Mizzou Says Years-Old Confederate Flag Twitpic Not a ‘Threat,’ Retracts Statement

By Alex Morey July 15, 2015

Officials at the University of Missouri said they will not take action against people photographed three years ago with a Confederate flag in a picture that recently appeared online, because they are not MU students.

MU updated its statement on the issue this afternoon after FIRE reached out asking for comment.

The photo, which was posted Sunday by Twitter user @fratscenery, appeared to show five young men, one of whom was holding a Confederate flag, standing near an MU fraternity house. On Monday, MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin posted an official statement on the university’s website, in which he said that the photo “may be considered offensive and possibly even threatening to some of our community members,” and announced that “we will be working to identify those in the photo.”

The statement attracted the attention of publications like Reason, which noted that the Chancellor seemed to be in a “panic” over the three-year-old photo. (The College Fix, for its part, ran the story underneath the headline “Mizzou chancellor flips out over three-year-old photo of Confederate flag near campus.”)

Concerned that MU was planning to punish students for protected expression, FIRE reached out to the university for more details. Shortly thereafter, the university removed the Chancellor’s statement from the website, although it is archived online.
University spokesperson Christian Basi told FIRE earlier today that MU had since identified the people in the photo as non-students who are outside the university’s authority.

“As far as we have been able to determine, these are not MU students,” Basi said. “There is no further action we will be taking.”

Basi also stated that Loftin’s statement was originally posted only because the Chancellor “wanted to respond” to numerous tweets he had received about the picture, and it was meant to demonstrate that Loftin was “trying to find context” about the photo. Basi said he could not speculate on what the university might have done had those pictured been students, other than to say students are required to abide by the MU rules of conduct.

Given universities’ well-documented propensity for overreacting to controversial but protected speech, MU’s quick retraction of its statement under public scrutiny is a welcome development.

Schools: University of Missouri – Columbia

Mizzou realizes how stupid it looked freaking out about old Confederate photo, removes ‘threatening’ statement

University of Missouri Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin’s statement that a three-year-old photo of a Confederate flag near campus was “threatening” to the community – reported yesterday by The College Fix and other outlets – has now been erased from his website.

It’s still archived online, as the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) points out today. Read it yourself: Loftin hinted he would punish any Mizzou students identified in the photo (none were).

In a new statement, Loftin plays dumb that days earlier he had accused a collection of pixels from the first Obama administration of endangering the “safety” of campus:
Yesterday, I received several messages via social media from concerned students and friends of MU about a photo taken at a Greek fraternity house near campus where individuals were posing with a Confederate flag. After reviewing the photo and the context in which it was taken, we determined that it was taken three years ago and no MU students were in the photo.

Based on this information, we will not be taking any additional actions. I appreciate those in the Twitter community who alerted me with their concerns.

It was pretty obvious the photo was old – Mizzou’s own student paper identified the time period quickly.

FIRE said the original statement went down shortly after it contacted Mizzou to protest the threatened punishment of students for their speech:

University spokesperson Christian Basi told FIRE earlier today that MU had since identified the people in the photo as non-students who are outside the university’s authority. …

Basi also stated that Loftin’s statement was originally posted only because the Chancellor “wanted to respond” to numerous tweets he had received about the picture, and it was meant to demonstrate that Loftin was “trying to find context” about the photo. Basi said he could not speculate on what the university might have done had those pictured been students, other than to say students are required to abide by the MU rules of conduct.

Loftin, of course, could have told students that in retrospect this photo is in poor taste, and the school recommends students don’t display Confederate symbols, while stating explicitly that they are free to express themselves peacefully, as they are constitutionally guaranteed at a public university.

Maybe in a parallel universe that’ll happen.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Nixon boosts need-based college scholarships

LIYING QIAN, 15 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Low-income, in-state college students can get more money from the Access Missouri Scholarship starting next school year, Gov. Jay Nixon announced Wednesday while visiting the University of Missouri–Kansas City.
Students at four-year institutions will be eligible for up to $1,850 per year, a 23 percent increase from previous $1,500. Students at two-year schools can get up to $850 a year, a 30 percent increase from the past rate of $660. About 50,000 students receive Access Missouri scholarships each year, according to a statement from the governor's office.

The scholarship increases Nixon announced are still below the statutory maximum for the program: The law establishing Access Missouri Scholarships caps them at $2,850 and $1,300 for four- and two-year schools, respectively.

The amounts actually awarded to students are based on the availability of the state's funding, Liz Coleman, communications and marketing director at the Missouri Department of Higher Education, said in an email.

In the past, Nixon had capped the Access Missouri Scholarship at about half of the legal maximum to help balance the state's budget.

The Access Missouri Program is a need-based scholarship program that was launched in 2008. To be eligible for the scholarship, students must be full-time, in-state undergraduates and meet certain financial requirements for effective family contribution — a legal formula that tabulates taxed and untaxed income, assets, family size and other government benefits against a $12,000 threshold. To renew the scholarship, students must maintain a 2.5 grade-point average and actively reapply by April 1.

The amount awarded to each student varies according to his or her finances and the type of school. The minimum amount a student can receive is $300 for two-year colleges and $1,500 for four-year public and private colleges and universities, according to the Missouri Department of Higher Education.

Scott Holste, the press secretary for Nixon, said in an email that the total appropriations for the program in the fiscal year 2015 were $73,682,307.
“College affordability has been a top priority of my administration, and over the past six years Missouri has led the nation in holding down tuition increases at public universities,” Nixon said in the statement.

**Tuition at MU increased 12 percent between the 2009-2010 academic year and the 2014-2015 academic year,** according to the school.

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

**Exercise helps men regain bone mass**

Men gradually lose bone mass as they age, but by facilitating bone growth, these exercises may help prevent osteoporosis, a condition that makes bones weak and prone to breakage, the study detailed in the journal Bone said.

"**Exercise-based interventions work to increase bone density in middle-aged men with low bone mass who are otherwise healthy,**" said one of the researchers Pam Hinton, associate professor at University of Missouri in the US.

"These exercises could be prescribed to reverse bone loss associated with aging," Hinton said.

The researchers studied 38 physically active, middle-aged men who completed either a weight-lifting programme or a jumping programme for a year.

Both programmes required participants to complete 60-120 minutes of targeted exercises each week.

The participants took calcium and vitamin D supplements throughout their training programmes.

The researchers measured the men’s bone mass at the beginning of the study and again at six and 12 months using specialised X-ray scans of the whole body, hip and lumbar spine.

The researchers found the bone mass of the whole body and lumbar spine significantly increased after six months of completing the weight-lifting or jumping programmes, and this increase was maintained at 12 months.
Hip-bone density only increased among those who completed the weight-lifting programme.

"The interventions we studied are effective, safe and take 60-120 minutes per week to complete, which is feasible for most people," Hinton said.

MU expert gives insight on Iranian Nuclear Agreement

Posted: Jul 15, 2015 11:32 AM by Hanna Yates, KOMU 8 Reporter
Updated: Jul 15, 2015 8:00 PM

COLUMBIA - A University of Missouri political science researcher offered his opinion on Wednesday regarding the Iranian Nuclear Agreement. The agreement was made after 20 months of negotiations and missed deadlines between the United States and Iran.

President Obama spoke Tuesday and Wednesday about the agreement. He said it's a "comprehensive long-term deal with Iran that prevents it from obtaining a nuclear weapon." "With this deal, we gain unprecedented around the clock inspections of Iran's nuclear weapons program."

The core of the agreement is the restrictions on the amount of nuclear fuel that Iran can keep for the next 15 years.

Obama said he feels it is necessary for the United States to go through with the agreement.

University of Missouri political science researcher A. Cooper Drury read the agreement and said the U.S. should be cautious. He said America can be slightly optimistic, but only if they're careful and guarded.

Drury said the deal works for the first few years, but can go very badly after that by allowing Iran to develop nuclear weapon capability.

He said the restrictions on Iran's nuclear capability will become looser as the years go on.
Drury said the way he reads the agreement is that the deal gives the U.S. a few years to convince Iran not to develop nuclear weapons.

He said the deal should not be seen as the end of negotiations, but as a starting point for a new relationship with Iran.

The deal moves to congress for approval within the next 60 days.

Watch the story: http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=29702&zone=5&categories=5

Experts: Ruling against college seeks to protect accused

By JULIE WATSON

July 16, 2015

SAN DIEGO (AP) — A ruling by a judge that a California university unfairly punished a student for sexual misconduct sends a strong warning that schools under federal pressure to better address rape should not forget to respect the rights of the accused, legal experts said.

San Diego County Superior Court Judge Joel M. Pressman ruled Friday that there was not enough evidence to back up the allegations against the student, identified only as John Doe, and that the University of California San Diego failed to give him a fair trial. Pressman ordered the school to lift his suspension of a year and a quarter.

UC San Diego officials declined to comment on the ruling. They said they were still evaluating whether to appeal.

Legal experts said the case sets a precedent as universities grapple with the best way to address sexual violence on their campuses and ensure justice is served for all in the wake of a national campaign by the Obama administration, which has criticized the institutions for not supporting victims.
Some say the cases should be handled by an independent agency or investigators not tied to the university and that this case drives home that point: No matter which side of the case one is on, universities are seen as having a conflict of interest in investigating and adjudicating such complaints since they can be penalized and lose federal funds for not taking action when a student has made such an allegation, said John F. Banzhaf III, a George Washington University's Law School professor.

"I think it's a very important and potentially a breakthrough case because the judge held that the student had a due process right and that right included being able to cross-examine the accuser," Banzhaf said.

Complaints of schools being overzealous in going after those accused of sexual assault have been surfacing in recent years. Harvard Law School faculty members last year lambasted their university's new policy on sexual assault, saying it did not ensure an investigation by an impartial party, nor did it provide for an opportunity for adequate representation for the accused.

"The pendulum has swung from universities doing nothing because of fear of hurting their reputation or not wanting to go after a star athlete, to universities being too overzealous in order to not risk losing federal support," Banzhaf said. "Now I think it's headed back somewhere toward the middle with courts stepping in to say to legislators and individual universities, 'you don't have a choice. It isn't what you think would be best but what the constitution requires.'"

John Doe's attorney in the UCSD case, Mark Hathaway, said the university can set an example.

"I think the university was trying to find the right balance and they got it wrong in this case," he said.

Doe met the woman at a party in February 2014, according to the complaint, and the two began a relationship, but the accuser said she was pressed into sexual activity three times. Doe denies the allegations.

A UC San Diego complaint officer found evidence to support one of the allegations, and the finding was affirmed by a university hearing panel, which recommended the suspension for a quarter, sexual harassment training and counseling. Dean Sherry L. Mallory later increased the suspension to a year after receiving a letter from Doe in response.

The judge ruled that UCSD did not hold a fair trial, saying only nine of 32 questions submitted by Doe were asked. Doe also was not given access to statements by his accuser or witnesses.

The judge also said the university should not have increased the suspension without an explanation.

Attorney Skye Daley, who has represented numerous college students who have filed sexual assault complaints, said victims welcome a fair process. Many victims, he added, still face an uphill battle in getting support.
"In the short term, we could well see civil action from schools' failure to meet the requisite burden, but I like to think this is just a bump in the road to a better system," he said.

July 16, 2015

How Traditional Colleges Compete to Enroll Student Veterans

By Colleen Murphy

NO MU MENTION

To many institutions, veterans seem like ideal students: They’re seen as hardworking and driven, and they bring guaranteed tuition money through federal benefits.

It’s that last fact, many observers say, that has made service members so attractive to for-profit colleges. Federal law requires institutions to draw at least 10 percent of their revenue from sources beyond federal student aid; but education money that veterans qualify for under the Post-9/11 GI Bill count as a separate source, even though the benefit comes with a federal guarantee. So for-profit institutions have recruited aggressively, and it has worked. Students veterans brought more than $19.5 billion to colleges through the GI Bill from August 2009 to September 2014, and nearly $8 billion of that amount went to for-profit colleges, according to data from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

For nonprofit colleges that see serving veterans as an important part of their mission, that poses a challenge: Getting service members fresh out of the military to enroll is often a matter of getting on their radar, and for-profit institutions tend to do that first. The nature of the "exit moment" — the point at which veterans are instructed about their GI Bill benefits — makes it difficult for traditional colleges to get a head start. But with a large group of veterans now preparing to leave the service, nonprofit colleges are looking to close the gap between that exit moment and enrollment. Here’s how.

A 'Self-Perpetuating Cycle'

Just before they are discharged, veterans get information about all aspects of their benefits, from health care to home loans, during several days of sessions run in part by the Department of Defense and the VA. The sessions are led by fellow service members, and veterans’ advocates say that poses a problem: Those service members aren’t always equipped to teach veterans how to navigate their educational choices.
"It is very much like, ‘Open mouth, turn on a fire hose, and try to remember as much information as you can,’” said Craig J. Bryan, an assistant professor of clinical psychology at the University of Utah and the associate director of its National Center for Veterans Studies. The information service members receive "isn’t necessarily the most relevant or most important information they need to find that job or enroll in college classes," he said.

Mr. Bryan called it a "self-perpetuating cycle": Since the service members leading the training sessions may not have gone to college themselves, they can’t function as guidance counselors.

Meanwhile, by the time service members are being told about their GI Bill benefits, many may have already had exposure to for-profit institutions — because the institutions are located near military bases, use aggressive online-recruitment strategies, or run large-scale advertising campaigns that pitch their programs as the cheapest and fastest way to get a degree.

Traditional colleges might wish to close that awareness gap. But they aren’t allowed to send staff members to military bases to court service members, said Steve Borden, director of the Pat Tillman Veterans Center at Arizona State University, who called that restriction a "real and serious" problem.

"The Department of Defense does not have a mechanism by which people outside can reach in and talk to people who are transitioning out," Mr. Borden said.

**Lines of Communication**

In fact, even that step might come too late. Many service members may already use tuition assistance while they are in the service, often to take classes through for-profit institutions, Mr. Borden said. "You need to get farther in front of it than that and start educating our military members about education when they come into the service."

Mr. Borden made other suggestions to improve service members’ ability to make the most of their benefits. For example, fill the guidance-counselor gap: The Department of Defense, he said, could bring in outside advisers for sessions that would give members of the military the same guidance they would have received from a college counselor in high school.

Veterans should have to complete an online training program about the education aspect of their benefits before committing to a college, he said, though he acknowledged that some military officials may find the requirement "intrusive." Such a program could make it harder for veterans to use their benefits, he said, but it would also make it "harder for them to waste it."

Mr. Borden isn’t the only one suggesting change. Janet Napolitano, president of the University of California and former U.S. secretary of homeland security, has called for a stronger "linkage" between the Department of Education and the VA to make sure veterans get sufficient information about their education benefits and the best ways to use them. She also said the two agencies should team up "to more aggressively go after those institutions that are targeting vets because they are very lucrative."
"I don’t want to paint with too broad of a brush," she said in an interview last week. "There are some for-profits that do deliver, but there are others that I think of as bad actors in the sense that students do enroll but don’t graduate."

She said veterans must leave the service knowing how to compare colleges and consider their full range of options — like going to a community college and transferring into a four-year program. In a 2014 letter to the education secretary, Arne Duncan, Ms. Napolitano called for the creation of an "interagency working group" to "increase accountability for the federal student aid" colleges receive and to monitor institutions with low graduation or high default rates. The group, which would include the VA along with White House, the Departments of Education, Treasury, and Justice, and watchdog groups, would be asked to "explore ways to improve outreach efforts to specific populations, including veterans, to ensure they have relevant information about institutional accountability and how their military and veterans benefits coordinate with student financial aid."

There could be challenges to such a group, starting with the fact that those agencies are often on different pages when it comes to veterans’ issues. Last week, in a new report, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau slammed loan servicers that have preyed on military borrowers — a stance that mirrors the Justice Department’s but contrasts with the Department of Education’s previous ruling that cleared the servicers of wrongdoing. "You get into the classic, ‘Who has jurisdiction over what?’" Ms. Napolitano said. "But there’s a linkage there that could really help our vets."

**Smarter Marketing**

In the meantime, the best things traditional colleges can do may be to sharpen their recruiting messages and do right by the veterans who do attend.

Mr. Bryan, the University of Utah professor, said many traditional institutions’ marketing plans miss veterans because they are targeted at traditional freshmen. Institutions tend to advertise "the lifestyle" that comes with a degree, he said, like the residence halls, social aspects of campus life, and opportunities to study abroad.

"Veterans don’t care," he said, because most are focused on graduating quickly and using their benefits efficiently, not on joining clubs or extracurricular activities.

And nonprofit institutions that do try to court service members often get the details wrong. "It’s almost like they don’t know how to talk to veterans," Mr. Bryan said. "They put camo on the website and use a couple buzzwords."

But Mr. Bryan said that colleges are becoming savvier in creating programs to support veterans. For example, staff members in the veterans-services office at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which has about 600 student veterans, follow up before the start of the academic year with students who have checked the military-service box on their applications, said John G. Bechtol, the assistant dean of students.
Then staff members attend 41 summer orientation sessions and meet with veterans at each. "Our goal is to remove their military affiliation as being any kind of burden," Mr. Bechtol said. "So now they just face the normal challenges of being a new student, like, ‘How do I get to class?’"

There are other ways to help ease the academic transition. For five years, the Texas A&M University system, which enrolls more than 11,000 veterans or children of veterans, has counted military experience toward college credits in programs like health, management, and criminal justice, said Rod Davis, director of the system’s veterans-support office.

Efforts like those, which support the veterans already on or heading to their campuses, may ultimately be the best ways to advertise to other prospective veteran students, said Wendy A. Lang, director of Operation College Promise, a program that trains college professionals on how to work with veterans. "I always tell people the best way to attract military-affiliated students is to have happy military-affiliated students at your school," she said.

To do that, several institutions are trying an unconventional approach. For the first time this fall, Cornell University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Smith College, the University of Chicago, Williams College, and Yale University are working with a nonprofit organization, Service to School, that aims to funnel veterans into their programs, said Tim Hsia, Service to School’s co-founder.

Volunteers at Service to School will identify high-achieving veterans who could qualify for the program, called Vetlink. The volunteers, many of whom are also veterans, will introduce candidates to the colleges, guide them through the application process, and help the colleges review applicants, Mr. Hsia said.

Mr. Hsia said volunteers would give tips on writing essays and updating résumés, serving a role similar to that of a high-school guidance counselor.

"Never will we say, ‘We’re going to get you into a top school,’” Mr. Hsia said. "What we can control is effort and making sure your app is great, and if it’s not great, making sure we get it to that level."