values as the university.”

Wetherington also said besides writing the bill, SJC is also in the process of getting in contact with religious student associations such as the Muslim Student Organization and Jewish Student Organization in order to ascertain their opinions on the matter.
Children don’t come with instruction books. Even if they did, you would have to purchase new editions every few months, or receive addendums daily. No two children are exactly alike in their behaviors, way of thinking, style of learning or reactions to any experience or event. Research involving children and their development is also constantly changing. What your grandparents believed about rearing children differed from what your parents believed. Now what you believe is probably different from them. Regardless of what stage you are in as a parent, relative, care give, or friend, one thing stays constant — We all want what is best for our children.

25 years ago a dream became a reality as ParentLink: now a University of Missouri Dept. of Education outreach organization, was born; to support families as they tackle perhaps the greatest responsibility of all time — raising future generations. They wanted what was best for all of Missouri’s children.

Finding out what “the best” is, however, can be a daunting task. You listen to your friends and family for advice. Sometimes you ask the doctor or teachers what to do. Often, you do what feels right and hope for the best.

A single mother of two said, “Although I appreciated all the advice and concern my parents and extended family had about how to raise my girls, I wanted to raise my kids differently than I was raised. Being able to discuss different thoughts and theories with ParentLink staff, and having them share with me current research and best practices helped me formulate my own way to parent. I knew what I was doing was indeed in the best interest of my children.”

There is never a question that is too small or insignificant for WarmLine staff.

“I don’t know all the answers, but I know where to find them” said Barb, one of the Family Support specialists.

CORE SERVICES

ParentLink has many core services, primary of which is the WarmLine. WarmLine gives callers direct access to family strengthening information and support. Callers can visit via phone or email with professionals who can assist them in thinking through solutions to parenting concerns, obtain access to ParentLink’s Loan Library and obtain community service and other resource information. WarmLine professionals have their masters degrees in human service fields such as social work, human development and family studies, education, school and counseling and psychology. The ParentLink WarmLine is available to all Missourians Monday through Friday 8 a.m. until 10 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday from noon until 5 p.m. by calling (800) 552-8522 or (573) 882-7321.
All student parents, and their children, can take advantage of ParentLink’s Cub Hub. Children are supervised by MU service learning students and the parents stay onsite in one of the many quiet study areas. One mother that uses the Cub Hub had this to say about it: “It’s just the right amount of time. I’m always amazed how much I can get done without all the small interruptions. And the kids love the attention and activities.” The children are provided with age-appropriate play and educational opportunities while their parents are provided access to Wi-Fi and a variety of study/work environments. A Facebook page allows for parent interaction and updates for upcoming events.

Grandparents and other relative caregivers raising children can become a part of the GrandFamily support group. Meeting on the third Thursday of each month, relative caregivers and grandparents share resources, a meal and a topic of discussion. The children play with one another, under the supervision of MU service learning students, giving them a chance to interact with other children in the same or similar home environments.

“The reason we started coming (to the support group) was so that our grandson would be able to play with other kids that lived with their grandparents too,” one grandfather said. “We didn’t know how many grandfamilies there really were.”

Quarterly weekend evening activities will begin in May. Those who can’t make the meeting can still be a part of the group by interacting on the Facebook page or accessing resources at their website www.education.missouri.edu/orgs/parentlink/grandfamilies/

Twice a year ParentLink hosts a Tiger Family Festival, inviting all area families for activities, educational tables, entertainment and food! Area businesses sponsor this event so it can continue to be free year after year. The next festival will be April 25 from 10:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. at ParentLink’s location, 4800 Santana Circle in Columbia, (just south of Rock Bridge High School).

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

FROM READERS: What if MU hosted a social entrepreneurship conference?

Thursday, April 9, 2015 | 9:37 p.m. CDT
BY SMITA AGGARWAL/MISSOURIAN READER

Smita Aggarwal, a graduate student in the Truman School of Public Affairs, is helping plan MU’s 'What If...?' conference. What If...? 360 conferences encourage coming up with ideas and taking actions to solve problems.
The concept of What If...? excited me from the very beginning because it talks about endless possibilities, and one’s approach decides the direction these ultimately take.

What If...? means possibilities, alternatives, dreams, aspirations and hopes. It means there is always a What If...? no matter how difficult the going is; there is always something even if it feels like you have reached the end of the road.

I got involved with What If...? when my friend and fellow student in the Master of Public Affairs program, Erin Meyers, casually mentioned it to me, and asked if I would be interested in being part of this. There was no question of not! The idea excited me.

Bringing What If...? to Mizzou became a mission. Challenges around the scale of the event and the kind of response it could generate within the local community became exciting. It became a passion. The team working on this event consists of some of the most highly motivated individuals whose energy levels are infectious. Hours spent discussing the nitty-gritty of organizing this conference has become the most uplifting time spent in my day.

The theme of the What If...? MU conference is Social Entrepreneurship, which is most relevant to this part of the world. Mizzou and Columbia are home to some of the most innovative start-ups on the social sector spectrum, and it would be an amazing feat to be able to share their stories to inspire thousands of bright minds on campus, waiting in the wings to take off.

The What If...? MU conference is Saturday, April 11th, at Cornell Hall on the MU campus and runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a networking event afterward. What If...? MU will feature the following speakers and questions (as listed on the Truman School of Public Affairs website):

- Dr. Eric Staley, Adjunct Professor at TSPA and Owner of MissionMapping, LLC: "What if We All Could be Social Entrepreneurs?"

- Elizabeth Gerrior, MPA 2014, TSPA: "What if We Could Recognize the Human Trafficking in our Own Backyards?"

- JC Holmes, Owner and CEO of EverFin: "What if Money Was a Public Utility?"
- Christina Weaver of Mustard Seed Fair Trade in Downtown Columbia: "What if Pencil Production Was Personal?"

- Teri Walden, Executive Director at EnCircle Technologies: "What if Cheerios Worked Against You?"

- Tron Jordheim, CMO of StorageMart: "What if You Could Say the Right Things to the Right People at the Right Time?"

- Sarah Redohl, Editor at the Columbia Business Times and Adjunct Professor in the MU School of Journalism: "What if Mobile Storytelling Could Democratize a Global Narrative?"

- Sarah Hill, Chief Storyteller at Veterans United Network: "What if e-commerce... was see-commerce?"

- Alex Altomare, BetaBlox and The Lean Lab: “What if you learned to code?”

Registration is free and can be found at WhatIfMU.com. Registration is limited and open to the community and campus, so be sure to reserve your spot today!

Rapper Common recalls journey to 'greatness' at MU

By Ashley Jost

Thursday, April 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Academy Award-winning hip-hop artist Common started out his hourlong talk with an audience of almost entirely University of Missouri students with free-verse rapping, incorporating lingo from MU and Columbia.
“College Ave.,” “Rollins” and “Club Ellis,” for Ellis Library, all made it into his free-verse rhyme at the Missouri Theatre on Wednesday evening.

Lonnie Rashid Lynn, known by his stage name, “Common,” most recently made headlines when he received an Oscar and Golden Globe for his collaboration with artist John Legend on the original song “Glory” from the “Selma” soundtrack. He has produced 10 albums and has acted in more than a dozen movies, including “Selma.”

But at MU this week, Common spoke more about his personal journey and the importance of recognizing where it started and what inspired him.

“You have to find your path, believe in your path and live your path,” Common said about striving for greatness.

After producing “Electric Circus,” a record that did not go over well with fans, and then dealing with the emotional and mental stress of a public breakup with musician Erykah Badu, Common said he learned a lot about the importance of believing in oneself on the “path to greatness.”

“I found that I was willing to dim my light for others,” he said. “I found that if I got around a certain type of relationship or person, I would dim my light to please them or to not make them feel uncomfortable. That’s not what I was created for. ... It is your duty to shine your light on the world.”

MU student Gabby Hays said she connected with every part of the discussion Wednesday night, but particularly Common’s point about not changing because of a relationship with another person.

“I cried a lot, but especially then,” Hays said. “He was really personable.”

The Madness of College Sports

April 10, 2015
By
Patricia Okker
I love March Madness. I love the Cinderella stories, the office pools and the fierceness with which the men and women play. Most of all, I love the fact that during these few weeks we celebrate not just the stars from big-name schools but also players whose names will never appear again on ESPN.

But as much as I love the nod toward students destined for something other than professional sports, March Madness also inevitably reminds me how warped our sense of athletes on campus really is. Much of this madness, as I see it, comes from an obsession with endings -- the Final Four, and the last game of most of the seniors’ competitive basketball careers.

This sense of finality for teams and seniors may be fully ingrained in intercollegiate athletics, but it is not, in fact, the experience of many of our athletes on campus.

Consider, for example, students who are marathon runners or equestrians or weight lifters, most of whom compete not as part of a university team but as individuals or as members of teams unaffiliated with college athletics. Like our football and basketball players, a student training for an Ironman competition, for example, may easily spend thirty hours a week or more running, swimming, biking and strength training, but these students’ athletic careers do not end in some grand intercollegiate tournament. Instead, many of them continue to compete long after graduation.

The same longevity is also true for many of the other athletes on campus, our faculty and staff. Richard L. Smith, a statistics professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, ran his eleventh Boston Marathon last year at the age of 61. My colleague and teammate, Shelly Frazier, a pathologist at the University of Missouri and a founding member of a competitive women’s power-lifting team called the OWOWs (Older Women on Weights), holds six world records in her age and weight class with the World Drug-Free Powerlifting Federation.

Emphatically, these faculty and staff challenge the deeply held assumptions that athletes are always young. Historically, colleges have done much to popularize sports in the U.S., but higher education’s role in that rise has come at a price. Constantly bombarded with images of youthful athletes -- images that so often originate on our campuses -- we often assume that youth and athletics are inextricably linked.

With a nation heavily burdened by preventable disease, the cost of these images is staggering. The United States has both highly developed sports programs for youth and some of the world’s most physically inactive adults. Stop by any sports field or local bar on a Saturday and you’ll find countless adults -- many of whom were involved in sports as youth -- spending their weekends as spectators, watching young people compete.

The sad reality is that this image of sport has been fueled, in large part, by events like March Madness. However unintentional, college sports reinforces the idea that athleticism is the realm of the young, of the specially gifted. Moreover, because we accept the idea that student athletes are fundamentally different from everyone else
and that it is impossible to balance athletic pursuits with other responsibilities, we rarely consider the alternative view of sport as a lifelong activity that most, if not all, of us could enjoy.

The good news is that studies suggest that athletic abilities change as we age but do not inevitably disappear. What we often see as the natural effect of aging is, in fact, the result of inactivity.

Perhaps if we broke the collusion between athleticism and youth, we would be more successful in warding off the assumed natural effects of aging. If we had more images of athletes of all ages experiencing the joys and frustrations of competition, perhaps we could see athletics and sports as play, as something that brings joy and enriches our lives rather than as a chore to be endured in order to be healthy.

Masters athletes do not exist solely on campuses, of course, and one could argue that higher education has no special responsibility to address the rampant inactivity of U.S. adults. But the history of college athletics suggests that it can help change deeply held cultural beliefs -- Vassar College’s requirement, in 1865, that women be active in sports came more than a century before Title IX legislation.

It’s time to harness the potential of collegiate sports to address the nation’s crisis regarding health and wellness. Rather than spread the gospel of athleticism and youth, colleges and universities could be using their not inconsequential media strength to promote lifelong physical activity. Maybe in the midst of all this March Madness, it’s time to see all our athletes on campus.

The Myth of the 4-Year College Degree

Christine DiGangi

Choosing the right college involves some serious decisions. Where to attend, how much it will cost, and is it affordable, are usually the first questions that come to mind. Many people tend to base the answers to these questions on the annual tuition information posted by schools, and assume that it will take them four years to obtain a “four-year degree.” But is four the right number? For many students, the answer is no. Studies show it can actually take anywhere from three to six years to complete a college degree. In fact, millions start college and never finish.

“Regardless of where you go, regardless of how you go, far too many of those students are not graduating,” said Michelle Asha Cooper, president of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, a Washington-based nonprofit that researches and advises legislators on higher education policy.
College is expensive for a lot of reasons, but the difficulty in estimating the full cost of an education you may not complete for years can exacerbate the issue of unaffordable higher education.

**College-Level Math Problems**
For students who enter a four-year college seeking a bachelor’s degree for the first time, only 39% of them graduate within four years of enrolling, according to 2014 data from the National Center of Education Statistics. Among students from low-income households, that graduation rate is only 20%, while 42% of high-income students graduate within four years, according to the Institute for Higher Education Policy. About 60% of students graduate within six years of starting at a four-year college.

Still, in the last 20 years, more than 31 million students started at an institution of higher education and left before earning a degree or certificate, according to a 2014 report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

“I think probably too few people take the time to graduation into account, and students and families should absolutely be asking colleges how many of their graduates graduate in four years, versus five years, versus six,” said Debbie Cochrane, research director The Institute for College Access and Success, a nonprofit that operates the Project on Student Debt. “They should definitely use that information in how they’re going to finance their education.”

That’s generally not a simple math problem. Even if you’ve worked out the details of your intended major and its course load, you may not know how much tuition will cost each year of your education, as schools re-evaluate what they’ll charge students on a yearly basis, as part of making a budget for the entire university. Unless, however, you go to a school that locks in tuition rates — where if your first year is, say, $20,000, that’s how much it will be each of the next three years, regardless of what the college decides to charge future incoming students. Otherwise, tuition rates have increased about 5% annually for the past 10 years, so you can use that as a guideline when calculating future costs.

There are also many other unknowns: Will your financial aid situation change from year to year? Will you be able to handle a course load that allows you to graduate on a specific timeline? What would you do if tuition increased more than you planned for? How will you cover unexpected costs?

The answers to these questions could significantly impact your financial situation after college. If you end up borrowing more than you can afford to pay back, and fall behind, it could ultimately affect your credit standing. This, in turn, could impact your ability to do things like rent your own apartment, get a credit card, buy a car or get a mortgage. (You can see how your student loans are impacting your credit by getting your free credit report summary from Credit.com.)

**How to Graduate Without Paying More Than Expected**
In the last few years, it has become easier to estimate total college costs. Schools are now required to put a net-price calculator on their websites, which estimate a student’s eligibility for financial aid and all expenses associated with getting a degree at that institution, not just tuition and fees.

Additionally, the Department of Education released its Financial Aid Shopping Sheet in 2012 and asked colleges and universities to adopt the sheet as a universal template for financial aid award letters – and as of December 2013, the ED said more than 1,950 schools have adopted the shopping sheet.

Why are those letters so important? They represent the first time students and families see customized college costs, rather than just estimates. However, it’s still not an entirely straightforward process. Because each school does award letters differently, it can make comparing them a challenge.

“Some award letters are clearer than others,” Cochrane said. “Some will only put tuition, some will put net cost, some will separate grants and loans, others will bundle them together, making it hard to figure out how much needs to be repaid.”
Even with improvements, figuring out how much school will cost, how likely you are to finish within a certain timeline, and how much your monthly student loan payments will be requires a lot of research, planning and shopping around for the best education.

Cooper said looking at graduation rates and career resources at a college is crucial to choosing a school that will be affordable in the long run.

“We have to make sure that we’re approaching this from a consumer standpoint, from a wise investment standpoint,” Cooper said. “The government has set up a number of student loan repayment plans, but honestly, graduation rates are more important, because if you don’t graduate, you’re not going to get that job. … It’s good to make sure that the institution not only prepares you for your first job but also prepares you for a lifelong career path.”