Mizzou News

Daily Clips Packet

August 7, 2015
A University of Missouri professor and two others have been accused of stealing artifacts from a southeastern Washington national forest two years ago.

R. Lee Lyman, a professor of archaeology at MU, was charged in June with second-degree theft, second-degree malicious mischief and making false or misleading statements to a public servant.

Research specialist Matthew T. Boulanger, who was a doctoral candidate at MU at the time, along with Dave N. Schmitt, a researcher from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, were each charged with second-degree theft and second-degree malicious mischief.

The Columbia Tribune reported that while on a research trip to the Umatilla National Forest and Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness, the three removed more than 93 items from seven sites in 2013 in violation of the federal Archaeological Resources Protection Act. Court documents identified the artifacts taken as more than arrowheads and said they “are important contextually in an archeological and anthropological sense.”

The three were arraigned July 22, with Schmitt pleading not guilty and the others not entering any plea. Lyman and Boulanger’s next court date is scheduled for early September.

A trial date for Schmitt was set for Oct. 15 in Washington state.
MU Professor accused of taking artifacts

A University of Missouri professor is accused of taking artifacts from a national forest without permission. Archaeology professor R. Lee Lyman faces charges of theft and malicious mischief. He and a research specialist are accused of removing more than 93 items from national forest sites in Washington State in 2013. Lyman said in an article the artifacts were clearly visible and could be removed by people using the area.

Watch the story: http://mms.tveyes.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=76a9698e-637c-4679-a3ab-44e6f4b06503
Say It Ain't So, Indiana Jones

August 7, 2015

**Did archaeologists from the University of Missouri at Columbia steal dozens of artifacts from a national forest?** The Associated Press reported that R. Lee Lyman, professor and chair of archaeology at Missouri, was charged with second-degree theft, second-degree malicious mischief and making false or misleading statements to a public servant regarding an investigation into missing artifacts from Washington State. Matthew T. Boulanger, a research specialist, also has reportedly been charged. The men allegedly took some 93 artifacts -- including arrowheads and other byproducts of toolmaking -- without permission from the Umatilla National Forest and Wenaha-Tucannon Wilderness in southeastern Washington during a 2013 research trip. The artifacts, taken from seven different sites, were protected by the federal Archaeological Resources Protection Act.

Dave N. Schmitt, a researcher affiliated with Southern Methodist University, also faces charges and has pleaded not guilty. He told the Columbia Daily Tribune that the charges are “a thorn in our side and completely unfounded.” Lyman and Boulanger were arraigned in July but did not enter a plea. Lyman did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Boulanger said he had no comment "regarding pending legal action."

The investigation report cites an article the men wrote about the research trip. It says that no excavation was done but some artifacts were collected because they were visible and could be removed by passersby, according to the Associated Press. A university spokesman said the university was aware of the charges but couldn’t comment further.
COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Two new mumps cases confirmed in Columbia

SARAH FINE, 13 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Two more MU students were confirmed to have mumps Thursday, bringing the number of known cases to nine.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said he could not comment on whether the outbreak was specific to MU Residential Life because of federal privacy laws. According to a flier posted in the Defoe-Graham residence hall, which is open to students during the summer, Residential Life was notified on July 24 that a student in the hall was diagnosed with mumps. According to the flier, the student left the hall and would not return until he or she was no longer contagious.

Thursday’s confirmed cases were the first announced in Columbia since July 29. Andrea Waner of the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services said as of early Thursday afternoon, three more people were waiting for test results and four more cases were "probable," meaning the patients have the symptoms of mumps or have physical or geographical connections to people with confirmed cases. All of the nine confirmed cases were up to date on their vaccines for mumps, measles and rubella, Waner said.

Waner said MMR vaccines are 88 percent effective, and people who are vaccinated and still get the virus may experience shorter illnesses or milder symptoms than people who did not receive vaccinations.

MU residence halls staff are scheduled to move in on Saturday; students eligible for early move-in such as members of Marching Mizzou are scheduled to move in on Aug. 16; and the rest of students can move in on Aug. 19.
The university has reached out to current and new students to help keep the virus at bay. Basi said the university sent emails to students about mumps and the virus' symptoms and advised anyone experiencing those symptoms to see a health care provider, in accordance with guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In the emails, he said, MU also reminded students to make sure they have received all vaccines recommended by the university, including those for measles, mumps and rubella.

According to the CDC, the most common symptoms of mumps are fever, fatigue, aching muscles, headache, loss of appetite and swollen salivary glands under the ears. The virus is highly contagious and can be spread via saliva or mucus from the mouth, nose or throat. Symptoms usually crop up 16 to 18 days after the initial infection, and recovery can take up to a few weeks. The disease is not generally life-threatening, and complications are rare.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

DEAR READER: The video of Columbia police shooting Mark Adair should be seen

TOM WARHOVER, 1 hr ago

This week, we found out officially what many people assumed all along: The killing of a man by police in the Hitt Street garage was justified. Cooper County Prosecutor Doug Abele said so and said there will be no charges filed against the police officers who shot and killed Mark W. Adair.

The only question for the public may be what took so long to make that judgment: From a layman’s eyes, the body cam video from one of the officers (names were not disclosed) makes for an open-and-shut case.

The question for the newsroom was whether to show the video. On Monday night, it wasn’t available on columbia missourian.com. Nightside editors thought the video was too graphic for
some readers. In the light of the next morning, we added it. Why the change? Several points emerged.

Was it too graphic?

The video shows the MU police officer getting out of his SUV near Adair and saying, “Sir, can you come over here and talk to me real quick?” Adair pulls a gun out of his pocket as he walks straight up to the officer. The two begin a struggle. Shots ring out. Adair falls. The officer with the body cam fires several shots at Adair. In the final moments, Adair’s arm falls to the pavement.

We watch a man die right here in Columbia, Missouri.

Some staffers thought any on-screen death to be too much. The article describes what happened; why subject readers unnecessarily to violence?

It’s not a new argument. I imagine journalists have been tasked with weighing community standards since the first photograph was put in a local paper. There’s no easy or clean definition for what’s too graphic. A photo a few years back showed just the shoe of someone who died in an accident. It provoked much more controversy than past photos that showed blood or even body bags.

The other implicit question deals with geography. A picture (video or still) of a death across an ocean will prompt less outrage than one in town. You might say that’s not fair or right — we should respect all humankind equally. But it is a fact. A picture from the Ukraine and a picture from Columbia don’t carry the same weight.

As I watched the video, I didn’t see anything that made me think this was too much for most local viewers. In movie parlance, the video would have been PG-13, probably. The most dramatic (and potentially traumatic) point of the video was that these weren’t actors. Mark W. Adair wasn’t getting up after someone yelled, “cut!”
Did the news value outweigh sensitivity concerns?

Absolutely, in my mind.

The audio and video captured by the officer’s body camera provide a scene that simply can’t be captured as well in words. The picture presented lets readers decide for themselves what to think of the prosecutor’s judgment. Providing the video is also in keeping with a Missourian goal of providing documentation of an issue or event. It’s the same reason you could read the entire 126-page report by the prosecutor.

What’s more, putting body cams on officers has become a rallying cry across the country for people who want greater accountability and transparency in their police forces. What began as a pretty good idea turned into a mandate, especially after the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, a year ago.

So here we had local proof of how a body cam could provide crucial evidence, but we wouldn’t show it? That didn’t make sense to me.

In the end, two versions of the video were included. The first shows only the first part, where Adair pulls a gun and attacks the officer. The second shows the whole incident. The first was embedded; the second required just one more click, to the YouTube page, to see it.

The video, even one as clear as this, shows only one point of view. It’s not the whole story. That’s what prosecutor Abele spent time and many pages filling out.

The report adds up to this: Adair was a particularly bad dude. A violent one. He kidnapped and raped a 9-year-old in 1988. He had been in and out of prison since. Earlier the night of April 15, he held a woman at gunpoint in the parking lot of Moser’s Supermarket. He was confronting three other women in the Hitt Street garage as the police pulled up. He attacked police. The officers were justified in shooting him.
Why football players get hurt during finals

College football players are more likely to get hurt during test weeks than during training camp, according to new research.

The effects of academic stress on injury occurrences are even more pronounced among starting players, the researchers find.

“Stress is systemic,” says Bryan Mann, an assistant professor of physical therapy in the University of Missouri School of Health Professions and assistant director of strength and conditioning for Mizzou Athletics.

“Everything players deal with on a daily basis creates stress. They don’t have separate accounts to withdraw from for practice, school, and relationships. Whenever there’s stress, something’s got to give. Otherwise, it’s similar to when unexpected expenses arise at the same time and you’re likely to overdraw your checking account. It’s the same idea but on a physiological basis rather than a monetary one.”

The researchers studied weekly injury reports for 101 student athletes on a Division 1 college football team during a 20-week season. Sixty different athletes had 86 injury restrictions during the season. The researchers found players were 3.19 times more likely to have an injury restriction during weeks when they had high academic stress, such as midterms or finals, than during weeks when they had low academic stress.

When the researchers compared players’ injury restrictions for weeks of high physical stress—such as training camp—and weeks of low academic stress, athletes were 2.84 times more likely to have injury restrictions.

“We know when there will be midterms or finals, and we can plan for these academic stressors and accommodate practices accordingly to minimize the risk of injuries,” Mann says. “Some stressors we can’t predict, but if we know about them, then there are things that we can do.

“Coaches should get to know the athletes and watch how their attitudes change. As attitudes change, it usually indicates that something else is going on in their lives. We’ve got to find those
causes so we can be proactive and get the athletes counseling or find other ways to meet their needs.”

The study appears online ahead of print in the *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Farmers and students displayed produce at Bradford Research Center's Organic Field Day

KAYLA PIEDIMONTE, 11 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — For Domenic and Nancy Giofre and their beehives, this year was different compared to most others.

"We just haven't had as much of a chance to get out to the flowers because of the rain," said Domenic Giofre, who harvested the beehives for honey. "The rain has washed the pollen away from the flowers."

**Domenic and Nancy Giofre were two of several farmers who presented and educated people about their produce Thursday afternoon at Bradford Research Center for the third annual Organic Field Day. The event was geared toward small-scale and organic farmers around mid-Missouri.**

The rainy weather this summer affected the growing season for each farmer and their produce differently.

In addition to rinsing off the pollen, the rain also takes away the nectar that the bees need to eat, Domenic Giofre said.

In order to keep the bees fed, Nancy Giofre keeps a feeder full of sugar water on top of all new hives that started this year because it's been too wet for them to forage and bring back food. All in all, they monitor 50 hives.
But for the bees, Nancy said she'd rather have a lot of rain than a drought.

"The hardest part this year is having to feed the bees more," she said. "It's expensive."

Giofre Apiaries farm is located in Millersburg, Missouri. The Giofres also grow lavender plants that were affected by the continuous rains.

"It's been too wet for them, and they've died," Nancy Giofre said.

Nancy Giofre said the rains have extended the flower season, and it's been good for her clovers.

"The flowers are there, but the nectar got washed away."

For Terry Durham of Eridu Farms, located in Hartsburg, the rains have treated his elderberries well. Joey Los, a representative for the farm, described the growing season as fantastic.

"They produce more when there's plenty of water, and this year was perfect for them," Los said.

The berries like a lot of water, and they generally grow along ditches and creeks and in moist areas.

The berries are ready to be harvested, Los said. Once harvested, Eridu Farms will turn the elderberries into juice, jam and other products.

Recent MU graduate Andrew Beckerle along with two MU students, Colleen Armstrong and Hilary Sears, faced several difficulties growing crops during the wet season. First, they had to wait to prep the field and then for the crops to come in.

"The biggest problem was a lot of crops got in late," Armstrong said.

Once the crops could be harvested, more problems arose, especially with the tomatoes, which didn't do as well as they had hoped. Beckerle said tomatoes favor dryer weather and had more disease than usual.
"With all the water, it's much easier for fungus to spread around," Sears said.

The three farmers showcased the crops that made it through the summer at the field day.

According to Armstrong, the rain during the summer affected most of the crops they grew. Where the crops would sprout was a huge determining factor for the outcome of the plants.

However, the rain didn't spell doom for all the crops. The three farmers also picked and displayed different Missouri wildflowers that were grown on the farm.

"The flowers love it," Sears said. "They are happy."

Family Impact Center schedules back-to-school health fair

Thursday, August 6, 2015 at 2:00 pm

**University of Missouri Extension’s Family Impact Center, 105 E. Ash St., will offer free school supplies, health screenings and haircuts for elementary school, middle school and high school students from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday during the Boone County Back-to-School Health Fair.**

Nick Foster, director of the Voluntary Action Center, recommends that parents or guardians accompany their children.

“This event helps prepare students and their families for the school year by providing necessary supplies and health screenings,” said Anna Hoskins, a social worker for the Family Health Center. “It’s a huge community benefit.”

The Family Impact Center and the Family Health Center coordinate the event with the Voluntary Action Center.
ICHTHUS HEARING DRAWS MAJOR CROWD ONCE AGAIN

ANDREW KESSEL, 11 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — In advance of a Boone County Commission vote on Tuesday whether to relocate a war memorial featuring a Christian symbol from government property, the issue once again drew heavy comment Thursday at a public hearing.

The commission meeting introduced a draft order that calls for the relocation of the Gulf War memorial that features an engraved ichthus, or "Jesus fish" symbol. The order contains the legal opinion of B. Daniel Simon, who wrote that the ichthus symbol on government property violated the separation of church and state. The county covered up the symbol with a stone plaque in May 2014 after receiving a records request from the Washington, D.C.-based Americans United for Separation of Church and State. The decision was made without a public hearing and has prompted continued backlash. On Memorial Day, a plastic ichthus of unknown origin appeared in its place.

The memorial honors Patrick Connor and Steven Farnen, county residents who died in the Gulf War.

Steven Farnen's parents, Hugh and Gladys Farnen, were among the first to offer comment. Hugh Farnen brought a picture of his son and held it up for the commission to see.

Hugh Farnen said it is a sin to mock the honorable service of those who fought and died for our country.
The hearing comes a day after the Connor and Farnen families co-wrote a letter to the commission that stated that the families were willing to have the ichthus covered as long as the monument stayed at the courthouse among the other war memorials.

By the time the hearing started, their request was halfway met. Earlier this week, the plastic ichthus that was placed on Memorial Day disappeared as mysteriously as it arrived. County officials said they were not behind its disappearance.

According to Simon's legal opinion, the commission can solve its church and state problem by relocating the monument or removing the symbol. The draft order the commission is voting on, however, calls specifically for the monument to be relocated to Columbia Cemetery.

Presiding Commissioner Dan Atwill didn't say whether leaving the memorial at the courthouse was an option now that the plastic ichthus has been removed.

Mark Schierbecker, who leads an MU organization for students who don't adhere to a religion, was one of the only attendees to speak in favor of relocating the monument. He said afterward the commission's decision not to remove the plastic ichthus themselves presents "credibility problems" for a governmental body meant to uphold the separation of church and state.

Schierbecker, though, was not in the majority. About a dozen people echoed the Farnens' call for the monument to stay. Almost all of them called on the commission to honor the wishes of the families and criticized the body for ignoring the views of their constituents.

Fred Berry of Columbia said that the commissioners need to focus on the citizens they were elected to serve, not any outside entity.

"It's the grass-roots level where people live that we need to be concerned about," Berry said.

Gladys Farnen had only one question for the commissioners.

"Why can't they be honored at the same place as the other soldiers?" she said.
The commissioners' vote will be held at the Roger B. Wilson Government Center at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday.

The Dean of Sexual Assault

August 7, 2015
By
Lee Burdette Williams

NO MU MENTION

The title “Dean of Students” is a throwback, and I’ve always liked that. When I found myself holding that title, first at a large university and then at a small college, I imagined myself as a link in a chain going back more than a hundred years, serious yet wry educators staring down a miscreant freshman one minute and comforting a lonely sophomore the next.

I liked that it made clear my highest priority: students. Whatever else might have been swirling around a campus, I knew that my primary focus, my raison d’être, was to tend to the welfare of my students.

I sometimes joked that a more accurate title was “Dean of Students ... and Their Parents,” given the amount of time I spent soothing and advising parents, or sometimes getting yelled at by them. Sometimes, I told my colleagues, my title was “Dean of the Student,” as a crisis sharpened my focus on a single individual in need of complicated assistance, temporarily pushing all other tasks to the side.

Mostly, I would remind myself, I was “Dean of All Students,” a title that kept me centered on the need for objectivity, for support of a student regardless of his or her actions, for fairness and openness and refusal to take sides in a student-versus-student situation. This was never easy when it came to matters of student conduct, when I needed to balance the interests of one student with another’s, or the good of a student versus the good of the community.

It was, though, what I signed on for in my pursuit of an education and a career. I tried to put myself in the shoes of each student I encountered, remembering my own undergraduate indiscretions, and in doing so, I found a degree of patience with my
students that allowed me to guide them, with some degree of equanimity, through very
difficult situations.

In sexual assault cases, the numbers of which grew during my nine years as a dean of
students, this was particularly critical. In a case where one student charges another
with sexual misconduct, it is clear from the outset that no one is going to “win.” The
existence of the charge itself is the middle, not the start, of a story that began days or
weeks or sometimes months before, and the harm -- regardless of what might have
happened in the actual situation -- has occurred and cannot be undone.

No winners. Many losers. My job, upon hearing of a situation (whether or not it was
heading to a conduct hearing or a report to law enforcement), was not to take sides but
to remain as clearheaded and objective as possible. Calling myself Dean of All Students
-- the accused and the accuser -- was my reminder to myself as I began the process of
overseeing the institutional response: the investigation, the support, the parents’
questions, the community outcry (if there was one).

I didn’t investigate: I deployed skilled people to do that. I didn’t advocate: I assigned
staff to those roles. I didn’t judge: I relied on smart, thoughtful, compassionate
colleagues to find whatever truth might be there in the midst of accusations and
counteraccusations.

My job was to protect a process that often felt like it was under siege by parents,
lawyers, friends of the students involved, faculty and staff members who had an
interest in the case. I stood at the figurative door and held off all those who would
interfere, impede or otherwise compromise a process we had worked hard to create, so
that my colleagues could do their work and my students could be treated fairly.
When it was over, my job became managing the fallout, whatever it was, which meant
working with students, faculty and staff, parents, and sometimes alumni to repair any
damage that might have been done. I protected the confidentiality of the process. I
assured the staff who had done their jobs that their very hard work was appreciated. I
reassured students that we always -- always -- took these matters seriously, and that
they needed to trust this process and the people involved.

It was a community matter, and we sorted through it -- imperfectly, perhaps, but with
as much integrity as possible -- as a community. We hurt and we healed and we moved
on to the next event or crisis or commencement, comforted by the rhythm of the
academic year, which always brought a respite not too far off.

Then the world started to change. The community in which I did my work was breached
by those on the outside who understood very little of what my day-to-day work
entailed. In 2011, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights sent a Dear
Colleague letter clarifying its expectations for how we were to handle sexual assault.
I read the letter, nodding at some parts and shaking my head at others. It felt like a
group of well-intended but misinformed interlopers had shown up to tell me how to do a
job I had done for years. Absent any input from people in jobs like mine, this group of
lawyers and policy specialists created a blueprint for an already existing structure,
disregarding the years of effort undertaken to build it. We needed some renovation.
They were requiring a gut rehab.
Why did this happen? There were institutions that had not treated their students well, and quite possibly there were some incompetent people at the helm of those institutions’ efforts. But many of my counterparts and I had been doing the hard work of managing these cases for years and knew a lot about what worked well and what needed changing. Didn’t our judgment, our input, count for anything?

For weeks, I pored over the various documents available online -- letters of agreement and results of investigations that the Office of Civil Rights made public. I was disturbed by the ways some institutions had ignored longstanding harassment and tolerated truly unsafe conditions. I believed they were in the minority, but the existence of any undermined confidence in us all. I made my peace with that, and with renewed determination to do this important work well, helped my campus examine and improve our policies, our outreach, our educational efforts.

I started talking more openly with parents during orientation, encouraged our college to hire a skilled Title IX coordinator without other time-consuming responsibilities, successfully applied for a grant from the Department of Justice to enhance our efforts. In short, I did everything I could to do my job well and help my campus support the students in my care. I even stopped griping about the Dear Colleague letter and tried to see it as it was probably intended: a rebuke to some, a reminder to all of the importance of our work and the students for whom we are responsible.

But clouds continued to gather on the horizon. For reasons that baffled us all, OCR released a list of colleges and universities under investigation for alleged Title IX complaints, despite the fact that these institutions had not yet been found to be in violation of anything. It was merely a list of institutions in the OCR queue to be investigated for what at least one student believed was a failure of the institution to meet its Title IX obligations related to sexual harassment.

The fact that these were either open investigations or had not even been fully shared with the institution didn't matter. Colleges and universities were pilloried in the press, their administrators accused of “covering up” something that they themselves had perhaps not even fully investigated yet. The reasons for releasing this list were unclear, but the damage was indisputable. The presumption of our role -- student advocates -- changed, and we were now presumed to be standing in the way of student safety and accountability, two things our profession holds dear.

Then the Obama administration began a well-meaning but relatively shallow campaign to hold institutions accountable, and momentum built. Everyone was talking about sexual assault on campus -- an outcome any dean of students would have been grateful for in the past. But the lines had been drawn, and somehow we ended up as targets of enmity instead of comrades in this important battle.

Media coverage, some by the best newspapers and magazines in the country, was constant, each reporter looking for an example from a campus to use as the lead-in to the story. Blogs and other online posts and comments became an increasingly powerful mode of “discussion,” which devolved into accusations of incompetence and cover-ups by allegedly self-interested colleges and universities.
Meanwhile, on our campuses, sexual assaults were still happening, and we were still responding to them as capably as we could. I still stood at the door, trying to protect a process that served all of my students in a way I could still call “educational,” because that was what I was -- an educator -- but the outside groups demanding access, explanation and redress had grown, dwarfing the community I was charged with protecting.

In the space of a year, it felt like my work had gone from being appropriately scrutinized by the members of my community who knew me and cared about our students and who had every right to expect me to answer to them, to being the object of uninformed opinions expressed by people who couldn’t have found my campus on a map.

In addition to the lawyers of OCR and DOJ, my counterparts across the country and I had to worry that each decision we made in a sexual misconduct matter would be made public, mostly by social media, vilified by clueless pundits, turned into slick justifications by “advocates,” would attract the attention of one of the high-powered lawyers making the rounds of cable TV talk shows and press conferences, and become the incident that would end our careers, or at the very least, sully our reputations. Federal laws and our own deeply rooted professional guidelines prohibited us from fighting back publicly, even if we wanted to. We remained silent while the battle raged around us.

But I found myself thinking, I didn’t sign on for this. Unlike professional athletes or musical performers or reality TV stars, people who become deans of students are not usually interested in the spotlight. Our work goes on behind closed doors where the hearts of students are laid bare and need to be repaired, or in campus forums where our students get to question our decisions and we can defend them, or change them. These things happen in the context of community, and that is what provides meaning and validity. That is how change, and improvement, occur.

And now our work is the subject of bloggers and activists who are so driven by agendas that they cannot consider an alternative viewpoint. Our efforts to serve our campuses are being pushed aside by the cottage industry of “consultants” and lawyers who prey on the fear of presidents and boards, worried that their institution will be the next one featured in The New York Times.

Did we need to be challenged about sexual assault response? Yes, and we were, and we worked hard to improve.

Did we need to be better as a profession? Yes. I have never believed I had it all figured out, and don’t know any other deans of students who would make that claim. But when swept up in a tidal wave of uncivil and often uninformed opinion offering, unfounded accusations, questionable Title IX complaints and spurious litigation, it is hard to do anything other than keep from drowning. Trying to improve one’s stroke at that moment is impossible.

Eventually, I found myself thinking of a new variation on my title. I had become, I realized, the Dean of Sexual Assault. Every case became an all-out crisis, and the cases were coming more frequently as awareness grew. Some cases were clearly appropriate uses of the process, while others were not, but it didn’t matter. I had little time to do the other parts of a job that has many other parts. I was consumed by situations
involving two or three or four students and had hardly any time left for the rest of those on my campus who needed and deserved my attention.

Very little has been written about or by those of us who work on the front lines of this issue, and when something is written, like *Rolling Stone*’s travesty of journalism last November, we are often portrayed as unfeeling idiots who care about nothing: not our students, not our institutions, not the law. Of course, the reverse is true: we care about each, and nothing trumps the affection we feel for our students. That affection is what made me so proud, so honored, to have a title that made clear to everyone what my first priority was, every single day I went to work.

It’s a title I no longer have. When I realized I didn’t want to be Dean of Sexual Assault, I decided to step away from a profession and identity I had treasured. When it became clear to me that being Dean of All Students was no longer possible without the constant threat of litigation, media coverage and Internet trolls, I thought it best to be dean of none. I hope there are others in this noble work who can weather this storm and emerge on the other side of the tumult. I won’t be among them, but I understand their anguish, and I wish them well.

August 7, 2015

What the Public Wants From Accreditation

By Goldie Blumenstyk

**NO MU MENTION**

Accreditation is at a pivotal point, facing growing scrutiny from Congress and the public about its effectiveness in assuring quality and its relevance in an era when new models of higher education are beginning to emerge.

In recent weeks, lawmakers have questioned whether accrediting bodies have the ability — and the will — to regulate colleges found to have misrepresented their job-placement rates, and at least one newspaper investigation has challenged the "watchdog" value of a system that allows colleges to remain accredited even though many of their students fail to graduate and default on their student loans. Coming changes in the federal law governing higher education are also likely to include some shifts in the accreditation process.

Judith S. Eaton, president of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, an organization of accreditors and institutions, sits at the center of those debates. The
Chronicle spoke with her on Thursday about the challenges facing the accreditation system. The following conversation has been edited and condensed.

Q. Accreditation has been taking a bit of a beating lately. Where do you see the big issues facing accreditation right now?

A. The biggest single issue is the call for accreditation to speak more explicitly to the performance of a college or a university — students graduating, students completing other educational goals, they’re successfully transferring, they get jobs. People want a tighter connection between performance of a college or a university, described in those terms, and whether or not a university is accredited.

Q. Is that new for accreditation?

A. No, it is not new, but it has become more intense and more focused. And I think it’s part of the broader conversation about the importance of some kind of postsecondary education, about tuition, about student debt, about default. That’s what’s putting all this pressure on this scrutiny right now, and what’s ramping up its perceived importance.

Q. Historically, accreditation has been about a process of self-improvement for the colleges, and also some level of this accountability that you’ve just discussed. For the accountability piece, does that mean accreditors are going to be asked to enforce some sort of minimum standards for acceptable graduation rates, acceptable default rates? And if that’s the case, who sets those bars?

A. There is discussion that there ought to be minimum acceptable levels of performance. Whether that actually happens or not for institutional accreditors is not clear. I know there’s more discussion about performance among the regional accreditors. Of course, the accreditors in the for-profit sector already have some performance levels like job placement, like gainful employment, now.

Many of the programmatic accreditors already have explicit cutoffs in the form of licensure pass rates, whether or not they meet state requirements for employment in a particular field. The federal government could develop these expected levels, or these minimum performance levels, or floor, or bright lines — those are all the words that are used. It could emerge — I stress the "could" — in the Higher Education Act.

Alternatively there is some discussion — I don’t know where it could go, and it’s not definitive at this point — among accreditors about, How do we say more about the performance of a college or a university?
Q. Are accreditors themselves comfortable with setting these minimum bars?

A. Historically, no. But I think there is a significant awareness now that the kind of accountability that is being demanded right now takes us to a point where we must be more explicit about performance in some way. One way that the academic and accreditation community could do this is to have institutionally based indicators established. That, I think, would certainly be preferable to many people than having national or federal indicators.

Q. In public discussions about accreditation, there are often concerns that it is a little too self-reverential. Some people go so far as to call it a cartel and question whether it has inherent conflicts of interest because its members review fellow members. What could accreditors do to answer some of those concerns?

A. Accreditors can make clearer — they already do this, it’s publicly available information — the protections they have put in place to avoid conflicts of interest. I know we in accreditation talk about the value of peer review all of the time. But at the same time we could say more about how we protect against peer review going awry when everybody’s got safeguards such as conflict-of-interest policies that are used. You have to have them, and you have to implement them.

The other thing that you can do — and I think we’re seeing more and more of this — is bringing in more public members to serve on accreditation teams. There are already public members serving on all the accrediting commissions, the decision-making bodies. And we’re seeing the beginning of more and more international colleagues on accrediting teams as well. So if we keep the academic core of the peer-review team, but we continue to diversify it with more public members and more colleagues from other countries or other parts of the United States, or other regions in regional accreditation, and this happens frequently, I think that can help as well.

Q. We’re seeing new kinds of organizations entering the educational market and even some discussion about ways to make some of them eligible for federal student aid. What’s the role for accreditation as these new entities start to play a bigger and bigger part in the higher-education ecosystem?

A. This is a sector [of non-degree-granting organizations] that’s going to continue to grow, whether it’s courses or modules or boot camps, you name it. The issue is going to be — if we’ve got, for example, down the road millions of students enrolled in these kinds of educational experiences — what is the quality?
If I’m right about that, the issue is going to be what kind of quality review, and who is going to do that? It needs to be, I would argue, external. An accrediting organization might say, "We want to do that," and develop a capacity to examine these kinds of innovative providers.

Or the accrediting community could say, "Look, this is really important. In the future, we need to have some kind of capacity, but maybe we want to work with some others to create some new kinds of quality-review bodies that are going to work on this particular new sector, and we’ll cooperate with one another."