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MU Panhellenic Association develops sexual violence education plan

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The University of Missouri Panhellenic Association has introduced a sexual violence education plan to be implemented in sororities beginning in the fall semester.

The Panhellenic Association has been working on the plan since March. Janna Basler, MU director of Greek Life, said the association wanted to introduce the plan before a Saturday
summit that Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin plans to have with Greek leaders and members on ideas to prevent sexual assaults on campus.

The Panhellenic Association will make a presentation about its plan at the summit. The PHA is an umbrella organization for campus sororities.

“We wanted to keep it separate and let people know this isn’t a response to the summit and also show that students are working on a plan and can develop something themselves,” said Carolyn Welter, vice president of public relations for the association.

The MU Fraternity Alumni Consortium put together suggestions for policy changes — including banning all alcoholic beverages except beer in fraternity houses and prohibiting fraternity members from having female guests between 10 p.m. and 3 a.m. on weekends — meant to help set the agenda for the summit. The list generated criticism from the Panhellenic Association and the Interfraternity Council.

Basler said the PHA plan uses resources already available on campus, including the Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Center, and adds to them.

Included in the plan is a yearly education requirement for sorority members. The PHA, the RSVP center and the campus Title IX office will work together to provide four in-depth presentations for members that will not be repeated each year.

“If chapter members receive sexual violence programs at all, it is often surface-level education that does not challenge them,” according to an online summary of the plan. “In addition, they can often end up receiving the same presentation or program several times throughout their years in college.”

Welter said each session would deal with a different topic, including fraternity parties and living in dorms.

The plan also includes New Member Peer Educators — about 10 members from each sorority’s pledge class who would receive additional sexual assault training and, in turn, help educate other new members.

Kendall Foley, PHA vice president of risk management, said it’s an informal program designed to foster informal conversations.

“New members end up bonding with each other and they talk with each other and they’re learning from each other,” Foley said. “It just means a lot more from someone you’re close with.”

Under the plan, sorority chapter leaders will receive training on how to handle reports of sexual violence in their chapters.
While these women are the trusted leaders of their chapters, they are often not trained how to navigate situations like these,” according to the plan summary.

Foley, a senior from Gower who wrote the summary, said the PHA’s executive board has worked closely with RSVP and the Title IX office in developing it.

Welter said more specific points in the plan still are being developed but that the plan will be ready to implement at the start of the fall semester.

“The details aren’t completely fleshed out yet,” Welter said.

Basler said the association has worked with the administration in developing the plan and that it requires no further approval.

Colleen Coble, executive director of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, said she likes that the plan provides ongoing education and trains sorority leaders and members to address issues as they arise.

She said it’s not a complete solution, which can’t happen without a culture change that includes behavior change among men.

“It is positive that the student community is coming together,” Coble said. “That can lead to positive changes and needed ones.”

Address the mind-set of those who create 'rape culture'

June 18, 2015

NO MU MENTION

The editorial "Ending campus ‘rape culture’ ” (June 15) has lots of advice for women: Be “mindful of their behavior and surroundings,” get “training in how to avoid sexual assault,” “learn the cues of danger and either become trained in self-defense or avoid situations where the possibility of harm exists,” avoid “getting drunk or stoned and passing out at parties,” “learn how to recognize danger and how to resist pressure to have sex,” and “help themselves by learning some self-defense strategies.”
While acknowledging that men “are at fault as the assailants in most cases of sexual assault,” the only advice given for men is to “back off and understand that there will be consequences if they don’t.”

And your solution to this crisis is to have free self-defense classes for women so that they won’t become victims of assault? The implication that women need to do more to protect themselves does nothing to change this culture.

Isn’t it imperative and obvious that we address the mind-set of those who create a dangerous environment for women and who would commit sexual assault, beyond simply a consideration of “consequences”?

Susan Martin • St. Louis

June 18, 2015

Another Challenge on Campus Sexual Assault: Getting Minority Students to Report It

By Colleen Murphy

NO MENTION

Reporting a campus sexual assault can be difficult, even traumatic, for any student. But for minority students who have been assaulted, speaking up can be an especially daunting prospect.

Many of those students may simply not know how to go about reporting an assault. Many more may not feel that the conversations that have campuses over the last year even apply to them, experts say. Increasingly, advocates for sexual-assault victims wonder: Are colleges doing enough to bring those minority students into the fold? Hard evidence on the racial demographics of campus assault is scarce. The U.S. Education Department doesn’t collect data on reported campus assaults broken down by race. According to a 2014 study released by the White House, about 22 percent of all black women — not just college students — reported being raped, compared with 19 percent of white women. More than a quarter of women who identified themselves as American Indian and Alaska Native said they had been raped.

In a pair of recent studies supported by the National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the Department of Justice, meanwhile, 13.7 percent of undergraduate women
at two large public institutions said they had experienced a sexual assault during college, while 9.7 percent of undergraduate women at four historically black colleges said the same.

Yet campus reporting of sexual assault can break down much differently, according to investigators. Brett A. Sokolow, president and chief executive officer of the Ncherm Group, a consulting and law firm formerly known as the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management, said that in his experience, the reporting rate for white women on campuses is about "10 times the reporting rate" for women of all other races.

Closing that gap should be among the top priorities for those who seek to curtail campus assaults, some advocates say. Race is largely left out of conversations about sexual assault, said Wagatwe S. Wanjuki, an activist and board member of the advocacy group SurvJustice, but biases "like not believing a woman of color" may keep students from deciding to report.

"Most of the faces and stories we’ve been hearing are usually white women, or middle class or pass for middle class," Ms. Wanjuki said. That pattern has the effect of "making survivors of other identities feel like they don’t matter."

Ms. Wanjuki, a black sexual-assault survivor, said she "spent hours and hours looking for someone who looks like me" when she first reported her assault. "You want to feel like you’re not alone," she said.

‘Layers Upon Layers of Privilege’

More than 100 colleges and universities are now being investigated by the Education Department over their response to sexual-assault reports. Many on that list are elite institutions with large populations of white students, like Dartmouth College and Brown University, and it’s those campuses that often draw the most attention.

Columbia University, for example, was home to one of the most high-profile sexual-assault debates last year, when Emma Sulkowicz, a senior, carried a mattress around the campus to protest how administrators had handled her alleged rape.

The focus on cases like that one can leave minority students on the outside looking in. Many of the most prominent faces in conversations about campus sexual assault have been straight, liberal, white women, said Sarah Merriman, a communications coordinator at Students Active for Ending Rape, or Safer. The community of activists that has rallied around the issue is similarly homogenous, she said.
"I’m a woman of color," Ms. Merriman said. "I’m always excited when people look a little bit more like me and say these things are tied together."

When students of color don’t experience that feeling, it can create a barrier to reporting, according to Mr. Sokolow. "Race and other minority identities are marginalized, and that marginalization impacts on the willingness of minority women to come forward," he said in an email.

There are other obstacles already. Deciding to report a sexual assault to the campus police or to a college’s Title IX office, which can help steer survivors through the reporting process, often is facilitated by a layer of privilege, said Ms. Merriman. Accusing a college of violating Title IX, a step that can prompt a federal investigation, is seen as an even more elite activity, she said, because it involves pulling on the levers of power to right an alleged wrong. In order to file a report, a student would need to understand the process and feel empowered enough to go through with it, she said.

"Going up against your school administration has layers upon layers of privilege that is not necessarily afforded to students who are of a minority race," Ms. Merriman said. Students who hold jobs may not have time to file a complaint, she added, and others may worry about losing a scholarship if they defy their administration.

Stereotypes Hamper Understanding

In 1994, Aishah Shahidah Simmons, an activist and documentary filmmaker, began work on No! The Rape Documentary, which focuses on sexual assault in black communities and on college campuses. The film, which had its premiere in 2006, features testimony from black women about their experiences with sexual assault. No!, she said, is "still unfortunately relevant" today, and she continues to screen it for college students.

When she first showed the film, Ms. Simmons said, "there were quite a few folks who were kind of pooh-poohing my focus on it." But Ms. Simmons, who will hold a visiting professorship in Africana studies at Williams College starting in January, still reaches college audiences. She screened the film at the University of California at Santa Cruz in April, and held screenings at universities including Tulane and Penn State last year.

Ms. Simmons said it can be especially difficult for black women to report attacks if they were raped or assaulted by black men. About 92 percent of women at historically black institutions who were raped were attacked by black men, according to the HBCU study.
"You’re not going to call the police nine out of 10 times, whoever your rapist is, but definitely if you’re a black person and your rapist is a black man, you know there’s that silence," Ms. Simmons said.

From a young age, she said, black women are taught to protect black men, an attitude that could keep them from reporting because they don’t want "to be seen as a traitor to the race." She also said black women are often sexualized in popular culture, a stereotype that creates the "myth that black women can’t be raped."

"We’re always wanting, willing, and able," she said. "Or we’re so sassy and big and bad that no one is going to be able to rape us because we’re going to fight them off."

Understanding Culture

Students who feel their colleges have been more broadly insensitive to issues of race could find it even harder to come forward, said Kathleen Wong(Lau), director of the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

"If I don’t trust my institution on issues of racism, why in the event of having been assaulted would I trust my institution?" Ms. Wong(Lau) said. "Racism can shape the way that you might decide to ask your institution for help, even if the assault may not have been rape."

Ms. Wong(Lau) said administrators should understand students’ ethnic backgrounds before telling them about available resources, so that all students’ needs can be met. For example, Asian-American students may have been taught to not talk about sexual activity; Native American students may seek help only at a health center on tribal land. Such students are unlikely to use mainstream resources like rape-crisis centers, and are "far less likely" to report an attack, she said.

"You add in immigrants, you add in second-generation, you add in all kinds of other things, you add in class," she said. "The institution may not recognize that complexity."

Ms. Simmons, the filmmaker, agreed. "We have to acknowledge that sexual violence looks very different in all kinds of communities, and have these resources always available," Ms. Simmons said. "What happens to Muslim students who are covered, wearing hijab, and raped in their community?"

This fall, Safer, Ms. Merriman’s organization, will release a new training curriculum that colleges can use in workshops for their students. The previous curriculum had
focused on issues of federal policy, like Title IX complaints. The new one is more specifically geared toward the needs of minority students, she said.

"We are definitely working on our own language in terms of being much more inclusive," Ms. Merriman said. "We’re trying to make the college campuses more aware that they don’t just serve one specific narrative and one specific population."

MU police arrest woman for stealing, fraud

Wednesday, June 17, 2015 at 2:00 pm

A 30-year-old Columbia woman with six previous convictions for stealing and forgery was arrested Tuesday by University of Missouri police after making purchases with credit/debit cards that she allegedly stole from lockers at the MU Student Recreation Center.

Samara B. Eagen of 4305 Mesa Drive was in the Boone County Jail on Wednesday on a $33,000 bond for charges of felony stealing, first-degree trespassing and two counts of fraudulent use of a credit device.

Capt. Scott Richardson of the MU Police Department said the three theft victims were MU students. Eagen is not an MU student, he said, and the victims did not know Eagen.

Richardson said the stolen cards were used at Columbia Hy-Vee and Wal-Mart stores. The theft occurred between 3:09 p.m. and 3:28 p.m. Tuesday. Richardson said video monitor footage helped lead to the arrest.

Eagen was arrested at about 3:45 p.m. at Motel 6, 3402 I-70 Drive S.E.

Eagen has a long list of prior convictions. She was sentenced to six months in jail in August 2002 for misdemeanor stealing and was sentenced to three years in prison in March 2004 after she was convicted on four counts of forgery.

She was convicted of forgery again in 2005 and was sentenced to two years in prison in August 2006 for two counts of felony stealing. She was released in 2007 and was placed on five years’ probation. She also was convicted for trespassing in 2008.
Q&A: MU pediatrician says new vaccine covers more meningitis cases

MICHAELA MARSHALL DUNGEY, 13 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Next week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Council on Immunization Practices will meet about a new vaccine that would target meningitis B. The current meningitis vaccine prevents A, C, W and Y strains of the disease.

Meningitis is a "disease caused by the inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord," according to the CDC.

Aneesh Tosh is a pediatrician who works for MU Health Care. He received his degree from MU School of Medicine in 2001. Tosh talked to the Missourian about the new vaccine, the importance the vaccination and how the CDC’s decision — if it OKs the new vaccine — would make it more affordable. He said an outbreak is possible at MU, just as it is at any place where people are in close contact with one another. (This conversation was edited for brevity and clarity.)

What are some of the symptoms of meningitis?

Meningitis presents many times like any other illness with high fevers. Sometimes you can get a rash, vomiting and other conditions. ... The body starts shutting down in severe cases as the brain becomes infected and swollen, (and) patients often become unconscious and need intensive care. Thankfully, there are antibiotics to treat that, but many times it's still too late to prevent all of the effects. They still may have neurological complications.

Meningitis in general is a very serious infection that affects the brain and nervous system. If you get it, you have a 10 percent chance of dying. If you survive it, you still have about a 20 percent chance of having significant neurological effects.
How is it spread?

It's spread through respiratory secretions. So with college-age kids sharing drinks, kissing and just sharing things are ways to transmit the bacteria.

What is the difference between the old vaccine and the new one?

There have been several versions of the current vaccine out for about 10 years that cover about two-thirds of the strains of meningitis that are out there. It covers strains A, C, W and Y. Unfortunately, the other third is covered by a group called B, and it's just been very difficult to make a vaccine. In the last year, the vaccine against B came out. We're excited because it covers another third of the cases of meningitis.

When can people get the new vaccine?

It is available on the market, but what's limiting use is that we have not gotten instructions on insurance coverage. Next week, after the CDC Advisory Council on Immunization Practices meeting, we're going to get a lot more answers. If they approve the vaccine, which we expect they will, and give us age guidelines and dosing guidelines, which we expect them to do, then insurance companies will get on board. Usually that's what it takes to get the vaccine really to market and used regularly.

Will my insurance cover it?

The current vaccine is covered by really any insurance plan. Our expectation is that they are going to approve it similar to other meningitis vaccines out there.

How old should I be when I get the vaccine?

Meningitis B is a three-shot series, with one shot given at time zero (time zero is when you first get the vaccine), two months and six months. That's how we expect them to be giving the dosing guidelines. The current vaccine is a two-shot series — with one shot before age 16 and the second one after age 16.
Who is affected by meningitis and should be vaccinated?

As a pediatrician I recommend all my patients to get it. It tends to pick on the college population. Anytime you have a group of young people living close together — so college dorms, military barracks and even incarcerated youth — that’s a high-risk population. It’s a way to protect our youth from a very serious issue.

The state of Missouri statute requires all college students living in university-sponsored housing to get the meningitis vaccine. I don’t think it is known whether that will include the new B vaccine or not. I think that’s something for the legislature to answer. The state requirement did keep an exception rule, so you have to do a certification that you are aware of the risks (of not being vaccinated). If you’re older than 18, you can do that yourself. If you’re under 18, your parent would need to do that.

I think Mizzou is a setting where (a meningitis outbreak) could happen, and I think we’re trying to be proactive to try to prevent that from happening.

Is the vaccine safe?

I’ve personally never had a patient have a bad outcome other than the common side effects of muscle soreness, chills and a headache. Those are pretty common for any vaccine. I’ve never had a patient with a serious side effect.

No vaccine is 100 percent perfect, but the studies that have been done to get the approval show at least 80 to 95 percent protection, as opposed to maybe 1 percent protection in just the normal population.

The CDC has posted an agenda for next week’s meeting on the vaccine and public comment instructions.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Boone County has a low risk of tornadoes, though warnings are common

PHILLIP SITTER, 17 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Sirens alerted Boone County residents Saturday of strong storms and tornado warnings, a reminder of the spring and summer weather hazards in Missouri.

Yet, compared to Joplin and surrounding Jasper County, tornadoes are rare in Boone County, where only 1.3 percent of all tornadoes have been recorded in the state since 1950.

In contrast, nine tornadoes have touched down in Jasper County since 2000, including one in May 2011 that caused 161 deaths and $2.8 billion in damage.

When Heather Hurst lived in Joplin, she said, the warning sirens were so common that she stopped counting.

"We never took (the sirens) too seriously" until the tornado hit in May 2011, she said.

Shortly afterward, Hurst moved to Columbia for a job at the MU College of Veterinary Medicine. She recalled hearing sirens shriek just once or twice a year in the last four years.

It is "kind of a relief," Hurst said.

What does the actual tornado picture look like in Columbia and Boone County?

Looking at diagrams of tornado activity around Columbia, it appears that parts of mid-Missouri have a protected status in the center of an active tornado zone. Some attribute that to the so-called Ozark Plateau, though there is minimal evidence to substantiate the correlation.
Historically, however, Boone County has been considered a low-risk area. No one has ever died during a tornado in Columbia, even during the one in 1990, calculated as an F3, with $2 million in estimated damage — including a hole in the roof of Columbia Mall.

On Nov. 10, 1998, another tornado hit with reported wind speeds in excess of 158 mph. Sixteen people were hospitalized, 20 homes were destroyed and property damage was estimated at $6 million or more.

**Do geographic features like the Ozark Plateau protect our area from tornado activity?**

There is not enough evidence to support the notion that the Ozark Plateau protects mid-Missouri from tornado activity, said Bohumil Svoma, an assistant professor on the Soil, Environmental and Atmospheric Sciences faculty at MU.

The Ozark Plateau is a geological term for the Ozark Mountains, which covers roughly 50,000 square miles of northern Arkansas, southeastern Kansas, southern Missouri and northeastern Oklahoma. The tallest peaks are more than 2,000 feet high.

Yet, there is little research to support the idea that the plateau prevents tornadoes in central Missouri, Svoma said. He said he is not confident that the plateau offers protection for portions of Missouri, but he also said he wouldn’t expect any other geographic feature to be capable of affecting tornado activity in the state.

“The Missouri River is too small from a moisture or topographic standpoint,” Svoma said.

Geographic features like mountain ranges are definitely important to weather activity on the larger scale of continents, said Greg Carbin, warning coordination meteorologist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.

“There are a whole bunch of basic things we don’t know about tornadoes,” Svoma said of why some areas of Missouri seem to experience more tornadoes than others, adding that it “might
have to do with just how difficult it is to observe tornadoes” in mid-Missouri, rather than an effect of the Ozarks.

**Do complete and fully accurate records of tornado activity in Missouri exist?**

The short answer is no.

"We can never confirm if a tornado touched the ground or not” from radar readings alone, Svoma said. The nearest weather service radar stations are not even able to detect debris picked up into the air by a tornado, so confirmation of a tornado touchdown in the Columbia area is “entirely based on visual observation," he said.

Radar beams from National Weather Service stations in Springfield, Kansas City and St. Louis cannot scan below several thousand feet over Columbia, Svoma said. This is because of the curvature of the earth, which causes a radar gap over Boone County.

Carbin said radar capabilities probably only account for a small percentage of unreported tornadoes. Other factors are topography and "population bias," which refers to the prominence of reports in urban areas over those in sparsely populated areas.

**What does tornado season look like this year in Missouri and nationally?**

The National Weather Service estimates that 26 tornadoes have touched down in Missouri so far in 2015 — 12 in April and 14 in May. Boone County was not hit by any of them.

Since 1950, April and May have been the most active months in the state for reported tornadoes, according to available data from NOAA.

Close to half — 44.8 percent — of the NOAA tornado records were reported in April and May, with May the more active month. A total of 635 tornado reports were counted in May, compared to 453 in April.
When June is added, with 298 tornado records since 1950, and March with 232 records, the four months together represent about 66.7 percent of historical tornado records in Missouri. Those four months are considered peak tornado season in the state.

When and where do tornadoes typically occur in Missouri?

The Weather Service reports an average of four tornadoes every March in Missouri, seven tornadoes in April, 12 in May and six in June. The remaining months generally have two reports of tornadoes each year.

This year, activity in April and May are above average but still slightly below average for the year to date, compared to the 25-year month to month averages.

Most of the tornadoes this year have been weak EF0 or EF1 storms that caused minimal damage, if any at all. As of June 10, Polk County just north of Springfield led the count in the state with three reported tornadoes touching down there in May. Dallas County, which is near Polk County, and Ozark County on the Arkansas border each had two tornadoes reported in May. Jasper and Barton counties in southwest Missouri and Cape Girardeau County in southeast Missouri had two tornadoes each in April.

According to the weather service's 20-year average of annual tornado watches, far southern counties like Ozark County are roughly twice as likely as counties farther north, including Boone County, to experience the atmospheric conditions favorable to tornadoes.

Nationally, the country's tornado picture was also well below normal during April, Carbin said.

It was a “very quiet start to the year,” he said, adding that tornado activity picked up late April into May and those months were “quite active.” Using an "educated guess," he estimated 500 tornadoes, compared to usually about 600 by this time.

How do tornadoes form and why during certain times of the year?
Tornadoes occur when a horizontal tube of rotating air close to the ground beneath a strong thunderstorm is tilted vertically, stretched and accelerated by an updraft of air, Svoma said. The tube is created by a rain-cooled downdraft that hits the ground as it comes out of the thunderstorm.

Any thunderstorm can produce tornadoes, he said, although strong thunderstorms called supercells are the most likely to spawn one.

Ideal conditions for supercells include a layer of warm, moist air, known as instability, sitting beneath an upper level of cool, dry air in the atmosphere and wind shear near the ground. Wind shear is a sudden shift in wind direction or speed, which Svoma described as light winds near the ground and higher-speed winds a few thousand feet above that.

These conditions arise in different parts of the country at different times of the year, creating storm seasons and tornado seasons. In the South, the peak occurs in late winter and early spring, Svoma said. For the Great Plains — the classic Tornado Alley — it is late April through early June, with May as the most active month. Farther north, it happens later, he said.

**Is climate change likely to affect tornado activity?**

There is not a lot of consensus on the possible effects of climate change, Svoma said. In a warmer world, wind shear would be expected to decrease, he said, but there would be more instability in the atmosphere, more warm, moist air near the ground.

More research in tornado science needs to be done, and "observed tornado records are inconsistent over time, not clean and lengthy enough," he said.