EDITORIAL: Missouri launches a mean-spirited, foolish attack on immigrant college students

Young people across Missouri are receiving a harsh lesson about their state’s mean-spirited General Assembly.

It comes in the form of letters from public colleges and universities, notifying students that because of language slipped into a budget bill, they are no longer eligible for in-state tuition. For some, that means college costs have at least doubled.

These are immigrant students who came to the United States as children without the proper documents. Thanks to 2012 action by President Barack Obama, they can remain in the country under “deferred action” status.

In Missouri, that status offered a way around a policy that prevented state-funded colleges and universities from granting in-state tuition to students who had an “unlawful presence” here.

But this year, lawmakers changed the language to “unlawful immigration status.” Colleges interpret that to exclude the students from in-state tuition.

About 1,200 young people in Missouri have obtained deferred action status, although not all of them attend college.
A University of Missouri System spokesman said 20 to 30 affected students are believed to attend the system’s four campuses. Fourteen attend the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and 20 more students are enrolled for the fall semester.

At UMKC, out-of-state students pay $438.70 more per credit hour. So a student who took 12 credit hours in a semester would see tuition rise by $5,264.

The university is seeking private funding to close the gap, a UMKC spokesman said. The University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, which has two affected students, is also planning to use private funds.

The schools are doing the right thing, but the legislature’s policy is immoral and foolish.

Lawmakers said they were taking a stand against illegal immigration. But pricing kids out of college isn’t going to stem illegal immigration one bit. And the affected young people aren’t going anywhere. They’ll just be less educated and less prepared to contribute to the state’s economy.

You don’t even need a college degree to figure out how stupid the Missouri legislature was to rewrite this rule.
Missouri could offer options to college algebra more relevant to students’ majors

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
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Q: Three English majors pick 70 bushels of apples. If Tyler picks twice as many as Taylor but only half as many as Ashley, how many college students will wish they didn’t have to pass algebra to graduate?

A: Quite a few.

In Missouri, roughly half the students who take college algebra fail it at least once, and many of them just give up and drop out, math professors say.

That’s why state education officials want to nudge algebra aside to make room for other math choices that would speed time to graduation for many students.

A committee appointed by the Missouri Department of Higher Education is recommending that two- and four-year public schools that require algebra instead give students the option of taking a class in statistics or another math subject more relevant to their field.

The department doesn’t have a complete list of schools still requiring algebra, but they include some community colleges in Kansas City as well as the University of Missouri and Truman State University.

“Ultimately we are not able to tell any institution that they have to do this or that,” said Rusty Monhollon, the Missouri department’s assistant commissioner for academic affairs. “But I do think there is a great deal of support for improving the quality of math education in the state.”
The change would add Missouri to a growing list of states giving students an alternative to algebra. In Kansas, where the pass rate for college algebra in 2014 was 76 percent, all six state universities governed by the Kansas Board of Regents allow students to take other math courses to satisfy their degree requirements, a Regents spokeswoman said.

College algebra has been the general education math requirement for graduation for decades. For many students, that’s also meant sitting through remedial math, or taking algebra two or three times.

Freed from the requirement, students could graduate sooner, save money and move Missouri closer to meeting a big goal: State educators have pledged that by 2025, 60 percent of working-age Missourians will have a higher education credential.

To get there, the state will have to increase its annual production of four-year degrees and two-year certificates by about 2,600 each year for the next 10 years, said David Russell, the state’s higher education commissioner.

College algebra has been slowing things down.

At Metropolitan Community College-Blue River, the algebra pass rate mirrors the national average of about 50 percent for first-time takers.

“We all have students who come to us and say, ‘I can’t do this. I’m terrible at math,’” said MCC-Blue River math professor Bill Morgan.

Racquel Phillips, who graduated in May with an associate’s degree from Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley, remembers students who had such a difficult time in her college algebra class that “they left and never came back.”

“Even to this day I know people who say, ‘I’m just one math class away from graduation. I just have to pass algebra.’”

Allowing students to take a math course they’ll use on the job would improve the pass rate at MCC-Blue River, Morgan said.

“If math could be seen as more relevant to a student’s future life, it would become less of a barrier to them,” he said. “I really think that relevance of the math is the key.”
Math experts said algebra emerged as the gateway math for college because all the math that students are taught from elementary school through high school is designed to prepare them for algebra.

“Right now we equate mathematics thinking with algebraic thinking, and mathematics is broader than that,” said Northwest Missouri State math professor Mary Shepherd, a member of the statewide committee reviewing math requirements. “Students have been told, ‘You don’t think mathematically,’ because they struggle with algebra, but algebra is just one small aspect of mathematics.”

College algebra “is for students going into the STEM fields or who plan to take calculus,” said Phoebe McLaughlin, a professor of statistics and mathematics at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg. “We want students to have the math course that’s most appropriate for them. I would not call that ‘dumbed down.’ I call it more applicable to their major.”

About a decade ago, a group of mathematicians modified the traditional college math in an attempt to make it more relevant to more students. The modified algebra had a higher pass rate than the traditional college algebra, said Michael Pearson, who taught college math for 35 years and is director of the Mathematical Association of America.

“But did it take off like wild fire? I would have to say, ‘No, it did not,’” Pearson said. Since then, he said, all kinds of approaches have been aimed at eliminating the algebra barrier.

Colleges across the country are engaged in various efforts to redesign mathematics pathways, according to the Charles A. Dana Center in Austin, Texas, which has worked with schools to develop what they call “mathways” to graduation that allow more student success.

In the fall of 2012, the University of Missouri-Kansas City, which offers math options to algebra, began using new technology to improve teaching and learning. In spring 2015, the school’s algebra pass rate was nearly 87 percent.

Many state universities in Missouri have added statistics and quantitative reasoning as options to their general education requirements.
“I think that’s a good idea as long as they keep the same rigor,” said Phillips, who now works in the administration office at MCC-Penn Valley. “I had to change my study skills to get through algebra. But I do think that class really helped me develop my critical thinking skills.”

**MU has been requiring students to pass college algebra or a higher level math course for nearly three decades, said Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies. But with the state recommendations coming down this month, that may change by fall 2016.**

**MU faculty members expect this fall to discuss giving students other math choices.**

“We just haven’t started those conversations yet,” Spain said. But he expects MU “will work diligently to address the state’s new recommendations.”

As for Tyler, the English major with the apples? He picked 20 bushels.

**Cerner extends Tiger Institute partnership with MU**

By MEGAN FAVIGNANO
Monday, July 20, 2015 at 2:00 pm

The Tiger Institute for Health Innovation is shifting its focus from digitizing data to using that data to improve patient care.

The University of Missouri and Cerner extended their relationship through 2025 and identified new priorities for the Tiger Institute, which the two entities formed in 2009, including mobile health care that focuses on smartphones, technology’s role in medical center research and patient record-keeping.
MU and Cerner created the institute to share electronic health records and technological advances. MU and Cerner’s initial agreement was set to expire in 2020.

Bryan Bliven, chief information officer at MU Health Care and executive director of the Tiger Institute, said since the Tiger Institute’s founding, MU Health has been nationally and regionally recognized for its technology.

“We’ve basically gotten the organization digitized and a lot of the data digitized,” Bliven said. He said MU Health is now looking at “what can we use this platform for to go to the next level, to help us manage our overall costs, to help us manage population better, to help us engage with patients and to perform research with all of the different data we have available.”

For Cerner the key reason to extend the collaboration is the addition of the Tiger Institute Leadership Academy, said Joanne Burns, senior vice president and chief strategy officer at Cerner. The academy will handle on-site visits from peers, and Cerner is hoping to make MU Health a model.

“We’re expecting organizations to come to Columbia from around the country and learn from the University of Missouri and the Tiger Institute,” Burns said.

The Tiger Institute will hire 12 full-time employees, some of whom will develop the Value Creation Office. That office will evaluate the partnership’s projects to look for ways to boost savings and revenue, Bliven said. MU Health will invest about $20 million into the Tiger Institute through 2025.

Mobile health care, Burns said, is an important aspect of the MU-Cerner relationship’s initiatives.

“People in general are becoming much more involved in their health, wellness and care,” Burns said. “And if you think about what your smartphone does today, it has become a normal expectation that I can do what I need to do on the go.”

Mobile devices can also help the health care system track patients with chronic conditions or monitor patients at home after a hospital stay, Bliven said. MU Health, he said, has been developing resources for its patient portal such as online scheduling. MU Health will look at expanding those mobile resources to include video visits with health care providers.

The University of Missouri is also a member of the Health Network of Missouri — a collaboration between six community hospitals that includes Capital Region Medical Center in Jefferson City and Lake Regional Health System in Osage Beach. Health Network of Missouri organizations each use
different IT systems and are working on ways to better share data, which will be an increased focus for the Tiger Institute.

“Especially with this partnership, there is a lot of patient overlap,” Bliven said.

Bliven said sharing data could help give physicians their patient’s entire story rather than just information from times the patient entered their specific facility. Data sharing could also help researchers predict trends, he said.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

CARL KENNEY: Pain, guilt remains centuries after Civil War

CARL KENNEY, 1 hr ago

You’d be hard pressed to find a monument honoring Nazi soldiers.

You won’t find a Swastika flag waving in the wind somewhere in Munich or a big rock honoring the patriotism of Nazis who died during World War II.

The Germans own their past. They accept how horrific the Holocaust was and how the memory of it all continues to burden those who lost family members. They haven’t forced Jews to embrace their hideous history. They haven’t allowed it to brew with symbols scattered across the land to prompt recollections of a madman named Hitler.

It’s not worthy of pride.

Americans could learn a lot from the Germans. They’re better at overcoming the humiliation of lives taken and assumptions made about people outside the Aryan race. Germans aren’t ensnared by a need to narrate the story to make the guilty innocent while forgetting it all was about hate.

The Germans have owned their mistakes. Americans could learn a lesson or two about embracing guilt and showing love for the people hindered by assumptions.
"To honor the valor and patriotism of Confederate soldiers of Boone County,” reads the plaque on the five-and-a-half ton red granite rock in front of Columbia’s courthouse. On Thursday, members of the Boone County Commission voted unanimously to relocate the rock to a Civil War battlefield in Centralia, Missouri.

The words on that plaque give us a clue about why we can’t just get along. Those soldiers weren’t patriots. They fought for a government that performed treason. They formed a separate government that sullied the Constitution of the United States. It wasn’t enough to disagree with those fighting to free slaves. They wanted to discontinue all conversations regarding the humanity of the slaves. Like the Germans, the members of the Confederacy believed in Aryan supremacy.

They were not patriots.

That big rock was a gift of the Daughters of the Confederacy. They placed the rock at MU in 1935 to honor the lives of those who died to defeat the American government. Yes, it was a Civil War. Yes, the nation was divided, but the war was treason.

Why the need to celebrate subversion?

In a strange way, I get it. It must be difficult carrying the guilt of your ancestor’s rebellion. How do you talk to your children and grandchildren about the Civil War? How do you tell them your ancestor’s owned slaves, fought to keep them and willingly died for the cause? How do you do that when your child or grandchild has a close friend whose ancestors were owned by your ancestors?

It helps making slavery about something different. The monuments are erected to remember the dead, but, in the process, there’s no room to embrace the guilt. You can’t face guilt when there is no guilt. The only shame is in losing the war.

Yes, I understand.

I understand the flags, monuments and rocks dedicated in memory of those who believed in the Confederate agenda. I understand many wish the South had won. I imagine many think about
what could have been if state rights and white supremacy won the right to remain comfortable in
the assumptions of white privilege.

They can’t let it go.

They’re not sorry about slavery and all that came with the institution. Some of them believe
black people were better off as slaves. Many are incapable of understanding how much was
taken from those who built plantations on their backs.

What do we learn from the Germans?

You can’t move past your mistakes until you admit a mistake was made. Southern pride isn’t a
statement of guilt. It’s a confession that people wish everything could remain the same.

I’m reminded of my last trip to Germany. While there, a deep sensation overwhelmed me. I felt
something I had never felt in America — it was the first time I felt free from my skin. I didn’t
feel judged or limited by my race.

What’s the difference between Americans and Germans?

Germans worked hard to overcome the memory of Hitler. They are ashamed of their past actions.
They have no monuments in honor of the Nazi soldiers. Though it’s part of their history, it’s not
a history they celebrate.

They refuse to wave a flag of hate.

Maybe it’s different with America's Southern pride. Maybe there’s a bunch of internal guilt
related to wishing the South had won. Maybe it’s hard to admit you would fight to keep slaves if
the chance presented itself again. Maybe that’s the rage behind why people are so passionate
about their right to wave and wear the Confederate flag. Could it be more than just a statement
about Southern pride?
Maybe they’re telling us they wish the South had won, and they’re waiting for a chance to do it all over again.

Each member of the Boone County Commission talked about the pain of our past. Something happened long ago that continues to dig at the souls of black people. The rock in front of the courthouse reminds people of that troubling past.

A war was fought in Missouri. Many fought to maintain the right to own slaves. They lost the war, but we remember them because they belonged to us. They represented our will. Is that the message oozing from the images of Southern pride?

The county commissioners voted to move the rock.

If only we could completely remove the memory.

There’s too much pain left to be seen.

**Experimenting With Aid**

July 21, 2015
by Paul Fain

**NO MU MENTION**

The U.S. Department of Education continues to work on its plan to grant experimental federal aid eligibility to partnerships between accredited colleges and alternative providers, such as job skills boot camps, coding academies and MOOCs.
A wide range of experts have been summoned to the White House for a meeting at the end of July to discuss this growing space. And department officials say they are seeking comments on how best to spot and ensure quality with nontraditional providers.

“We think that a new set of quality assurance questions will need to be developed to ask hard, important questions about student learning and outcomes,” said Ted Mitchell, under secretary of education, in a blog post last week. “These questions will help students, taxpayers and those evaluating educational programs separate programs that are high quality from those that do not meet the bar.”

Growing numbers of students are enrolling in noninstitutional programs. For example, roughly 16,000 students are expected to graduate from boot camps this year, Fast Company reported, which is up from 6,740 last year.

The White House wants to encourage that growth, at least among what it sees as high-quality providers. As a result, the department has been mulling an “experimental sites” project that would open up federal aid to a limited group of academic programs that colleges and nontraditional providers would offer jointly.

As Inside Higher Ed reported in April, the department would waive certain rules for federal aid eligibility under the experiment, such as the regulation that fewer than 50 percent of academic programs can be outsourced to nonaccredited, noninstitutional providers. The results of the experiment could be used to inform future policy and regulatory decisions.

Details are still being sorted out for the project, sources said. But the goal is to announce its creation in the next two months.

In June, Jamienne Studley, deputy under secretary of education, told a meeting of accreditors that the department was considering the partnership approach to an experimental site. She said the feds are seeking to “encourage dialogue” on how to ensure quality with approved boot camps and noninstitutional online providers.

“We’re very much in listening mode about what we might do,” said Studley, adding that the department’s goal is to strike a “balance between being deliberative and creative.”

To participate in the project, an accredited college and its partner provider -- perhaps a boot camp like General Assembly or an online course provider such as Udacity -- would need to apply to the department and be accepted as an experimental site. Qualifying programs would include the imprimatur of some third-party, such as an accreditor, that does quality assurance based on minimum thresholds the department would establish.

This pathway to alternative accreditation could be managed by a regional accreditor, perhaps through a newly created subsidiary. Another possibility would be a new national accrediting body that specializes in nontraditional providers.
The WASC Senior College and University Commission, a regional accreditor, could be a player in this space. Recently the commission released a policy for how a nonaccredited provider could partner with a traditional college for a “period of incubation” and eventually evolve to hold its own accreditation.

Paul LeBlanc, Southern New Hampshire University’s president, recently wrapped up a three-month stint as an adviser to the department. One of his tasks was to work on the experimental site project for alternative providers.

The blog post from Mitchell, LeBlanc said, “speaks to the desire to bring new, effective partners into the Title IV ecosystem.”

One goal in this work is for the feds to help students get financial support for the “best of these programs,” he said. But just as important is for the department to ensure quality control and consumer protection, said LeBlanc. That's because the department wants to avoid opening the floodgates of federal aid to subpar providers -- “bad actors” in the parlance of Washington.

“We don’t want to go down the path of Corinthian,” LeBlanc said, referring to the collapse of Corinthian Colleges, a controversial for-profit chain.

**Partial Agreement**

Mitchell’s statement includes three general categories for questions the department should ask in deciding which programs meet the bar. They revolve around “measurable claims” a provider makes about student learning, the reliability and validity of learning assessment, and the outcomes completers achieve -- including both academic transfer and employment and salary.

Senator Lamar Alexander, the Tennessee Republican who heads the Senate’s education committee, also has floated ideas for opening up accreditation to noninstitutional online course providers and other new entrants.

On Wednesday Alexander’s committee is holding a hearing on “exploring barriers and opportunities within innovation.” In a news release the committee’s staff said the “hearing will be an opportunity to explore new models of delivering education that could provide high-quality and affordable education, such as competency-based education and personalized learning models.”

In many ways Alexander and other Senate Republicans, including presidential hopeful Marco Rubio, are on the same page as the Obama administration when it comes to upstarts in higher education. All three have said they would like to expand opportunities for students to attend promising providers that exist outside of the models of traditional colleges.

For example, Rubio recently called higher education a "cartel" and promised that, as president, he would create a new accreditation process that "welcomes low-cost, innovative providers."
Yet Rubio and Alexander differ with Obama in their view of the federal role in encouraging and overseeing that sector’s growth. A heavier hand for the feds, where the department controls the path to accreditation, will be less amenable to Republicans.

Andrew Kelly is director of the Center on Higher Education Reform at the conservative-leaning American Enterprise Institute. He applauded the department’s desire to experiment with alternative providers, and to study the results of such a project.

“There is a clear role for the federal government to play in research and development,” said Kelly.

However, Kelly said he is wary of the department playing favorites with the experimental sites project, as he said they did with the gainful employment regulations, which largely target programs at for-profit colleges.

“I don’t think the department is the right institution to make all the calls about who gets in and who gets left out,” he said.

Kelly said he generally likes the approach of bringing in outside entities to do quality assurance. But that still might not be enough to prevent the department from bigfooting the process, he said.

“I don’t have as much confidence about where they end up,” said Kelly. “There’s almost an inevitable momentum to federalize these decisions.”

Many Paths to Diversity

July 21, 2015

BY Scott Jaschik

NO MU MENTION

The U.S. Supreme Court this fall will hear arguments about whether colleges have the constitutional right in certain circumstances to consider race and ethnicity in admissions decisions. The case has the leaders of many colleges that do consider those factors worried about what they will do if the court rules against the University of Texas at Austin, whose rejection of a white woman led to the suit.
But a report released today by the American Council on Education -- based in part on a survey of college admissions leaders -- argues that the high-profile debates over what should be considered in admissions decisions don't reflect the way most colleges actually go about diversifying their student bodies. A range of activities, many of them far less controversial and many of them race neutral, are at the heart of these diversity efforts, says the report, "Race, Class & College Access," by Lorelle L. Espinosa, assistant vice president of ACE's Center for Policy Research and Strategy; Matthew N. Gaertner, a senior research scientist at Pearson; and Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project at the University of California at Los Angeles.

The report does not deny that many colleges consider race in admissions. For example, 60 percent of those surveyed and that admit 40 percent or a smaller share of all applicants said that they do so.

But the report stresses that diversity efforts are much broader, and that many of them are focused on outreach, not the actual admissions decision. For example, the survey found that:

78 percent of colleges and universities use "targeted recruitment and outreach to encourage racial/ethnic minority students to apply."  
76 percent use "enhanced recruitment and additional consideration for community college transfers."  
71 percent report "targeted recruitment and outreach to encourage low-income and/or first-generation students to apply."  

In the case of the latter two strategies, community college transfers and low-income/first-generation students include many minority students, but also include many white students.

The report also faults journalists and policy makers for focusing attention on strategies used by relatively few institutions. The ACE survey, for example found that:

24 percent of colleges are trying to increase diversity through reduced emphasis on admissions preferences for the children or relatives of alumni.  
16 percent are adopting test-optional admissions.  
13 percent have "percentage plans" under which some top percentage of high school graduates in a state are automatically admitted to public colleges and universities in the state.  

"If researchers, policy makers and the press want to align more closely with prevailing practice -- and we believe that they should -- then the focus of their attention and coverage will need to shift," says the report. (While this reporter is one of those who has written repeatedly about percentage plans, it might be difficult to avoid the topic when a central point of the case before the Supreme Court is whether Texas can rely on its percentage plan or needs to take additional steps to assure diversity.)

Another major theme of the report is that the choice colleges face is not an either-or between considering race or only relying on race-neutral strategies.
"Institutions that consider race in admissions decisions use other race-conscious and race-neutral diversity strategies more often and find them more effective than institutions that use race-neutral strategies alone," says the report. "Race-conscious and race-neutral approaches can and do coexist and are often used outside of the admissions decision."

The report praises "holistic review," in which admissions officers review applicants based on the entirety of their applications, and not based on any formula. That approach tends to be used at private, highly competitive colleges. But the report adds that there are other approaches that are working well to promote diversity, including "targeted recruitment and yield initiatives" focused on minority students, similar efforts focused on low-income and first-generation students, summer enrichment programs to help admitted applicants, and special financial aid awards for disadvantaged students.

The ACE study -- while praising the consideration of race along with other race-neutral strategies -- raises criticisms of other approaches to diversity.

For instance, while it notes that the Texas percentage plan has helped to promote diversity, the report stresses this may not work in all states.

"Campus racial diversity as an outcome of the Texas plan depends to some extent on racial segregation in Texas's public high schools -- an inequitable and troubling scenario on which to base major admissions policy," the report says. "The segregated nature of Texas's (and the nation's) K-12 system in fact challenges the notion that any percentage plan is truly race neutral, as its proponents would claim."

And the report doesn't just say that legacy admissions preferences get too much attention -- it questions whether eliminating them would promote diversity. The report acknowledges the "highly symbolic" role of legacy admissions. But the report questions whether killing off this form of admissions would help promote diversity.

"Just doing away with preferences for certain groups does not inherently mean that preferences for desired others will emerge in their place. For example, reducing emphasis on legacies may simply mean there is more room for students with high test scores and [grade point averages]," the report says. "Deeper qualitative research is needed to understand the relationship between doing away with the consideration of legacies in admissions and greater student body diversity."

The report speaks favorably of many efforts -- including consideration of race -- to achieve diversity. But says more research is needed on various approaches, both to promote their effectiveness and to defend these strategies when challenged in court.

Whether the new report will shift public discussion of affirmative action remains to be seen. Edward Blum, one of the lawyers suing the University of Texas in the Supreme Court case, said colleges will not be protected by having many race-neutral strategies if they also consider race in unconstitutional ways.

"To the degree that colleges are using race-neutral means to increase student diversity and student cosmetic diversity, I think that the vast majority of Americans support that," said Blum, and so would the
courts. "But the law does not permit just small amounts of racial classifications and preferences within a greater body of admissions policies. Racial discrimination is racial discrimination," he said.

July 21, 2015

Colleges Seek Diversity, but ‘Admissions Calculus’ Hasn’t Changed

By Eric Hoover

NO MU MENTION

Few selective colleges have changed their admissions practices since the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling in Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin two years ago, according to a report released on Tuesday by the American Council on Education. Yet many institutions, it found, have since embraced various strategies for increasing racial and socioeconomic diversity in their student body.

The report, which is based on a survey of colleges, urges policy makers, researchers, and journalists to consider such nuances as higher education braces for another ruling in the closely watched affirmative-action case. In June the high court announced that it would revisit the lawsuit, which challenges the university’s consideration of race and ethnicity in its evaluations of undergraduate applicants. As the Supreme Court takes up the case for a second time, college officials once again are weighing how best to achieve diversity.

So far, however, most haven’t revamped their admissions practices as a result of Fisher. Only 13 percent of colleges that consider race in admissions reported having changed their processes since 2013. The most prevalent changes were an increased emphasis on socioeconomic disadvantage (11 percent), on international diversity (9 percent), and on ability to pay (8 percent). As the report notes, such changes might have had little or nothing to do with Fisher.

Overlapping Goals
The same caveats surely apply to another set of findings in the report. Over the last two years, the report says, several diversity strategies have "received a post-Fisher boost." Those include increasing the recruitment of transfer students from community colleges (23 percent) and of low-income students (22 percent), as well as bolstering efforts to enroll racial and ethnic minority applicants who have been admitted.

"Institutions may have changed little in their admissions calculus," the report says, "but they seem to have increased their use of other diversity strategies in their broader work."

Diversity efforts can serve overlapping goals. "Race-conscious and race-neutral diversity strategies can and do coexist," the report says. Colleges that consider an applicant’s race, the authors write, are more likely to consider other aspects of his or her background, too. Seventy-four percent of institutions with race-conscious admissions also weigh socioeconomic disadvantage, compared with 27 percent of those with race-neutral admissions, the survey found.

Along with the survey findings, the report serves up some criticism of the news media. Widely used strategies for enhancing racial and socioeconomic diversity — such as articulation agreements with other institutions — receive less attention than less-prevalent practices, such as test-optional admissions policies and statewide percentage plans like the one in Texas.

"If researchers, policy makers, and the press want to align more closely with prevailing practice — and we believe that they should — then the focus of their attention and coverage will need to shift," the report says.

The report, "Race, Class, and College Access: Achieving Diversity in a Shifting Legal Landscape," was written by ACE's Center for Policy Research and Strategy, Pearson’s Center for College and Career Readiness, and the Civil Rights Project at the University of California at Los Angeles. It’s based on a survey of 338 selective four-year colleges.
When Activism Is Worth the Risk

Academics who champion causes may be gambling with their careers. But for some dedicated activists, the choice is clear.

By Audrey Williams June

Justin Hansford lives 10 minutes from Ferguson, Mo., where last summer a white policeman shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager. The incident set off months of protests, as people from all walks of life took a stand against police brutality.

Mr. Hansford, an assistant professor of law at Saint Louis University, just back from a conference in Washington, was among them. When he joined the law faculty at the university, in 2011, it never occurred to him to cast his causes aside: "I was an activist before I was a scholar, you could say."

In the months since the unrest in Ferguson, Mr. Hansford has become a well-known face in the Black Lives Matter movement. He has served as a legal observer during protests, was once arrested and jailed overnight, and was a key organizer of #FergusonToGeneva, a delegation that frames police violence in the United States as a human-rights issue worthy of global attention. Mr. Hansford and others in the group accompanied Michael Brown’s family to Geneva in November to testify before the United Nations Committee Against Torture.

"There’s a tradition of black scholar-activists who fought for justice," says Mr. Hansford, who studies human rights, legal ethics, legal history, and critical race
theory. "This particular activism is almost like a calling for me." But he knows it could hinder his academic career.

With issues of social justice dominating the national conversation, some academics identify as scholar-activists, a term typically used by those deeply involved in progressive causes. They take to the streets as part of protest movements, work alongside community organizers, and push for policy changes, applying their research to underserved communities. Yet balancing activism and scholarship can be risky, especially while on the tenure track.

"I was an activist before I was a scholar, you could say."

Scholar-activists must be ready to fend off the perception that their activism taints their scholarship, or that they’re going to indoctrinate students. Another challenge is time: Some academics struggle to contain their work in the community to do what’s needed to advance professionally.

Juggling the two identities isn’t new, but the task seems tougher today. The crowd was perhaps thicker during and just after the civil-rights and political movements of the 1960s and ’70s, which drew in so many young people, future professors among them. Now activists are more visible, their protests or remarks potentially bringing unwanted attention on social media or cable news — and prompting complaints to universities. Meanwhile, the academic job market in many disciplines is tight.

"We all know that the talented, well-educated young people who are getting Ph.D.s today are unlikely to secure tenure-track jobs," says Frances Fox Piven, a professor of political science and sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and a longtime activist for the poor. "If they’re more insecure, they’re less confident. And they’re inevitably more eager to seek the approval of the people who are the senior academics who are going to make the judgments on whether they get the job, whether they get tenured, or whether they get promoted."

Young academics may decide that now isn’t the time to give those committees an excuse to turn them down. Some give up their activism, for a while anyway. Others choose the hyphenated life, aware of the hazards but hopeful that if their scholarship measures up, their activism won’t count against them. Many look for ways to tie that
work to their professional goals, optimistic that, at some point, their universities will acknowledge that. On an online forum for sociologists, someone recently asked if activism should count toward tenure, generating mostly responses that it should not.

Still, institutions may find reasons to support scholar-activists, many of whom are women and people of color. Signaling to a new generation that engagement with social issues isn’t necessarily a career-killer could help in diversifying the faculty. Successful role models might be a draw for younger scholars.

A sense of urgency, not a calculation of risk, has guided Mr. Hansford. "When the Mike Brown situation happened, there was no time for me to say, ‘Well, I’ll wait a year until I get tenure,’ " he says. His dean has not discouraged him. The decision on the assistant professor’s bid for tenure should come this academic year, but that hasn’t deterred Mr. Hansford: "It would be too much of a compromise for me to hold back on my activism because of that."

Many describe the life of a scholar and an activist as one of isolation and constant pressure, but also of determination.

When Rebecca Tarlau began a Ph.D. in social and cultural studies in education at the University of California at Berkeley, she was dedicated to both worlds. She helped organize statewide protests of tuition increases and served as a leader in the graduate-student union as it fought for higher salaries and better benefits.

"I wanted to be a part of how higher education was being remade," says Ms. Tarlau, now a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University’s Graduate School of Education. But even as she built a reputation as a community organizer, she carved out enough time to establish the bona fides — publications in top journals, for instance — that are respected in academe.

"You have to do the scholarship just as well as the activism," says Ms. Tarlau, who studies the intersection of social movements and education and the development of global educational systems, particularly in Brazil. "I knew I had to hit the steppingstones of what’s considered successful in graduate school."
That’s the time when some aspiring scholar-activists doubt they can pull it off. Rajani Bhatia saw a Ph.D. as a way to enhance her work in the reproductive-rights movement, including a job at an advocacy group. But once in a women’s-studies program at the University of Maryland at College Park, she found that staying on top of her courses, teaching undergraduates, and pursuing a research agenda stripped her of spare time.

"I realized the very first year that I was going have to give up certain aspects of my life," says Ms. Bhatia, who is now an assistant professor of women’s studies at the University at Albany. "For me, it was my activism."

With her tenure clock ticking, Ms. Bhatia still keeps her activist work at a minimum. She maintains connections to groups she used to collaborate with and tries to attend some academic conferences that draw scholar-activists, but that’s about all she can manage, she says. "My clear priority is getting tenure."

The pressure to tamp down activism can also be external. April L. Few-Demo remembers, as an assistant professor of human development at Virginia Tech, a turning point in her academic career. In her fourth-year review, she was told to publish more, she says, and to cut back on service that had an activist bent.

On the advice of her department chair, she chose community outreach and service activities that could yield strong submissions to academic journals. She altered her teaching, informed by black feminist pedagogy, by giving fewer writing assignments, so as to limit the time she spent grading and focus more on research, she says. Ms. Few-Demo, who chronicled her efforts to balance activism with the demands of earning tenure in a journal article, became a tenured associate professor in the department in 2006.

"People are still facing the same challenges as I did then," she says of young professors today.

Scholar-activists at any point in their careers have to reckon with the perception of bias and watch how they represent themselves to students.

"Calling yourself a scholar-activist, in a way, puts a target on you in the classroom," says Carl S. Taylor, a professor of sociology at Michigan State University and an expert on youth violence in urban America. A native of Detroit, he conducts research there and works with young people and various organizations to help reduce violence
in the community. "You have students who will applaud you for what you do," he says, "and those that won’t."

Mr. Hansford, of Saint Louis University, can relate. After his night in jail, last October, he went to teach his first-year torts class. He didn’t bring up the experience of his first time behind bars, he says. "I didn’t feel as if it was a safe space to mention it."

Some students in that class had already complained to his dean, Mr. Hansford says, that he was difficult to meet with because he was so busy. Others, he knew, agreed with the steady stream of alumni who emailed him, he says, to make clear that they opposed his activism and to threaten to withhold donations to the institution.

In some cases, it can at least appear that a scholar’s activism plays a role in his or her career’s going awry. David Graeber, an anthropologist and radical activist who helped to set up the Occupy Wall Street movement, had trouble finding an academic job in the United States. Yale University decided not to renew his contract in 2005, though it didn’t point to his activism as an underlying factor. Mr. Graeber is now a professor of anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Even when the details of a hiring, tenure, or promotion decision are complex or unknown, a denial can deter younger scholars.

For now, if they find support, it’s more likely to be individual than institutional.

Many scholar-activists point to a mentor or role model they looked to for guidance or inspiration early on. Laura Pulido, a professor of American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California, is one of those role models.

Over the years, says Ms. Pulido, who is known for her work on social and environmental justice, she has entertained countless questions from young academics about how to navigate their careers. She wrote a chapter for a book on methods of activist scholarship, published in 2008, that featured answers to frequently asked questions.
At the top of the list: How her institution responds to her activist work. For the most part, Ms. Pulido wrote, she hasn’t "faced any real problems with administrators."

Producing top-notch scholarship is key. So is landing in an academic home that embraces scholar-activists, she says. That might not always be the most highly ranked destination in a given field.

Such a trade-off is often necessary, says Rose M. Brewer, a professor of African-American and African studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Also crucial is a group of like-minded people, to avoid what can become crippling isolation.

Even then, says Ms. Brewer, a founding member of the Black Radical Congress, aspiring scholar-activists should know what they’re getting into: "There might be tremendous battles and struggles if you go down this road."

Some people do manage to find a good fit. Stephany Rose, a newly tenured associate professor of women’s and ethnic studies at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs says her interview in 2010 encouraged her that she could flourish there.

For starters, her future colleagues already understood her area of research, critical whiteness studies. For almost a decade, the university had co-sponsored a national conference on white privilege. She got the impression that activist work was considered appropriate in her line of scholarship. "They had done their due diligence on me," she says. "They were very forthcoming and let me know what they value."

The Women’s and Ethnic Studies Program tries to make that impression, says Andrea Herrera, the program’s director.

"When we created our tenure-and-promotion criteria, it’s implicitly stated that we value community activism," Ms. Herrera says. "Now when we hire people, that’s the kind of people that we attract, the kind who value that kind of work."

Some institutions and academic departments recognize "engaged scholarship," or research done in partnership with communities. Revised tenure policies at Michigan State, Portland State, and Syracuse Universities regard engaged scholarship as legitimate work. Syracuse’s faculty manual says the university is "committed to longstanding traditions of scholarship as well as evolving perspectives" and will continue to "support scholars in all of these traditions, including faculty who choose to participate in engaged scholarship."
Activism hasn’t reached that level of acceptance. But some scholars see signs that it is gaining traction as a worthwhile pursuit.

Gregory C. Ellison II, a recently tenured associate professor of pastoral care and counseling at Emory University, is still trying to "figure out how to broker" the scholar-activist life, he says. He founded the organization Fearless which brings together unlikely groups of people — pastors, gang members, government leaders, drug dealers, and students, for instance — to discuss the issues that plague young black males and come up with ways to improve their communities.

Traveling to at least 30 cities with that group, trying to change how black men are perceived, he saw his work as risky. But during a recent presentation for some Emory administrators and trustees, the response was more affirming than he expected.

"We are determined to support a wide range of styles of scholarship."

"They began to talk about my role as a professor and my role as an activist," Mr. Ellison says, as well as about how best to measure success for those who are both. "It was humbling, but also gratifying, to know that there are actually allies at the upper echelon of the university who are concerned about this."

Jan Love, dean of Emory’s Candler School of Theology, says its "bottom-line standard" for evaluating research — publications in refereed journals and books published by top presses — accommodates the kind of activist work that is the backbone of Mr. Ellison’s scholarship.

"Within that standard, we are determined to support a wide range of styles of scholarship," Ms. Love says. "One of our intentions as an entire school is to shape public debate about pressing moral issues of the day. We don’t think there’s a trade-off between very fine scholarly work that’s informed by one’s guild and public engagement."

Such support may grow, if it does at all, only in pockets. Meanwhile, scholars like Mr. Hansford are trying to fulfill personal commitments along with professional expectations. He recently co-wrote a scholarly article based on a report he helped draft to present to the United Nations. His trip to Geneva also informed the human-
rights course he teaches. And as a Fulbright scholar, he is now in South Africa to study the legal career of Nelson Mandela.

During a recent panel discussion at the University of California at Los Angeles on the Black Lives Matter movement, Mr. Hansford was pointed about priorities: "How important is this movement, and what are we willing to risk?"