How Activists Improved The Handling Of Campus Sexual Assault This Year

On May 13, Lexi Weyrick, Alejandra Melgoza and Melissa Vasquez, students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, began a 13-hour sit-in at the office of Chancellor Henry Yang, hoping to change how the school handles sexual assault. The students spent five of those hours negotiating demands with Yang. They left just before 3 a.m. with a signed set of agreements the chancellor said he would pursue.

It was an encouraging note for the 2014-2015 school year to end on -- a year where similar signs of progress have been seen around the country. As more schools have come under investigation for alleged failures to address sexual violence, there have been some tangible changes -- in the legal, administrative and social realms -- to improve circumstances, thanks in large part to persistent student activism.

"Our voices have power," Weyrick told The Huffington Post. "As long as we are willing to dedicate ourselves, we can make change happen."

On May 29, Yang hosted an open forum to discuss issues around sexual assault with UCSB students. In addition to the demands at their school, Weyrick, Melgoza and Vasquez say they want to implement change across the University of California system. The university is now arranging for them to meet with officials from the UC Office of the President in Oakland, a spokesperson confirmed. The full text of the agreements from the sit-in can be found at the bottom of this article.

Besides UCSB, many schools introduced new or updated sexual assault policies this year. Schools including Arizona State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of South Florida now require students to take classes on consent and assault. Although these changes have drawn some criticism, they are nevertheless a sign that these campus communities are not just sitting on their hands.

The Student Efforts To Improve Campus Safety

Student groups have stepped up to provide help within their schools. Students at Duke University created a support group for sexual assault survivors and campaigned for changes on campus. Students at the University of Texas at Austin started a campaign to stop sexual violence on campus, while Iowa State University students demanded answers from their administration.
The University of Virginia launched a bystander awareness campaign, "Hoos Got Your Back," at the beginning of the school year. The campaign encourages students to look out for each other, especially to prevent sexual assault. The effort became more poignant following the slaying of U.Va. student Hannah Graham, whose remains were discovered in October after she had been missing for over a month.

A number of candidates for student government have featured sexual assault policies prominently in their platforms, in a sign of how extensive the conversation surrounding these issues has become. Addressing sexual assault has been a major platform point in elections at George Washington University, the University of Iowa, Vanderbilt University and UT Austin.

**Meanwhile, fraternities at schools like the University of Kansas, the University of Utah, Iowa State and the University of Missouri have instituted training programs and called for an end to sexual assault. At Missouri, the Interfraternity Council budgeted more than $22,000 to create a peer educator program.** Critics have suggested that some of the fraternities may be acting less out of a genuine desire to address the problem and more because of fear or PR concerns, but advocates say they welcome any student effort that could make campuses safer.

As Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring (D) put it to HuffPost last week, "I really get the sense that this generation of students really wants to change the climate."

**How Schools Have Reformed In The Wake Of Controversy**

Schools that have faced particular criticism from both students and the public have been working on reforms. At the University of Kansas, following a HuffPost report on a student who was found guilty of nonconsensual sex yet received a very mild punishment, students put pressure on the school to change how it handles sexual assault. Last month, a sexual assault task force at the school presented its recommendations to the chancellor and provost.

University of Iowa President Sally Mason faced criticism and protests on campus last February after she told a student newspaper that ending sexual assault was "probably not a realistic goal." Later that month, Mason spoke publicly about her own experience with sexual assault. Throughout this school year, Mason has continued to keep sexual assault at the forefront of her work. In February of this year, she gave an update on her "Six Point Plan to Combat Sexual Assault" showing areas in which the school has been improving.

**The First Year Of 'It's On Us'**

In September, President Barack Obama launched "It's On Us," an initiative meant to raise awareness among students and encourage personal responsibility for helping to end campus sexual assault. Many schools are participating, and big-name partners have included EA Sports, the U.S. Olympic Committee, BET, MTV, Microsoft and several athletic conferences.

The NCAA backed a competition to make an anti-assault video. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte ultimately won that contest, beating out 40 other schools. Greek
organizations have also been involved, including local chapter meetings hosted by seven fraternity partners to discuss how to have a safe spring break.

There were weeks of action in the fall and spring where campuses across the country hosted awareness events and training programs. So far, 215,476 people have taken the "It's On Us" pledge and more than 370 events have been hosted on college campuses, the organization told HuffPost.

State-Level Efforts To Improve Sexual Assault Policies

In Virginia, a task force gave recommendations last week that included making it easier for students to report sexual assault. The University of Virginia is attempting to do this with its "Just Report It" online system, introduced this past spring.

Various pieces of legislation in other states have addressed different aspects of campus sexual assault this year. Texas now requires public colleges to have more detailed policies on sexual assault. Oregon passed a bill to protect conversations between survivors and advocates. Several states have considered bills that would require schools to note sexual violence on the transcripts of students punished for it, and Virginia is the first state to sign such a bill into law.

Prosecutor charges student with hate crime

An 18-year-old man charged with a hate crime for allegedly vandalizing a University of Missouri residence hall in April burned a swastika onto the ceiling in a stairwell twice and wrote, “You have been warned,” the second time, according to a probable cause statement.

Bradley M. Becker was arrested April 21 and was released from the Boone County Jail after posting a $4,500 bond. Boone County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Roger Johnson on May 18 charged Becker with second-degree property damage motivated by discrimination, a Class D felony punishable by up to four years in prison.

The first incident of vandalism was found at 12:30 p.m. April 8 in the Mark Twain Residence Hall, the statement said. In a northwest stairwell on the second floor, known as a place where students smoke marijuana, according to the statement, a swastika and “Illuminati” triangle were found and subsequently covered with white paint. Two days later, at 7 p.m., another swastika and
the words “You have been warned” appeared in the same spot. Anonymous tips led to Becker’s arrest.

Becker admitted to the vandalism during an interview with MU police Officer Dustin Heckmaster on April 21, the statement said. Becker told Heckmaster he acted in the “spur of the moment” and was inspired by YouTube videos mocking jihadism.

Becker’s attorney, Columbia-based Jeffrey Hilbrenner, was not available for comment Tuesday morning. MU police Capt. Brian Weimer said the markings were covered up as soon as possible and there haven’t been any more reports of similar crimes.

“That took care of the problem,” Weimer said of Becker’s arrest. Becker is listed in an online directory as a freshman health science major.

Johnson said the prosecutor’s office is talking to people on campus to “determine the impact of the crime.” Johnson said the case is unique because “the property that was damaged belongs to the university, but the victim in the case is the broader community.”

A preliminary hearing is set for June 23.

State budget completes funding for medical programs


Springfield enters 'new dawn' of health care training
Top university and hospital officials announced Tuesday the collaboration required to launch Springfield's first physician training campus — and occupational therapy program — will continue. For example:

- CoxHealth announced a $500,000 gift to provide scholarships to medical students who train in Springfield.

- Missouri State University and Mercy Springfield will open a clinic to serve uninsured, low-income residents.

- The University of Missouri made it clear it wants to work with Missouri State, CoxHealth and Mercy Springfield in additional ways, including an expansion of clinical research, health care training and medical residency programs.

"What we are seeing here, I believe, is a new dawn in terms of medical education that will support this part of Missouri," said R. Bowen Loftin, chancellor of the University of Missouri in Columbia. "But also model perhaps elsewhere in the state for us to forward and find ways to place doctors where they are most needed."

He added that the population growth in the Springfield area has "outstripped the ability of the hospitals to have the necessary physician count and mix to be able to support the medical needs of the area. Now we begin to (address) that in a very direct way."

The groundwork for the University of Missouri School of Medicine's new Springfield Clinical Campus, which will eventually train up to 64 future physicians a year, started nearly a decade ago.

"Obviously we're hoping some of the doctors who train here will stay here in the Ozarks and serve our communities in this part of the state," said Jay Guffey, chief operating officer of Mercy Springfield. "We also hope that the availability of this campus will encourage students from southwest Missouri to take a closer look at all the jobs in the health care field, knowing they can get training close to home."

It began to take shape in recent years when top officials from Mizzou and Missouri State — with support from Springfield's chamber and two large health systems — jointly lobbied Gov. Jay Nixon and lawmakers to provide the funding necessary for the clinical campus as well as a new occupational therapy program at MSU.

They presented a unified front, pointed out the growing physician shortage, and stressed the statewide job creation and economic development potential of expanding health care training options in southwest Missouri.

"I don't think either of these programs would have happened separately," said MSU President Clif Smart. "It was the working together that got them across the finishing line."
Annual funding, approved a couple years ago, includes $10 million for the clinical campus and $1.3 million for the occupational therapy program (as well as an expansion of the nursing program at MSU's West Plains campus). Part of the annual funding was delayed for much of this fiscal year before being released.

"We believe the governor has seen how important these programs are to our state and he is completely on board," Smart said. "I think we are over the hump in funding."

Now it's down to finalizing details. Missouri State is in the process of notifying the 24 students selected this fall for the occupational therapy program, the first one to open south of Interstate 70. Mizzou is also admitting additional medical students, many of whom are expected to transfer to Springfield for two years of training when the clinical campus opens a year from now.

Later this year, Mercy Springfield and Missouri State will partner to provide a new primary care program to expand health care access to uninsured, low-income residents. It will be located inside the O'Reilly Clinical Health Sciences Center, which is being built on the west side of campus.

"It will serve those adults who can not get Medicare or Medicaid coverage," Guffey said. "It will also enhance the educational opportunities for students within the College of Health and Human Services at MSU. When they graduate, they will have more hands-on experience and be better providers for their future patients."

Steve Edwards, president and CEO of CoxHealth, said the programs will help address a critical shortage.

"Our community needs these health care providers. We have, within a 50-mile radius, 4,000 openings in health care," Edwards said. He joked that two health care systems will "arm wrestle for every occupational therapist" who graduates from MSU.

At a Tuesday news conference, Edwards also announced that CoxHealth will donate $500,000 to provide scholarships to medical students training at the Springfield Clinical Campus.

Patrice "Patrick" Delafontaine, dean of the University of Missouri School of Medicine, said the clinical campus was the result of a shared mission of expanding access to quality health care.

He expressed interest in collaborating to establish additional medical residency programs so medical students trained at the clinical campus, among others, can work continue their training at CoxHealth and Mercy Springfield. He said another area is expanding clinical research.

"That would be a good thing because it allows access to cutting edge treatment," he said.

The School of Medicine currently receives about 2,000 applications a year and, when the clinical campus is fully operational, will accept a total of 128 new students a year. All students will spent the first two years in Columbia but a portion, 32 a year, will attend Springfield's campus. He said
while a "significant" number of applicants are from southwest Missouri, the university plans to increase recruitment.

"Now that we will have a campus down here, we'd be able to target applicants more specifically," Delafontaine said.

New Healthcare Training Programs Coming to Springfield


SPRINGFIELD, Mo. -- A collaboration between area hospitals and universities addresses a growing need for healthcare professionals in southwest Missouri.

On Tuesday, officials from Cox and Mercy hospitals, as well as Missouri State University and the University of Missouri, gave an update on the upcoming medical training programs.

After an eight-year process, Springfield will be home to M.S.U.'s Occupational Therapy Program and the newest clinical campus for the University of Missouri's Medical School.

Officials first applauded legislators on their efforts to get the budget passed.

"Having the campus here I think is the first step to recruit more physicians in this part of the state and we're very hopeful we'll be able to do that and improve access," said Patrick Delafontaine, the Dean of the University of Missouri’s Medical School.

The project is a collaboration by both universities and hospitals.

Thanks to the budget passed by the Legislature last month, Springfield will receive more than $11 million for the two new healthcare training programs.

"In each and every area in healthcare we have a need for more providers," said Jay Guffey, Senior Vice President of Mercy Hospital Springfield.
The need stems from the region's growing population of elderly patients, many of whom have chronic conditions.

"We know there will be a dire shortage of physicians, it's coming. If we can get ahead of that, by training physicians here the likelihood of a physician training and coming back to the town they trained in or grew up in is very high," said Steve Edwards, C.E.O. of Cox Health.

Starting in the Spring of 2016, eight to 12 University of Missouri medical students will begin their two-year training here in Springfield. Some of them may begin their residencies here in the city. The hope is after that, they'll stay, work here, and serve the community.

"It just means basically more ability to attract great students from this part of state to go to medical school and stay in Missouri and work in Missouri as physicians," said R. Bowen Loftin, Chancellor of University of Missouri.

Thirty-two additional medical students will be admitted to the university every year as a result of the Springfield Clinical Campus.

Meanwhile, M.S.U.'s first Occupational Therapy class of 24 students will begin in the fall of this year.

Matt Morrow, President of Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, said the collaboration will have a lasting effect on the Springfield area.

"It's an enormous impact to this community to meeting healthcare needs of this part of the state, state in general, and to do it in a way that advances good high paying jobs, quality education for those who are pursuing medical degrees throughout the region. It's just a huge win win win all the way around," said Morrow.

Missouri athletics' donor system to undergo changes

The Missouri athletics department is planning significant changes to its donor system in an effort to keep the school financially competitive in the Southeastern Conference.
Effective July 1, the school will change its Priority Points system, which determines perks given to private donors based on their contributions, The Kansas City Star reported. Under the current system, boosters are given separate point totals for football and men's basketball and earn points based only on gifts for seat premiums and parking.

The new system will tally a donor's total annual contribution to Missouri athletics to decide a donor's annual level. The donor level determines rank for parking passes, as well as requests for season tickets and tickets for away, neutral site and postseason games.

Missouri's athletics department ranks near the bottom in SEC schools in private donations, which help pay for scholarships, travel costs and facility improvements. An estimated $22 million was raised in contributions during the 2013-14 fiscal year, but the department hopes the new donor model will move it closer to the middle of the pack.

"We're going to hear that it's all about money, and I don't want to come across too strong here, but it is," said Tim Stedman, Missouri associate athletics director for advancement. "Our competitors are not apologizing for that, and our competitors are more aggressive in how they're going about securing funding. We need to do that, too."

The department hopes donors who want better parking and better access to tickets will consider bumping up to a higher donor level. It also hopes donations to campaigns for projects such as the new softball stadium will increase.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Pilot program aims to build cross-cultural competence via South African partnership

COLUMBIA — A successful leader inspires community members to work toward a common goal, says Letitia Johnson, a community development specialist for the University of Missouri Extension.

“If you want to clean up a creek and keep it clean,” Johnson said, “how do you pull a group of people together, get everybody heard, get the funding — how do you organize that?”

To create a new cadre of cross-culturally agile leaders, the MU Extension is partnering with the University of the Western Cape, South Africa, to create an International Community Leadership Program. Mid-Missouri residents are encouraged to apply, and the deadline is Friday.

MU and the University of Western Cape have a long history of academic partnership dating to 1986.
Johnson said the pilot program will provide learning opportunities through international exchanges between Missourians and residents of the Cape Town area, South Africa. It's intended to highlight the connection between excellence in community leadership and competency in cross-cultural communication.

South African participants in the program will be in Columbia for two weeks from July 26 to Aug. 8. Missouri participants will visit the South African group in Cape Town from Oct. 3 to 18. They'll take tours, sightsee and attend some classes, though Johnson said specifics of inter-cultural activities have not been decided.

Both groups will attend classes before traveling to the host country and will learn about ethics in leadership, leadership theories and styles, emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, project management, diversity and cultural competency, communication and facilitation.

The key to building better communities is to shift focus from differences in appearance, language and other cultural backgrounds to the essentials, she said.

“It strips away distracting elements,” Johnson said.

The program charges each participant $1,000 with a minimum of $200 payable up-front and the remaining due by July 31. Johnson said a financial award from the University of Missouri South Africa Education Program and the Extension office provide subsidies covering course materials, instructor and speaker expenses, transportation, round-trip air fare, lodging and meals in South Africa.

The application deadline is Friday. Johnson said the program is particularly looking for people with previous experience in volunteering and leadership in community building, but zero experience won't necessarily be a disadvantage.

“We want people who are motivated to make a better community,” Johnson said.

A certificate will be granted by the University of the Western Cape upon completion of the course. Participants also have the option to take the course for credit at MU as an independent study.

For full program details or to apply, contact Letitia Johnson at the Boone County Extension Office at 445-9792 or johnsonlk@missouri.edu. In addition, participants are advised to obtain access to a computer with high-speed Internet connection for some online classes or contact Johnson to make special arrangements.
June 3, 2015

Kipnis Case Highlights Perilous Clash of Title IX and Academic Freedom

By Katherine Mangan

NO MENTION

Students deserve to be educated in an environment free from sexual harassment, and professors, to speak and write freely about sensitive topics. But what happens when federal laws designed to protect those rights "butt heads," as some say occurred during the fallout over a Northwestern University professor’s essays on what she termed "sexual paranoia" on college campuses?

Universities nationwide are grappling with those issues as the number of campuses being investigated by the federal government for potential violations of the federal gender-equity law known as Title IX has climbed to more than 100.

When a complaint is filed, a university is required to investigate. In Northwestern’s case, two students filed complaints against Laura Kipnis, a professor in the department of radio, television, and film, claiming she’d violated federal law with her February essay in The Chronicle Review and with a subsequent tweet. Last week, hours after she published a second Review essay on what she termed her "Title IX inquisition," the university cleared her of wrongdoing.

The students said her original essay had misrepresented and impugned a student who had accused a professor of sexual misconduct and that the piece had had a "chilling effect" on students’ ability to report similar complaints.

The case points to the need for better guidance from the U.S. Department of Education on how colleges and universities should handle controversial statements by professors in news and social media, said Peter F. Lake, director of the Center for Excellence in Higher Education Law and Policy at Stetson University.

"It’s very obvious that the First Amendment is butting heads with Title IX enforcement," he said. "This could be incredibly chilling for people who teach or write op-ed pieces about related issues."

‘Gender Apparatchiks’
Some higher-education experts questioned whether Northwestern should have dropped the case before it got to the point of Ms. Kipnis’s being interrogated by lawyers. But Mr. Lake said the university’s response wasn’t surprising “when you have a gun to the back of your head,” alluding to the threat that colleges can be stripped of federal financing if they are found to violate the law.

"Somebody has to get in the middle of this and help referee it in a way that addresses due-process, First Amendment, and academic-freedom concerns," he said.

Erin E. Buzuvis, a professor at the Western New England University School of Law who directs its Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies, said that Northwestern had a responsibility to investigate the students’ complaints but that the process it used "could have been more evenhanded, expedited, and transparent without running the risk of violating Title IX."

A spokesman for Northwestern wrote in an email on Tuesday that the university is "firmly committed to free speech and academic freedom" as well as a harassment-free environment, and that it was confident the case had been handled appropriately.

Still, some scholars argued that universities are trampling over academic freedom in their eagerness to avoid harassment charges.

"University and college officials are fearful of running afoul of Title IX, so they are now quietly amending the U.S. Constitution," Christina Hoff Sommers, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of Who Stole Feminism?, wrote in an email.

"The First Amendment is being replaced by a woman’s right not to be made uncomfortable," she added. Due process, she said, is treated as a barrier to justice while "armies of gender apparatchiks are monitoring and policing speech, ideas, humor, and sexuality."

Validating Faculty Fears

The potential chilling effect of Title IX that Ms. Kipnis outlined in her essays is troubling, said Brett A. Sokolow, president of the Ncherm Group, a consulting and law firm that advises colleges and that was formerly known as the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management.

"The way campuses like Northwestern respond to complaints like hers just validates the faculty fears to which Kipnis gives voice," he wrote in an email.

Ms. Kipnis’s two essays also touched on the topic of trigger warnings, which she wrote assumes students are "trauma cases waiting to happen."

That argument resonates with Mary P. Koss, a professor of public health at the University of Arizona who teaches about human sexuality and sexual violence.

"Trigger warnings are difficult in an intellectual environment because emotional learning is an important part of learning," she said. "Students in my human-sexuality class sign a consent form in which I say that
the course content involves explicit imagery and materials that provoke emotions. If it offends you, let’s talk about it.

A male student once told her that her feminism created a hostile climate for him.

"I was happy he told me rather than going off and filing a complaint against me," Ms. Koss said. "It made me more sensitive to the fact that some men can be offended when there’s so much talk about men as rapists, and it made me take a closer look at my behavior and my sense of humor in class. I benefit from what students are thinking. I didn’t see it as self-censorship."