More intern troubles in Missouri call for tighter rules

NO MU MENTION

Fresh allegations that college interns may have been mistreated while working in the Missouri Capitol demand a reassessment of the legislative internship program and the conduct of people representing the Missouri General Assembly.

The latest reports involve the office of Sen. Paul LeVota, a Democrat from Independence. They follow by just days the resignation of House Speaker John Diehl after he admitted to an inappropriate texting relationship with a 19-year-old female intern from Missouri Southern State University.

Two interns from the University of Central Missouri who were assigned to LeVota’s office ended their internships after six weeks.

LeVota said in a statement he was told the interns, a man and a woman, were needed for a different assignment, and he was never notified of any problems.

But the university began an investigation, according to news reports. The Missouri Senate is also investigating.
It is unclear what is being reviewed, and which of a few people who are frequently in LeVota’s office might have been involved.

Legislative leaders must work with universities to set clear rules for making internships safe and professional.

For some lawmakers, that should involve an assessment of who is permitted to use their offices and for what purposes.

It’s unfortunate such steps are necessary. Elected officials should know what sort of behavior is appropriate when dealing with young adults. But obviously the rules need to be more clear.

THE KANSAS CITY STAR.

Questions swirl about university’s responsibilities in Missouri speaker-intern scandal

NO MU MENTION

By JASON HANCOCK and MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS

About halfway through the spring legislative session, rumors about a Capitol intern from Missouri Southern State University engaging in a relationship with a state lawmaker made their way to the school’s Joplin campus.

Although details were hard to come by, the chairman of the school’s governing board said he was told worries grew strong enough that the university cut the internship short for the college freshman and three other students in the program.

Still, the university has not opened a case under a federal law intended to protect college students from harassment.

Missouri Southern board of governors chairman James Fleischaker defended the university, saying facts surfaced slowly and sometimes in muddled fashion. He said Missouri Southern president Alan Marble acted appropriately by pulling the interns from the Capitol and back to Joplin.

“I think (Marble) said, ‘I’m not going to wait to find out what the full story is,’” Fleischaker said. “On his direction, he had (the interns) brought home. I know the university directed that all be brought home.”
School administrators knew something was wrong, Fleischaker said, but the details didn’t come into focus until May 13, when “we read them in The Star.”

That day, it was revealed that House Speaker John Diehl had been exchanging sexually suggestive text messages with Katie Graham, a 19-year-old Missouri Southern freshman who was interning in the House.

A day after the story was published, Diehl said he would resign from the legislature.

Since that news broke, questions have swirled about whether the university did everything required by federal law.

Universities around the nation are facing heightened scrutiny over how they handle enforcement of federal Title IX laws, which protect students in federally funded education programs from harassment and discrimination based on gender.

At Missouri Southern, school spokeswoman Cassie Mathes issued a written statement Friday.

“The university is investigating issues surrounding text messages revealed to MSSU for the first time in the Kansas City Star report,” the statement said. “MSSU previously addressed the decision to reassign interns in April and cannot further comment on student-related issues, potential or specific investigations.”

Peter Lake, professor of law and Title IX coordinator at Stetson University in Florida, said the situation in Missouri demonstrates just how complicated such issues can become.

Federal law, Lake said, is designed to deal with unwelcome behavior, such as sexual assault or harassment. In situations like Missouri’s where the relationship appears to be consensual, things become unclear.

“Something that is welcome would not necessarily be a Title IX issue on its face,” he said.

Title IX investigations don’t have to result in punishment or disciplinary action, Lake said. That’s especially true when one of the people involved doesn’t fall under the jurisdiction of the school, such as Diehl.

In such cases, he said, investigations can lead to policy changes to better protect students or provide assistance to victims.

Missouri Southern’s general counsel has looked into the matter, Fleischaker said, and has talked with each of the interns. Graham initially denied any relationship took place, he said, and has since hired an attorney. Graham’s attorney did not respond to a request for comment.

Fleischaker said he was unsure if the school was automatically required to launch a Title IX investigation based on what it learned about the intern and Diehl.
“If the student does not want to pursue the investigation, we can’t force them to,” he said. “The university has the obligation to look into this, but how far is the university (supposed) to pursue it? It is very murky.”

But Title IX experts said that even if it is determined the relationship was consensual, an investigation of some sort must still take place.

“It happens all the time that people are involved in something that potentially is Title IX related and they don’t want to proceed,” Lake said. “If there are Title IX issues, there are circumstances when a school should proceed even if the student says they don’t want to go forward.”

Wendy Murphy, an adjunct professor at the New England School of Law and an attorney specializing in cases involving sexual violence, said the difference in power and authority between the speaker of the House and an intern should throw the idea that it was consensual out the window.

“Because (Diehl) was in a position of authority over this intern, the school should go out of its way to investigate this fully,” Murphy said. “They need to be clear that this is unacceptable and need to send that message.”

Murphy said she is not trying to absolve the woman involved from any responsibility, but “when you’re that young and in that position, you are easily exploitable. And you may not even know you are being exploited.”

Meanwhile, the University of Central Missouri and the Missouri Senate are conducting a Title IX investigation into the departure of a pair of interns who worked in the office of Sen. Paul LeVota, an Independence Democrat. The focus of that investigation is unclear because neither the university nor Senate administrators would comment publicly.

Adam Crumbliss, chief clerk of the Missouri House, said he could neither confirm nor deny any investigation has taken place into Diehl’s relationship with an intern.

But as one of his first acts as the newly elected speaker of the Missouri House, Rep. Todd Richardson has appointed Rep. Kevin Engler to review House intern policies.

“Sexual activity is inappropriate for any business setting, any professional setting, and we just need to make sure we put up some safeguards,” Engler, a Farmington Republican, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. “We can’t stop stupidity, but we can sure put some codes of conduct in there.”

A handbook given out to House interns and the chamber’s sexual harassment policy have no provisions dealing with fraternization. Additionally, the House has no authority over qualifications for internships or placement of interns in legislative offices. Those decisions are left up to individual universities.
Fleischaker said the university’s board of governors will look at possible policy changes to prevent something like this from happening again. Mathes confirmed the school is “looking for ways to improve” its internship program.

Fleischaker said, “We don’t want to get rid of the program because of one incident.”

### The Future of Zoning Downtown

In the fall of 2014, the University of Missouri announced it had broken its enrollment record: 35,441 students now attend the university, which is 30 percent of Columbia’s population and a 31 percent increase in enrollment over the past decade.

In 1950, Columbia’s population was 31,774: almost 4,000 fewer people than MU now enrolls. During that decade, the city configured its zoning ordinances to guide the growth of a blossoming college town. MU enrollment had risen sharply with the adoption of the GI Bill and a shift toward affordability in public universities. For a time after World War II, college towns flourished, and Columbia was no exception.

In this 1950s zoning, the area bounded by Elm, Walnut, Providence and Hitt was classified as C-2: the central business district. The ordinances were tailored to create a vibrant downtown, one that was close to campus and accessible for all the new students.

Sixty years later, the C-2 zoning has become a point of contention in the debate about Columbia’s continued growth. After MU responded to funding slashes by pumping up enrollment in the mid-2000s, downtown has been flooded with development. Student housing complexes have fixed themselves among retail shops and restaurants, and they have easily found tenants willing to pay to live in The District. A 2014 report from the Columbia Vision Commission listed the downtown vacancy rate as 5 percent, which seems microscopic compared to the 25 percent the report listed for downtown in 2003, before MU began more aggressive recruiting efforts.

The city is now in the process of bringing downtown zoning up to date. Opinions are mixed. All this growth has inflamed passions and concerns from various perspectives. Some say the proposal is too flexible; others say it’s too rigid. Many aren’t really sure what effect the new ordinances would have. Zoning can be complicated.

Last fall, a failed petition gathered 5,400 signatures wanting to halt development of the District Flats, a 259-bed student housing complex being constructed on Locust Street. More recently, the
impending demolition of Shakespeare’s Pizza spurred a proposed moratorium that would have halted any demolition downtown for six months. The proposal failed in City Council by a vote of 5-2. A similar proposal, intended to stop demolition of the Niedermeyer apartment building, the oldest building in Columbia, failed in 2013; that building was only saved from demolition when an MU math professor, moved by protests, purchased the property. Shakespeare’s purists had no such luck.

This summer, the city will draft ordinances based on suggestions from a consulting firm, Clarion Associates, and gather public comments about the new zoning, all to answer the hottest question around: What should we do about downtown?

The gist

The proposal currently on the table will replace C-2 with M-DT, standing for mixed-use downtown. It’s a form-based code, which puts emphasis on the type of street a building is located on rather than the current use-based code. “It’s a little bit of a different code,” says Tim Teddy, director of community development. “It’s more generalized.”

Under the proposed ordinances, any new residential development would have to provide parking. The area stretching from Locust to Walnut between 10th and Sixth would have a 10-story maximum height — the same number as Columbia’s tallest building, the Tiger Hotel. Outside of the 10-story area, there would be a six-story maximum. Conservation is a major theme of the plan, according to Teddy, and new development would have to be environment friendly.

The proposal, he says, “will enforce a more compatible transition” concerning new development’s congruency with existing structures.

The city has already adopted interim zoning based on parts of the proposal, including a two-story minimum height, minimum parking requirements and an extra layer of City Council review for buildings taller than 120 feet.

“I think people have a lot to say about it,” Teddy says. “But I think there’s been a general agreement that our ordinances need some work. It’s been a need that’s been postponed over the years, and these things tend to fossilize with time.”

The grabbing

“I’ll just be really blunt,” says John John. “There is no need for a new zoning ordinance. It’s a knee-jerk reaction from people who want more control over something that they really shouldn’t have more control over.”

John is a local real estate agent who acts as a development intermediary. He finds land for developers to build on, and he sells land for people who want it developed. After some time away from the city, John moved back to Columbia in 1990 and sat on City Council from 1999 to 2004, serving the Sixth Ward. He’s alarmed by the new ordinances — and he thinks property owners should be, too.
“It is a taking of value,” he says. “If I could sell Bengals to someone who wanted to put up a 40-story building and pay me $5 million for my half block, and if now I can’t do that, and the only person willing to buy from me is only going to pay me $3 million, then I just lost $2 million.”

John worries about a ripple effect this potential loss, and other limits on development, could bring. If developers are limited in their proposals, he says, they have two options: don’t build, or increase rent to make up for lost profit. The rent increase, in turn, would limit how many people, especially students, are able to live downtown, which would create a demand surplus, which could push rent up even further.

John estimates there is 3,000-bed deficit in student housing right now, and that number could increase if MU fulfills promises to expand further.

“Some people say, ‘Oh, I don’t go downtown anymore because of all the students,’” John says. “I’m sorry, but you haven’t been going downtown for the last 40 years. That’s why it died in the ’90s. This is a fear of the unknown combined with a false memory of the past.”

John does make some concessions. He says the zoning codes are probably out of date and don’t account for things such as car transportation. Still, he’s no less critical of City Council’s move to revamp the ordinances.

“It’s a disease of the elected,” he says. “You get asked to control things. You’re put in charge, and people come to you and say, ‘I want you to stop them from doing this.’”

The growth

Clarion Associates began working on Columbia’s new zoning in January of 2014, having been commissioned by the city for $150,000. During the process, Clarion, partner firm Ferrell Madden and the city have tried to maintain an open dialogue with the public, inviting people to suggest changes and see what’s being changed.

Caleb Colbert has been among the most dedicated followers of this process. When he was interviewed for this article, he had two three-ring binders filled with various documents related to new zoning open on his desk, along with a stapled packet from the latest meeting and several zoning-related tabs open on his computer.

Colbert is a lawyer with Brown Willbrand, a firm located on Broadway, near City Hall. One of his specialties is housing development; he’s currently getting approval for a new complex to be built near the Stadium Boulevard and Highway 63 interchange. He graduated from MU in 2007 and completed law school there in 2010. Colbert is still sympathetic to students, especially students needing a place to live and even more so if they’re looking to live downtown.

“At the end of the day, students are just consumers,” he says. “Students patronize a lot of the businesses downtown. A lot of those businesses make pretty good money on weekend nights, and that allows us business folks to eat lunch there Monday through Friday.”
Colbert pulls out a map of the proposed M-DT area, color-coded to show which new rules apply to what area. He cites a criticism he’s heard about the breadth of the proposed ordinances, including the interim two-story minimum that’s already in effect. “So now you’re going to say that Jiffy Lube and Plaza Tire have to have two stories?” he asks. “You just can’t apply the same rules to the Jiffy Lubes of the world as you can to all the things on Ninth and Cherry.”

Colbert’s objections with the proposed ordinances boil down to Columbia’s diversity. Different businesses have different needs, and different people have different needs. As he sees it, a strong downtown population translates to more business revenue, which means businesses can develop or not develop based on their individual needs rather than conforming to a new zoning code.

Predictably, Colbert doesn’t buy the notion of a student housing bubble burst, a situation where the flood of development overshoots the demand for downtown housing.

“I don’t think an influx of students are going to change the way downtown operates,” he says. “It’s all just supply and demand. You could see students that currently live in duplexes move downtown, which gives opportunities for affordable housing in the duplexes to lower-income folks. You’ll never convince me that more housing is bad for Columbia, considering the population growth.”

**The good problem**

The Shakespeare’s building was purchased by McAlester Park LLC, which is jointly owned by Columbia’s Rader and Odle families. The Odles operate Trittenbach Development, which built the Brookside student apartment complexes downtown.

Shakespeare’s will temporarily relocate while its building is demolished and rebuilt; once the new site is completed, the pizzeria will return. They’ve promised the original atmosphere of the restaurant will be recreated, down to the last detail, and employees have documented the interior with extensive photography.

For many Columbians, Shakespeare’s is a bitter casualty in the continuing development boom. After the April 1 announcement, the restaurant had to deny claims that it was a cruel April Fools’ Day prank. Representatives from Trittenbach didn’t respond to requests for comment. First Ward Councilman Clyde Ruffin, who was elected in April, says it’s too early for him to comment on the zoning, as he is still gathering opinions from his constituents.

Colbert says he’s waiting to see a final draft before “digging in our heels.” He acknowledges that zoning is a delicate issue; it involves political ideologies, but it also involves the identity of the city and whether to preserve a small mid-Missouri town or embrace bigger city growth. John commissioned the MU College of Business to conduct a projection report that estimated Columbia would be at 200,000 residents in 25 years.

“We have a fantastic problem on our hands,” Colbert says. “People want to live here. People want to invest here. No matter what happens with the code, no matter what happens with the
projects, Columbia is still going to be a great place to live, and people are still going to want to come here.”

Teddy says they hope to have new ordinances in effect by the end of the year, and the time has come to address the aging zoning ordinances. “Ultimately,” he says, “we’ll have to deal with a changing downtown.”

A Look Into Crime Downtown

It was about 1:30 a.m. Millie Lovett, then director of operations at The Blue Note, was about to lock up the venue for the night. For most of her six years working at The Blue Note, she’d leave around 2 or 3 a.m., but that night’s show ended earlier than usual, around 11 p.m. With all the other employees gone by midnight, Lovett had time to wrap up some last-minute work before heading out.

“I always tried to park my Jeep right in front of doors so it was only about 10 feet away when I’d leave,” she says. With her overstuffed work bag tucked behind her, her car keys in her right pocket, a small pocket knife she often used to open boxes in her left pocket and her car only feet away, Lovett locked the three front doors and walked by to check each one, one last time, when she heard people talking loudly behind her. As she turned to walk to her car, they crossed the street toward her and asked for a light.

“I was already smoking a cigarette, so I couldn’t really say no,” she says. But as he got closer, Lovett began to get nervous. “I could tell they were pretty intoxicated.” She passed him the light. The larger man was in front of her, one man was between her and her vehicle, and the third man walked behind her and placed his hands on her shoulders. Then the man in front grabbed her arm, and they began steering her toward the alley between The Blue Note and Coffee Zone. Lovett continued to resist and talk back when she remembered her pocketknife. She opened it in her pocket, cutting her leg in the process, and pulled it out.

“That’s when I started acting crazy,” Lovett says. She waved her knife in the air and began alternating between speaking gibberish and screaming at the top of her lungs. “I just went ballistic.”

The men called her crazy and ran off in three different directions.
“I ran to my Jeep, locked the doors and cried until I could drive,” Lovett says. As she headed home, she heard police sirens south of Broadway. When she arrived home, she posted about her ordeal on Facebook.

“The next day, the chief of police called my cell,” Lovett says. So she told him the story, and he told her that officers would stop by The Blue Note later that evening to take a statement. “And he asked me why I didn’t call the police. But I knew they were busy, and I just wanted to get the hell out of there.”

On the rise?

From 2010 to 2014, calls for service and reports taken by the Columbia Police Department in beat 70D, which basically aligns with the boundaries of downtown Columbia, have increased by 31 percent, according to Columbia Police Department statistics.

Many of the crimes that have seen the most statistically significant increases include vandalism (up 97 percent between 2010 and 2014), assistance to citizens (120 percent), peace disturbances (107 percent), parking violations (95 percent) and checking on suspicious persons or activities (134 percent and 152 percent, respectively).

“You see certain things stay very stable, like assaults and burglaries,” says Sgt. Chad Gooch, supervisor of the CPD’s downtown unit. Other things, like shots fired, are statistically immaterial. In 2010, there were no incidents of shots fired, then four in 2011, three in 2012, four in 2013 and one in 2014 in beat 70D, for a 100 percent increase over five years.

Perception versus reality

To better serve residents and business owners downtown, CPD and the Downtown Community Improvement District Board, also known as Downtown CID and The District, are working to conduct a survey of crime perceptions downtown. Gooch, who has been in his role since August 2014, says it’s something that has worked well for his predecessors.

“I think that’s how I’m going to be judged as far as the success of our unit: by perception,” he says. “any crimes that occur downtown are going to be perceived so much differently than somewhere else in Columbia.

Downtown receives more attention; more people have a vested interest in it.”
Skip Walther, an attorney at Walther Antel & Stamper downtown and member of the Downtown CID board, agrees.

“If [anything] occurs downtown, people develop a fear about coming downtown, whether that’s rational or not,” he says. Although Walther can’t recall the last time he’s been downtown after 10 p.m., he’s worked downtown since 1979.

“Crime downtown isn’t the problem that a lot of people think it is,” he says.
Adam Dushoff, co-owner of restaurants Addison’s and Sophia’s, has been on the Downtown CID board for more than six years.

“I think it’s funny how in a town of little more than 100,000 people, there are actual geographic distinctions of where people would and would not go,” he says. Dushoff says he’s never felt unsafe downtown. although he says he’s “been out of the business of being downtown at 2 a.m.” for almost a decade, he hasn’t heard of any late-night issues from his employees at Addison’s, which is located downtown at 709 Cherry St. “But it’s not like I walk down dark alleys when I am downtown.”

Lovett offers a different perspective of safety perceptions downtown. Some people often have to walk down dark alleys; workers must ensure doors are locked and take out the trash. She thinks much of the perception is in response to high-profile people, like her, posting about their experiences downtown. Her post to Facebook after her incident garnered nearly 200 comments. She also cites a couple friends who have posted similar experiences to social media.

“But people have to realize that my thing happened at almost 2 a.m.,” she says. “I had people acting like they were afraid to go downtown for dinner at 7 p.m.”

“It’s like Mom always said: The crazy stuff happens after 1 a.m.,” she continues. “The after hours are where it gets hairy.”

Lovett says what she’s seen the most during the past two years is an increase of people lingering on the streets after bars close. She says even if only a small number of those people are looking for mischief, there are so many intoxicated people that are “easy prey for the small percent who want to do people harm.”

But Lovett emphatically says she doesn’t want people to think downtown is unsafe for them.

“Taking out the trash in a dark alley at 3 a.m. is very different from walking down Broadway at 9 p.m.,” she says. “I will always live and work in downtown Columbia.”

Ultimately, the response to various perceptions of crime downtown will be based on the upcoming Downtown CID/CPD survey.

“We have over 400 businesses, so to try to speak for them would be really difficult because every one of them will have a different perception,” says Katie Essing, executive director of the Downtown CID. She hopes whatever appears in the news around the time people take the survey doesn’t color the results. “Surveys can often get swayed by recent news, so then that becomes the main topic of conversation.

“It all depends on what happens to individuals,” she continues. “If something makes them feel unsafe, and they tell their friends, ‘Hey, you shouldn’t go there,’ that is very harmful for an economy, so we want to make sure that people feel safe in any situation downtown.”

**Why can’t we all agree?**
One topic everyone seems to agree on is that day-time and nighttime downtown are very different, and that has changed significantly during the past 50 or so years.

When Walther was a kid, he says downtown was the only retail area in Columbia. With the addition of Broadway Shopping Center, Parkade Plaza, Crossroads and the Columbia Mall, that all changed.

“For a period of time, Columbia was just offices and banks, with a few restaurants,” he says. “You didn’t have a lot of activity at night, which is when most criminal activity occurs.”

Now, he says, Columbia has seen a resurgence of retail and entertainment business, as well as an ever-increasing student population.

“You have more people coming downtown, more people living downtown and a lot more activity after 10 p.m., and criminal activity is more likely to occur in those later hours,” he says.

Gooch says there’s also a difference in perception of safety based on the time of day someone tends to visit downtown.

“The perception of safety may be different for those heading to lunch downtown and those coming here to go out to the bar,” he says.

Although most of the members of the Downtown CID board are more likely to see the aftermath than the storm — for the most part, they operate daytime businesses — Mike McClung, who owns Tonic and Quinton’s, also sits on the board to represent those late-night concerns. The board also gathers a lot of information from police officers during board meetings and tries to keep all channels of communication open.

“The leftovers definitely get people’s attention,” Walther says. “You can just imagine what’s left on the street after a loud night. It’s a byproduct of an awful lot of younger adults occupying downtown.”

“We have two very different and healthy economies that need to coexist,” Essing says, “and there’s a vastly different audience of customers who are here during the day than are here at night.”

The priorities between these two groups are also different. One main issue is vandalism, which increased by 55 percent between 2013 and 2014. Gooch expects the increase to be even more pronounced in 2015, as most of the vandalism picked up at the end of 2014.

Removing graffiti is a responsibility that often falls to business owners and can take a significant amount of time and effort to remove. at one point, downtown was getting hit with graffiti at several locations every couple of days.

“The problem with graffiti,” Walther says, “is that if it’s allowed to remain in place, some people think it emboldens the graffiti artist to expand on their work.”
CPD has also begun a bike and pedestrian safety initiative, as well as an initiative to improve lighting in some of downtown’s darkest alleys.

Essing took a walk with CPD officers to review and prioritize alleys and try to work with building owners to install LED lights.

“One of the biggest deterrents of crime is light,” Essing says.

Lovett has an even larger initiative. She would like to see more police officers in the downtown unit.

Several years ago, Lovett says she would often ask for a police escort to her car when she felt unsafe.

“No, I don’t want to do that because I know they’re so busy with other issues,” she says. “The police are doing their jobs. They’re just understaffed.”

So she often walks to her car alone. She also instigated an informal escort service from The Blue Note and would appreciate some sort of escort option for her and others who leave work after midnight or a downtown safety ambassador program of some kind.

**Adding officers**

In November 2014, Columbia’s Proposition 1 failed at the polls. The proposition, which called for a 30-cent increase of the city’s property tax levy, would have generated an estimated $6 million per year to hire, train and equip additional public safety personnel, including police officers.

“I think people were going through a rather difficult period in municipal government where there was a vocal group of people who expressed dissatisfaction and mistrust with City Hall,” Walther says. “I think to some degree, that sentiment spilled over into [that] vote.”

Walther says the CPD staffing issue doesn’t stop with downtown, and Gooch agrees.

“Manpower is our biggest concern, and we’re trying to do better on that by offering overtime and hopefully expanding our unit,” Gooch says, “but that’s needed department-wide.”

The downtown unit has six officers, one during the day, Gooch as supervisor and four at night. The beat has had an opening for a few months, though it’s currently working to incorporate a new officer.

“Meanwhile, it’s getting harder and harder to tell the difference between a Saturday night and a Wednesday night,” Gooch says.

James Kanne is the owner/operator of 9th Street Public House, and he’s lived in Columbia for more than a decade. On April 28, 2015, Kanne says he heard shots fired right outside his
window. He lives across the street from The Blue Note, where a crowd had gathered after a show.

“It was a Tuesday, but now, there’s something going on every night of the week,” he says. “Downtown is also our entertainment district, so there are a lot of people concentrated in one area at a time when tensions are already higher, but that’s the case in any city.”

He says he began hearing people first talk about downtown being unsafe eight years ago. He says now, people have a much better grasp.

“We understand now that, yeah, crime is going to increase because we’re becoming a bigger city,” Kanne says. “It’s a growing pain.”

Gooch says it makes sense that an increase in calls for service has correlated with an increase in population, and Dushoff agrees.

“For so many years, we tried to figure out ways to increase density downtown; every study said we needed that,” Dushoff says, “but we never really considered what we were going to do, police-wise, if we did get that density.

“As that population increases, it’s completely reasonable for more officers to be added to that force,” he adds.

With more officers, Gooch says community policing, where officers attempt to be more proactive and a part of the community rather than just reactive, would be possible.

But it’s also important for businesses to communicate even the little things to the police so they can make informed decisions about their efforts, Dushoff says. To provide an outlet for this, the police are present at every monthly Downtown CID board meeting to provide an update on trends. “And we help pass information between [the businesses] and the police,” Essing says.

But downtown officers face another issue: turnover.

“[Downtown] is a pretty intense assignment,” Gooch says. “Just because of the density of the population and the likelihood of in-progress calls, it’s pretty active. It takes a lot of work and sacrifice, a lot of weekends and late nights.”

When Gooch became supervisor of the downtown unit in August, nearly all the downtown officers also rotated. The unit also handles some of the difficulties of dealing with intoxicated people.

“A good portion of the late-night population downtown is students, and they’re going through a learning process of what’s appropriate, what’s allowed, and it cycles every four years, so we’re constantly educating these people,” he says.

Moving forward
To meet the ever-changing needs of a rapidly evolving downtown landscape, the Downtown CID has brought in a consulting firm, RHI (Responsible Hospitality Institute), to evaluate downtown this summer and recommend infrastructure improvements to initiate prior to students’ return in the fall.

The board has selected a small Transformation Team, including Lovett, to get started with the first round of the evaluation.

The group went out on the Thursday night before the University of Missouri’s Reading Day, a night well known for partying, with a checklist of things to look for, such as police activity, sidewalk congestion, dimly lit passageways, security cameras and disruptive behavior, among others. In June, each member of the team will be asked to select 10 or 12 people for roundtable discussions, which will continue through July.

Essing says safety, along with transportation, noise and other concerns, will certainly come up during those conversations. She appreciates the idea of a late-night security escort service, creating a public safety ambassador program downtown and other unique measures to improve safety, and she’s sure these ideas will be discussed in the upcoming roundtable discussions.

In August, the Downtown CID and RHI consultants will put together action steps and recommendations to keep downtown a safe and attractive place to live and work.

“It takes community involvement to create a safe city: volunteer work, paying attention, looking out for your neighbor,” Kanne says. “It isn’t just a police job; it’s the whole city’s job.”

Plant wisdom could vanish as botany studies drop sharply

MOUNT IDA - The teeming plant world could become a virtual mystery in the coming decades as college students increasingly shy away from studying botany and universities across the U.S. shutter their long-standing herbaria.

Since 1988, the number of research universities offering botany degrees has dropped by half, according to National Science Foundation research funding statistics. And the National Center for Education Statistics reports that fewer than 400 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral botany degrees were awarded in 2012. Educators say that's because students are being pushed into more modern, technology-related majors.

Current botanists fear that will lead to a dearth of people able to teach about, identify and use plants, which could harm conservation efforts and even the ability to develop alternate fuels and
important medicines. At the same time, universities and states struggling under budget cuts are closing the sometimes-expensive task of maintaining herbarium collections of plant species that botanists can reference or use for genetic material.

"We aren't going to understand what we have in the world. By some estimates only 20 percent of the (plant and animal) species in the world have been identified," said Joe Miller, a program officer at the National Science Foundation's Division of Environmental Biology.

In a clearing on the side of a rural Arkansas highway, about a dozen researchers scoured the rocky glade for a threatened annual called the Missouri bladderpod, which blooms with clusters of small yellow flowers. Only 75 populations of the threatened species exist in the world, and all are close enough to urban centers to be in danger, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission botanist Theo Witsell said.

The 39-year-old, carrying a small shovel and a handful of large plastic bags, plucked a few purple flowering plants from the ground by the root.

"I think one of the things that's happening in this field of study is there aren't a lot of open jobs," Witsell said. "But as people get older and they retire, you then have fewer people who are qualified for those jobs."

Witsell hopes to conserve some of the glades, where he said scientists are still finding new species of plants. That's where botanists' skills are irreplaceable, Miller said.

"If we are able to name a plant, then we understand its biology," Miller said. "If we understand its biology, then we can use the comparative method to understand and predict how it could be used."

For example, Quinine is a malaria treatment that occurs naturally in cinchona trees. He said if botanists identify plants with similar taxonomies that react similarly to their surroundings, plant biologists could do genetic research to find medical uses.

Herbaria are a major reference source for botanists, but increasingly, such repositories are dwindling as several states and universities have closed or consolidated their collections, including the University of Iowa and the University of Nebraska State Museum. Researchers acknowledge the bulky collections of plant specimens that are mounted, dried, dated and tagged with pivotal information can be hard to maintain. They require temperature and moisture control and space for the preparation process.

**The University of Missouri announced May 18 that it would donate its more than 200,000 plant specimens to the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis.**

"The facility on campus that was housing them, it outlived its lifespan," said Jordan Yount, a spokesman for the university's College of Arts and Science. "Regulating the humidity and temperature was critical and getting to be a problem. And we reached a point where we had to
decide, do we spend a lot of money renovating this facility or find another home for the collection."

From his 14th-floor office in downtown Little Rock, Witsell is fighting the trend. After the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville herbarium narrowly escaped closure in 2003 and the University of Arkansas at Little Rock closed its collection a few years later, he decided the commission needed its own.

A handful of commission staff and Witsell have combed the state over the past 12 years to find, collect and preserve more than 70,000 native plant species. The commission's herbarium is now the most actively growing in Arkansas.

"This is the physical record of the plant life of the planet, of this state," he said. "You can't get all of the information from a photograph."

Fewer students study botany, more plant collections closing

By CLAUDIA LAUER

May 25, 2015

MOUNT IDA, Ark. (AP) — The teeming plant world could become a virtual mystery in the coming decades as college students increasingly shy away from studying botany and universities across the U.S. shutter their long-standing herbaria.

Since 1988, the number of research universities offering botany degrees has dropped by half, according to National Science Foundation research funding statistics. And the National Center for Education Statistics reports that fewer than 400 undergraduate, graduate and doctoral botany degrees were awarded in 2012. Educators say that's because students are being pushed into more modern, technology-related majors.

Current botanists fear that will lead to a dearth of people able to teach about, identify and use plants, which could harm conservation efforts and even the ability to develop alternate fuels and important medicines. At the same time, universities and states struggling under budget cuts are closing the sometimes-expensive task of maintaining herbaria—collections of plant species that botanists can reference or use for genetic material.
"We aren't going to understand what we have in the world. By some estimates only 20 percent of the (plant and animal) species in the world have been identified," said Joe Miller, a program officer at the National Science Foundation's Division of Environmental Biology.

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College students, rejoice! Report says demand for grads is on the rise

Move over, minimum wage.

It’s a struggle every recent college graduate knows all too well: finding a job. But according to a recent report by the New York Federal Reserve the Class of 2015 may start a new trend.

The report states that the demand for college graduates is on rise after having declined since 2013.

Recent Illinois State University graduates Kristine Kramer and Stephanie Horvat are hopeful that they will have better opportunities in the job market.

“People have been saying in the past how a lot of college graduates aren’t getting jobs in their field or they’re just working minimum wage jobs because there aren’t many opportunities out there,” Horvat says. “So I think it’s good to know that there’s a better potential for us to find a job.”

The New York Federal Reserve report says job openings for recent graduates have been increasing since the summer of 2014.

Kramer says this knowledge is “motivational.”

“Last year, I heard so many people were just so frustrated because the job market was down, and they couldn’t find a job,” Kramer says. “So (hearing this) makes us want to push ourselves more and kind of step outside our comfort zone and apply.”

And this rising demand for college graduates could make students worry a little less while still in college and consider choosing a different field of study.

“That’s the one thing most people talk about – going into college, it’s choosing a major and what the job opportunity will be like when you graduate,” Horvat says.

And post-graduation life can be scary.
Kramer says she’s “kind of in denial” about entering the real world and finding a job. She says her summer has been filled with cover letters and applications.

As for actually finding jobs? Horvat says they’re working on it.

Rose Schmidt is a student at the University of Missouri and a summer 2015 USA TODAY Collegiate Correspondent.

Career Market for Graduates is Growing

Watch story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=ff09f8b7-d99d-41c9-b551-38bd5e3e2734

Turning the iPad into a mini-production studio

Watch story: http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2015/05/25/turning-the-ipad-into-a-mini-production-studio/27695775/

VENICE BEACH, Calif. — The kids in Dave Basulto's high school video class were producing shaky videos with poor sound and lighting. So he decided to invent a rig to fix those ills.
His creation: the iOgrapher, which turns the iPad and iPhone into a mini-production studio, with tools to steady the image and add lighting and sound.

The cases for the iPad and iPhone 6 Plus (which will be out in mid-June) sell for $59.99. They are basically a case that happens to be expandable. Instead of holding an iPad with your bare hands, you get a grip that also can fit into a tripod, and it has slots on top for adding an LED light, which you couldn't really do without it.

He started the company with a Kickstarter that raised $17,000 and got the orders started. With sales of 60,000 units to date, he says:

"Two years later, I'm retired from teaching, and we're about to go into 1000 Best Buy stores."

Even though iPad sales have been declining for the past two years, the majority of his sales are still with the tablet. He hasn't produced anything for Android or Windows Phones yet, but hopes to get to Android next year.

By the time you've dressed up your iPad with a case, lights and a mic, the unit is way bigger than the camera you might have wanted to take with you, but left at home because it was too big.

So what's the advantage of going iOgrapher?

Portability, says Basulto.

"Being able to pull it out, getting it edited right there, the size of everything, how you can get into really awesome, tight places, and you don't have this big, bulky camera."

Plus--it's hip. "It's the trendy, hot thing now," he adds.

Judd Slivka, an assistant professor at the University of Missouri, teaches mobile journalism, and has all his students using iOgrapher units with their iPads.

He likes it because "it takes the entire reporting and publishing process into one single place," he says. "I can shoot, edit and publish from one spot, and get to social (sharing) much quicker."

Basulto likes to shoot video with the Filmic Pro app, which allows additional controls like exposure and focus overrides, and white balance tweaking.

He edits in Adobe's Premiere Clip app, while Slivka prefers Pinnacle Studio.

This is part 3 of our Citizen Journalist series. We'll be coming back with more articles, videos and podcasts on the subject of Mobile Journalism (#MoJo) in the coming weeks. We'll be looking at new ads and movies that are being produced on smartphones, and apps that make it easier to edit videos on mobile devices.
Lincoln University speaker cites authors without attribution

May 25, 2015

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — A motivational speaker used similar or identical phrasing from passages by Mark Twain and poet Berton Braley without attribution during her 2015 commencement speech at Missouri's Lincoln University earlier this month, according to a newspaper report.

Atlanta-based speaker and attorney Patricia Russell-McCloud quoted from or paraphrased at least eight passages previously attributed to authors, poets and others on May 16, the Jefferson City News Tribune (http://bit.ly/1FtuoqS) reported.

Russell-McCloud did not credit others whose work was referenced in her roughly 20-minute speech, for which she received a standing ovation. She also received an honorary degree from the university.

She did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press or the News Tribune.

Lincoln University President Kevin Rome said in an email that the speech "was quite inspirational" and that he doesn't believe the intent was to "deceive" students.

But he also questioned drawing on others' work without sourcing them.

"I believe that credit should be given to the originators of thought as when one writes a piece," Rome said. "Unfortunately, this didn't occur and it's a lesson learned for Lincoln University."

University of Missouri media law professor Sandy Davidson said speakers must attribute parts of their work pulled from other sources or risk committing "a form of intellectual theft." She said that could amount to copyright infringement.

Regardless, Davidson said the audience has the right to know if material used was taken from another source.

"I think people should do what I call 'due diligence,'" she said. "If they've got some words circling around their minds and think that perhaps somebody else said that phrase — somebody famous in particular — they should use due diligence. In this era of the Internet, it's so easy — just Google it."

Unfair Admissions Criteria?

May 26, 2015

By Scott Jaschik

NO MU MENTION

Most colleges are considering applicants' high school disciplinary records, even without formal policies on what role these records should play in admissions decisions, according to a survey conducted by the Center for Community Alternatives.

A draft report accompanying the survey builds on the center's work questioning whether colleges are too quick to rule out qualified applicants because of something they did in their high school years that may be irrelevant to their chances of academic success.

"In the absence of data that show how many students are accepted or rejected once they disclose a disciplinary record, it is not enough for college admissions counselors to offer assurances that a school disciplinary record is not likely to impede admission to college," says the report draft. "Moreover, vague assurances will do little to assuage the fears of students who are the most vulnerable to school suspension -- poor students of color, whose life experiences have subjected them to exclusion in many social domains."

The center's survey of colleges was drafted in conjunction with two groups that represent admissions leaders and encouraged participation in the survey -- the National Association for College Admission Counseling and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. Key findings were:

Almost three-quarters of colleges and universities collect high school disciplinary information (many through the question on the subject included on the Common Application).

Of those that collect the information, 89 percent report that they use the information in admissions decisions.

Of the colleges that collect the information, only 25 percent have formal, written policies on how to use the information.

Only 30 percent of colleges have trained their admissions staff to interpret disciplinary violation findings.
Rejection isn't the only possible outcome of colleges overreacting to high school disciplinary violations, the report says. In some cases, colleges are admitting applicants but based on high school records barring them from campus housing.

The center's report doesn't rule out the possibility that there are some cases where a past record may be relevant to a college's decisions. But the report argues that, in many cases, this record shouldn't be used -- and that any use requires, in fairness to applicants, that colleges have clear policies and train staff members on how to use them.

The issue of whether high school disciplinary infractions are relevant to college admissions has long challenged both high schools and colleges. Many fear that a minor misdeed of a high school freshman could unreasonably hurt an applicant. But many also worry that someone who might pose a danger to fellow students could be admitted without the college knowing the risks.

A related debate is whether colleges should ask about and consider applicants' criminal backgrounds. Students at Princeton University last year urged the institution (without success) to stop asking about applicants' criminal past, arguing that the criminal justice system is unfair to many minority, low-income people, such that a conviction may not mean anything.

New York University on Saturday announced a change in its admissions policies that reflects some of the issues raised by the new report on disciplinary records. NYU is a Common Application institution that thus obtains information about applicants' criminal and disciplinary pasts. With regard to criminal convictions, NYU will now do a first round of evaluations without knowledge of whether applicants checked the box indicating a criminal record.

But before an offer of admission is extended, a second review will take place in which the information will be shared with an admissions team "specially trained" on how to evaluate such information, including the potential of bias in various parts of the process. Previously this information was available to admissions officers throughout the process, as is the norm at many institutions.

A statement from MJ Knoll-Finn, vice president of enrollment management at NYU, spoke of trying to "strike a balance" on the issue.

"Colleges and universities are places that believe in the power of learning to change lives, and that believe in second chances, especially for those who may have made mistakes at a young age," Knoll-Finn said. "And we are aware of the concerns being raised on a national level about the sometimes disparate impact of the criminal justice system. But the members of our community and the parents of our students also have a reasonable expectation that the university will do all it can to provide a safe learning environment for our students."

The center's report -- which urges colleges to stop asking about high school disciplinary records -- notes that these records may well cover infractions that aren't close to criminal.

An editorial in The New York Times endorsed the report's recommendations both that colleges stop considering the high school records and that high schools stop turning over the information. "The notion of penalizing college applicants for minor misbehavior when they were 14 or 15, when a child’s impulse control is notoriously weak, is unfair on its face," says the editorial.

But Todd Rinehart, associate vice chancellor and director of admission at the University of Denver, and chair of the NACAC Admission Practices Committee, said via email that he shared the center's concerns
about the potential for inappropriate use by admissions officers of high school disciplinary records. But
he questioned whether this is happening -- and whether colleges can't determine when the information
matters.
"Colleges and universities are using information on discipline in a very thoughtful and careful manner,
considering the severity of a behavior, patterns of behavior, when the incident occurred, and within the
overall context of many other factors. Admission committees aren’t denying students access to higher
education, but they have the prerogative to determine who is the best match for their respective
institutions," he said.

He said that while there are issues associated with evaluating high school disciplinary infractions, "the
solution isn’t to put our heads in the sand, ignoring personal qualities and characteristics that may be
telling us a student isn’t ready for college, but rather to continue examining the systemic barriers that
exist in our secondary and postsecondary institutions and to identify paths for students to enter college
at a later date, when personal and academic abilities match the expectations and rigor of a particular
school."

Michael V. Reilly, executive director of AACRAO, said via email that the association has not taken a
position on the use of high school disciplinary decisions in college admissions. But he said that he was
personally sympathetic to many of the points made in the report.

"We have raised similar concerns about racial disparities in both high school and juvenile justice systems
as well as the fact that colleges and universities have implemented these practices without developing
policies for their use," Reilly said. "There does not appear to be evidence that screening students via
their disciplinary records has made campuses safer. As a former admissions director I don't know that I
had the expertise to be able to distinguish between a real threat to the community and a young person
who was caught in an unfair system and who might benefit the most from a college education. My
advice to campuses who are collecting this information is to read this report and ask whether their
practice is appropriate given the many inconsistencies in the high school justice system."
So there’s some excitement being generated this month with respect to the OECD’s Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO). Roughly speaking, AHELO is the higher education equivalent of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), or the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). It consists of a general test of critical thinking skills (based on the Collegiate Learning Assessment), plus a couple of subject-matter tests that test competencies in specific disciplines. AHELO completed its pilot phase a couple of years ago, and OECD is now looking to move this to a full-blown regular survey.

Not everyone is keen on this. In fact, OECD appears to moving ahead with this despite extremely tepid support among OECD education ministers, which is somewhat unusual. Critics make a number of points against AHELO, which mostly boil down to: a) it’s too expensive, and it’s taking resources away from other more important OECD efforts in higher education; b) low-stakes testing generally is of dubious value; and, c) intrinsically, trying to measure student outcomes internationally is invalid because curricula vary so much from place to place.

The critics have half a point. It’s quite true that AHELO is expensive and is crowding-out other OECD activities and it’s not entirely clear why OECD is burning this much political capital on a project with so little ministerial support. While there is real benefit to outcomes measurement, there are also benefits to other kinds of work the OECD could do as well. It’s not just the costs – it’s the opportunity costs as well.

The criticism with respect to low-stakes testing (basically, students won’t try very hard at tests that don’t count towards a grade and so scores on such tests are not a valid means of measuring competence) has some force to it. On the other hand, if the purpose of the tests is to compare students in place X with those in place Y, that’s really only a valid critique if you think some students are not affected by the low-stakes nature of the testing. Otherwise it’s an equal handicap to all students and thus shouldn’t affect the comparisons. After all, PISA and PIAAC have both become huge successes, helping to inform policy around the world, despite the fact that they are equally “low-stakes”. And as for the different curricula: that’s the point. Part of what government wants to know is whether or not what is being taught in universities is bringing students up to international standards of competency. One could of course quibble with the notion of international standards of competency in some fields, but that’s a different issue.

But what’s most notable about the charge against AHELO are the people who are against it. In the main, it’s associations of universities in rich countries, such as the American Council on Education, Universities Canada, and their counterparts in the UK and Europe. And make no mistake, they are not doing so because universities dislike comparisons based on untested or iffy social science. But of course, that’s not the case. Top universities are more than happy to play ball with rankings organizations like Times Higher Education, where the validity of the social science is substantially more questionable than AHELO’s.

Institutional opposition to AHELO, for the most part, plays out the same way as opposition to U-Multirank (which was boycotted by top-ranked schools from the Leading European Research Universities (LERU) on the patently absurd grounds that “it might be turned into a ranking”). It’s a defence of privilege: top universities know they will do well on the comparisons of prestige and research intensity.
which are the bread and butter of the major rankings. They don’t know how they will do on comparisons of teaching and learning. And so they oppose it, and don’t even bother to suggest ways to improve comparisons.

Is AHELO perfect? Of course not. But it’s better than nothing – certainly, it would be an improvement over the mainly input-based rankings that universities participate in now – and can be improved over time. The opposition of top universities (and their associations) to AHELO is shameful, hypocritical, and self-serving. They think they can get away with this obstructionism because the politicking is all done behind the scenes – but they deserve to be held to account.