Missouri Right to Life seeks legislation targeting university, health department

By Rudi Keller

Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Abortion opponents are planning an aggressive legislative agenda for 2016 aimed at Planned Parenthood, the Department of Health and Senior Services and the University of Missouri.

Legislative hearings about the disposal of fetal tissue at the Planned Parenthood clinic in St. Louis and the license allowing the Columbia clinic to resume abortions show the need for tighter controls, Missouri Right to Life said Tuesday in a news release. Those hearings, the organization said, “continue to bring to light the sinister workings of the above groups, as they bend and break Missouri laws to allow Planned Parenthood in Columbia and St. Louis to profit from killing babies and selling their precious baby body parts.”

Lawmakers are investigating Planned Parenthood after the release of undercover videos that allegedly show officials discussing the use of fetal tissue for research. The fees for transferring the tissue are discussed in the videos, which foes argue show Planned Parenthood engaged in the illegal commercial trade of human tissue.

Planned Parenthood has defended its practices as legal because federal law allows fees to cover the costs involved in storing and transporting tissue. The organization has denied that any tissue from abortions done in Missouri is used for research, and the investigations have not proved otherwise.

The legislation sought by Missouri Right to Life would require the state to monitor the disposal of fetal tissue from abortions. It would bar the university from using tax money for “abortion services of any kind” or research using cloning techniques, embryonic stem cells or fetal tissue.

The bill also would tighten the requirement that physicians providing abortions have staff privileges at a hospital in the same community as the clinic, the news release said.

The university follows all state and federal laws and does not perform abortions except to save the lives of mothers, MU Health Care spokeswoman Mary Jo Banken said in an email.
The university has a researcher working on two projects involving human embryonic stem cells, Banken wrote. The research has been underway for more than a decade and uses stem cell lines approved for research by then-President George W. Bush, she wrote.

During the legislative hearings, health department Director Gail Vasterling has defended the decision to issue a license for drug-induced abortions in Columbia. She told lawmakers that required annual inspections have been conducted at abortion clinics each year since 2011 and blamed budget constraints for spotty inspections before that time.

Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis clinic sends the tissue from each abortion to Pathology Services Inc., which produces a report on the fetus required by state law. Vasterling said the department did not know how the lab disposed of the tissue because no inspections were required.

Abortions resumed in Columbia after Colleen McNicholas, the St. Louis doctor performing abortions for Planned Parenthood, was granted “refer and follow” privileges at MU Health Care. The law requires physicians performing abortions to have surgical privileges at a local hospital, but the department interpreted the law only to apply when clinics provide surgical abortions.

The health department did not respond to a request for comment on the proposals.

MU task force hears graduate student stories at forum

By Megan Favignano

Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Erin Schlabach, first year University of Missouri graduate student in music, said she worries about the future of her department as it tries to recruit more students with assistantships.

This summer, MU said it no longer would provide a full tuition waiver for 10-hour graduate assistantships, starting with incoming students next fall. Music is one of three programs responsible for half of MU’s 10-hour assistantships, which are given to graduate student researchers and instructors.
“I made the choice to come to this university, a lot because of that tuition waiver and a lot because of the” health insurance “subsidy that is much higher than other institutions,” Schlabach.
“What choices are your potential future students wanting to make?”

Schlabach and other students shared concerns at a forum Tuesday night as members of a task force appointed to research the graduate student experience at MU took notes. While the task force has been gathering data since its creation in the spring, MU Assistant Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs Tracy Kitchel said it is important to also collect personal accounts.

“I think the committee has been focused on numbers, and as a social scientist, the stories are important, too,” Kitchel said. “To me, tonight was about the stories and hearing the stories in all the pockets of campus.”

MU’s Office of Graduate Studies, the MU Graduate Professional Council and the MU Graduate Student Association hosted the graduate student experience open forum from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday in Keller Auditorium in the Geological Sciences Building. Rachel Bauer, Graduate Professional Council vice president, said about 75 students attended — fewer than forum organizers were expecting.

Tuesday’s forum initially was set up after the university told students they would not receive health insurance subsidies this school year, a decision MU later rescinded. About six task force members attended the forum to take notes. Kitchel, co-chairman for the task force, said the group of about 20 will begin meeting every two weeks starting this month. The task force met less frequently during the summer months.

Insurance subsidies dominated Tuesday’s discussion as MU Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Studies Leona Rubin again apologized for poor communication about MU administrators’ initial decision to no longer provide health insurance subsidies.

Rubin said she should have included Graduate Professional Council student leaders on the first email she sent to other MU administrators about the subsidies in late July.

MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin created the task force last spring and recently expanded its membership and mission to include specific concerns graduate students listed in a letter to MU officials last month. The letter pushed for a long-term solution to the subsidy issue, more on-campus graduate student housing, the continuation of full tuition waivers for 10-hour assistantships and better pay for graduate assistants.

Kitchel said task force members plan to collect more personal stories from MU directors of graduate studies at their next meeting later this month.
Editorial: MU ought to promote its own gender inclusivity efforts more

Despite all the progress, gender neutrality doesn't seem to be on MU's radar.

As an institution, MU is making significant progress toward gender inclusivity. However, it seems like MU’s public relations staff is either ignorant or hesitant to highlight this progress. Consequently, if you just looked at MU’s online presence, you’d have no idea any such progress has taken place.

MU, like most American universities, spends a significant amount of time and money creating the most appealing websites and social media pages possible. Because these efforts are so influential in defining the public image of the university, the content posted should spotlight the best that MU has to offer — and to a large extent, it does. But MU’s social media presence manages to entirely shy away from mentioning gender-neutrality.

For example, the gender-neutral clothing consignment store, ThreadBare, opened its doors on the first floor of the Student Center on Aug. 26. Shortly afterward, Truman’s Closet announced it would no longer include any gender-specific labels on its clothing options. Initiatives like these are instrumental in creating a more inclusive campus environment at MU and are also a major step in diminishing the perceived distinctions between genders.

Meanwhile, the few posts made by MU on social media regarding ThreadBare completely omit its gender-neutral theme and only refer to the store in the context of its role in the Student Union’s Entrepreneurial Program.

From @Mizzou Instagram: “Kyle Gunby and Zach Bine are on hand for the store's Grand Opening today at the Student Center! It's part of the Student Unions Entrepreneurial Program, designed to give students a place to test business ideas and gain experience.”

This is only one example of the progress made toward gender-neutrality across campus that has gone unmentioned by the MU marketing team. In an effort to not stigmatize gender-nonconforming students by forcing them to declare a gender to live in the residence halls, MU now offers gender-neutral housing options for students — another massive step in the right direction. Gender-neutral bathrooms have also become more commonplace on campus, with MU’s newest residence hall, Gateway Hall, including unisex bathrooms on all of its floors. The Missouri Students Association also released a full map detailing every gender-neutral bathroom on campus. All of these advancements have only received minimal mention on MU’s social media.
It’s odd that while MU students are making strides toward inclusivity, they don’t seem to be getting public recognition from the MU higher-ups. While the progress made towards inclusivity is great, MU needs to spend more time and effort promoting it instead of skirting around or omitting gender-neutrality altogether.

Scientists prove they can edit mosquito genes

Researchers have used a gene-editing system to disrupt the blue fluorescent eye color gene in mosquitoes. The insects originally expressed both fluorescent blue and red color genes in their eyes.

The new trait was stably inherited over several mosquito generations, the researchers report.

They say this new technique could open the door to genetically modifying mosquitoes that spread deadly diseases such as dengue and malaria.

“While, for this study, we simply disrupted a fluorescent marker in the eyes of mosquitoes using CRISPR/Cas9, we were able to prove that this system can be used to perform more impactful gene edits in the future,” says Shengzhang Dong, a postdoctoral fellow in the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine.

“By successfully editing specific genes in the Aedes aegypti, the mosquito species which transmits the dengue virus, we have established techniques which can be used in future research to target the virus-carrying capabilities of this mosquito,” adds Dong, who is first author of the study published in PLOS ONE.

Alexander Franz, an assistant professor of veterinary pathobiology and senior author of the study, says future research using this established technique could search for ways to genetically edit mosquitoes so they cannot harbor diseases like dengue.

“Infection of a mosquito with a human pathogen, such as dengue virus, alters the gene expression profile of the mosquito due to innate immune responses produced by the insect,” Franz explains. “These complex genetic interactions are not well understood. However, being able to knock out an individual mosquito gene that responds to the presence of a virus will allow researchers to understand the gene’s underlying molecular mechanism in order to find ways to genetically block virus infection in the mosquito.”
Franz says in the case of viruses such as dengue, blocking the ability for the virus to reproduce in the mosquito will interrupt the viral disease cycle with the consequence that humans no longer become infected when bitten by the mosquito.

The National Institutes of Health funded the study.

Drug made from herbs may fight breast cancer

Luteolin, a natural compound found in herbs such as thyme and parsley and in vegetables such as celery and broccoli, may reduce the cancer risk for women who have taken hormone replacement therapy.

More than 100 women die from breast cancer every day in the United States. The odds increase in postmenopausal women who have taken a combined estrogen and progestin hormone replacement therapy—and these women also have an increased risk of developing progestin-accelerated breast tumors.

“In most circumstances, hormone replacement therapies improve the lives of menopausal women and achieve excellent results,” says Salman Hyder, professor in tumor angiogenesis and professor of biomedical sciences at University of Missouri.

“Nevertheless, research has proven that a higher incidence of breast cancer tumors can occur in women receiving therapies that involve a combination of the natural component estrogen and the synthetic progestin.

“Most older women normally have benign lesions in breast tissue,” Hyder says. “These lesions typically don’t form tumors until they receive the ‘trigger’—in this case, progestin—that attracts blood vessels to cells essentially feeding the lesions causing them to expand.”

Promising results

The new study, published in the journal Springer Plus, shows that when the supplement luteolin is administered to human breast cancer cells in the lab, vessels “feeding” the cancer cells causing cancer cell death are reduced.
As human breast cancer cells develop, they tend to take on stem cell-like properties, which can make them harder to kill. Here, luteolin was used to monitor stem cell-like characteristics of breast cancer cells and researchers saw a vast reduction in this phenomenon, further proving that the natural compound exerts its anti-tumor effects in a variety of ways.

Then, researchers further tested laboratory mice with breast cancer and found that blood vessel formation and stem cell-like characteristics also were reduced in vivo, or inside the body.

“We feel that luteolin can be effective when injected directly into the bloodstream, so IV supplements may still be a possibility,” Hyder says. “But, until the supplement is tested for safety and commercialized, which we hope will happen after further testing and clinical trials, women should continue consuming a healthy diet with fresh fruits and vegetables.”

The early-stage results are promising. If additional studies are successful within the next few years, researchers will request authority from the federal government to begin human drug development (this is commonly referred to as the “investigative new drug” status).

After this status has been granted, researchers may conduct human clinical trials with the hope of developing new treatments for breast cancer in women who have taken combined estrogen and progestin hormone replacement therapies.

Donations to the Ellis Fischel Cancer Center at the University of Missouri funded the work.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

MU professor expert on Disney in new 'American Experience'

BROOKE KOTTMANN, 14 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — Walt Disney’s next appearance on TV is being brought to you in part by an MU history professor.

Steven Watts will talk about Disney next week in the latest installment of "American Experience" on PBS. The two-night, four-hour “Walt Disney” airs at 8 p.m. Monday and Tuesday on Missouri PBS affiliates KMOS and KETC.
Watts, who wrote "The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life" published in 2001 by the University of Missouri Press, said he is pleased with what he has seen so far of the documentary.

“Great from a historical perspective, this documentary is the best film ever made on (Disney),” Watts said.

The film takes a chronological approach to analyzing Disney’s life and career beginning with his early childhood and continuing up to his death in 1966. The documentary also jumps ahead to raise issues from later life and career and then flashes back to developmental issues that resonate, Watts said.

Documentaries on Disney’s life up to this point were produced by Disney Studios and portrayed him in a positive light, Watts said.

“This film is objective — it talks about his many achievements and qualities," Watts said in an interview. "It also takes up controversial issues and reveals the darker sides of his personality.”

On occasion, Watts explained in an email, Disney "could be domineering with regard to his subordinates and tended to hog the credit for Disney productions, even when a great many people were involved in the creation."

Disney was raised in Marceline, Missouri, between ages 5 and 9. His soft spot for Midwestern America influenced his films, Watts said.

“(Missouri) had a terrific impact on him,” Watts said. “It gave him appreciation of rural life and a love of nature and animals — a constant in his films, like in 'Snow White.'”

After writing "The Magic Kingdom," Watts said, he was approached by PBS producer Sarah Colt to work on an “American Experience” about Disney’s life.

“I was happy to participate in any PBS film,” Watts said. “I had seen many films, and I am impressed with the high quality product. I saw it as a way to get a good history out.”
Last week, the Kansas City Public Library held a lecture and discussion for Watts to introduce the documentary before it aired. The first 25 minutes of the documentary were shown.

“The auditorium in the plaza seats 300,” Watts said. “There were 450 in attendance. It was impressive.”

It was the first time he had seen any piece of the finished product. Watts said it was skillfully done, laying out the issues and the long trajectory of Disney’s career.

So what’s the takeaway of the new documentary? Watts hopes the “Walt Disney” audience will come away with an appreciation of Disney as a major cultural influence of modern American values.

“(The film) explains why and how he appealed to so many people and uncovers his secrets in shaping modern American life,” Watts said.

This will be Watts’ second time as a commentator and adviser for a PBS “American Experience” film. His analysis was featured on “American Experience: Henry Ford” in 2013. Watts wrote "The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century" in 2005.

"A couple years ago, Sarah Colt asked me if I wanted to work on a film about Henry Ford after reading my biography of him," Watts said. "It's always a pleasure to work with people who are genuinely interested in putting out a good product."

“American Experience” is an award-winning series of documentaries that showcases those who have shaped America’s past and present, according to PBS’ website.
Lee Berger put his ad up on Facebook on October 7th, 2013. He needed diggers for an exciting expedition. They had to have experience in palaeontology or archaeology, and they had to be willing to drop everything and fly to South Africa within the month. “The catch is this—the person must be skinny and preferably small,” he wrote. “They must not be claustrophobic, they must be fit, they should have some caving experience, climbing experience would be a bonus.”

“I thought maybe there were three or four people in the world who would fit that criteria,” Berger recalls. “Within a few days, I had 60 applicants, all qualified. I picked six.” They were all women and all skinny—fortunately so, given what happened next. Berger, a palaeoanthropologist at the University of the Witwatersrand, sent them into the Rising Star Cave, and asked them to squeeze themselves through a long vertical chute, which narrowed to a gap just 18 centimetres wide.

That gap was all that separated them from the bones a new species of ancient human, or hominin, which the team named Homo naledi after a local word for “star”. We don’t know when it lived, or how it was related to us. But we do know that it was a creature with a baffling mosaic of features, some of which were remarkably similar to modern humans, and others of which were more ape-like in character.

This we know because the six women who entered the cave excavated one of the richest collections of hominin fossils ever discovered—some 1,550 fossil fragments, belonging to at least 15 individual skeletons. To find one complete skeleton of a new hominin would be hitting the paleoanthropological jackpot. To find 15, and perhaps more, is like nuking the jackpot from orbit.

The earliest hominins were the australopiths, with their sturdy builds, long arms, short legs, and small brains. A couple of million years ago, they were joined by the first members of our genus Homo, with their longer legs, stiffer walking feet, more dextrous fingers, and much larger brains. And some curious species harbour traits that are typical of both lineages.

In 2008, Berger found one such mosaic in South Africa’s Malapa cave: a new hominin called Australopithecus sediba. He spent the next five years studying it. The project became so all-
encompassing that in 2013, Berger, an explorer at heart, realised that he had stopped exploring. To rectify that, he enlisted two cavers, Rick Hunter and Steve Tucker, to explore other South African caves that might yield important fossils. The Rising Star Cave was one of them.

When the duo entered it in October 2013, they weren’t expecting much. Cavers had thoroughly explored the system for some 50 years, and the chances of finding anything new were low. Tucker did so by accident. During a rest, he wedged himself in a crevice—and found that his feet didn’t touch the bottom. The crevice, it turned out, led to an absurdly narrow shaft, which descended for 12 metres before opening into a chamber. When Tucker dropped into it, he found bones. He took out his Go-Pro and snapped some shots.

When Berger saw the pictures, he was amazed. He was clearly looking at the skull and jawbone of a hominin, maybe an *Australopithecus*. “That evening, I couldn’t sleep,” he says. At 2 in the morning, he called Terry Garcia, the National Geographic Society’s chief science and exploration officer, who had funded Berger’s digs before. “If you ever believe in me, believe in me now,” Berger said. “Terry said: Do whatever you need to do.”

Berger quickly rounded up a team of scientists—and six skinny cavers. Marina Elliott was the first and oldest of them on the scene. When she first saw Berger’s ad, she was finishing off a PhD at Simon Fraser University and had already done a lot of fieldwork in Siberia and Alaska. “I was predisposed to extreme environments,” she says. “Telling me that I’d have to do climbing, that it would be underground, and that it would be strange and potentially dangerous… it appealed.” She was joined by five others: Elen Feuerriegel from Australia, and Americans K. Lindsay Eaves, Alia Gurtov, Hannah Morris, and Becca Peixotto.

By November 7th, a month after Berger’s ad went up, a 60-person camp had assembled next to the Rising Star cave. Three days later, the team ventured inside. “We knew the fossils were going to be super-important. They clearly weren’t human,” says John Hawks from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, whom Berger recruited. “We thought we were going to excavate one skeleton. Because what else would you find?”

After entering the cave, the team almost immediately hit several narrow, pitch-black corridors, a knife-edge ridge called the Dragon’s Back with steep drops on either side, and finally that 12-metre chute. “It’s a long crack, punctuated by shark-teeth protrusions,” says Elliott. “I remember looking down and thinking: I’m not sure I made the right decision.”

At the bottom, the team eased down into an area they dubbed the Landing Zone, before entering the fossil-filled trove that they called the 101 Chamber. On the first day, they excavated a single bone—a mandible. “It came out and we said: wait a minute, this isn’t what we thought,” says Hawks. Tucker’s images hinted at an australopith-like jaw but he had forgotten to include a scale bar. The actual specimen was vastly smaller, and its teeth were almost human-sized. “We thought: we’re looking at something special here.”

On day two, they settled into a rhythm. The six cavers went underground in six-hour shifts, working in claustrophobic darkness and often on all fours. The most challenging part “was the emotional intensity of recovering the fossils themselves,” says Elliott. “There was so much
material and it was friable and delicate. And every day, we realised that we were pulling out another 40 or 60 fragments of this thing that was going to be incredible.” Back on the surface other scientists started preparing and cataloguing the fragments. As they unwrapped the packages, “we realised that we had been wrong,” says Berger. “It wasn’t a skeleton. It was more than one.”

By the end of the week, the team had excavated more fossils than had ever been found in a South African site. Shortly thereafter, they exceeded the tally from all of southern Africa from the previous 90 years. It took months to process all the 1,550 or so fragments and assemble them into 15 skeletons—male and female, elderly and infant. As hominin fossils go, that’s a superlative haul, paralleled only by Spain’s Sima de los Huesos cave, a bonanza of Neanderthal remains.

These types of multiple individual sites are rare and important for looking at variation, which is after all the thing that evolution works from,” says Susan Antón from New York University, who was not involved in the project. Some other hominins are known only from the most measly of specimens, like small pieces of jaw or finger. “You’re always used to taking a single scrap and working it to death,” says Hawks. “If we only had one piece of Homo naledi, we wouldn’t know anything like the picture we have.”

That picture, published today, is evocative but confusing. It shows a slender, upright hominin, which stood between 4.5 and 5 feet tall. It had relatively long legs and very human-like feet, which probably made it a good long-distance walker—a trait that Berger describes as “the defining characteristic of the genus Homo.” Then again, its hip bone was flared in a australopith-like way, and its thigh bones had ridges that were unlike any found on other hominins.

Its arms are similarly confusing. The shoulders are almost ape-like, but the hands “are more human-like than any other fossil hand, except for Neanderthals,” says Hawks. However, Its fingers are incredibly curved and its first thumb bone had unique ridges for the muscles that draw it close to the hand. This was a creature with a very powerful grip. “I don’t know what to make of that,” says Berger. “They’re climbing, but I don’t know what they’re climbing.

And then there’s the skull. As I talk to Berger over Skype, he picks one up from his desk. It neatly fits in his hand, as though someone had shrunk the skull of Homo erectus down to the size of Australopithecus.

“By the second morning, we were asking ourselves: What are we looking at here?,” says Hawks. The team quickly discounted the idea that they had found several species, since the various copies of any single bone were all the same. Every femur looked like every other femur. H.naledi was clearly a single creature, albeit one with a confusing mish-mash of features. “Everything was just all over the place,” says Berger, whose earlier discovery, A.sediba, also married features from both Australopithecus and Homo. “We were one of the better teams in the world to make this discovery. The idea of mosaicism was drilled into our heads,” says Berger.

It’s tempting to suggest that both species—A.sediba and H.naledi—were intermediate steps on straight evolutionary climb from Australopithecus to ourselves. But these are no “missing links.”
Both may be mosaics, but they’re different mosaics. Each has different sets of australopith-like and human-like traits that can’t be easily reconciled on the same family tree.

It’s especially difficult to do so because the team still haven’t dated the specimens—a fact that has vexed several other paleoanthropologists. “I am puzzled by the apparent lack of attempts to estimate its age,” wrote Chris Stringer from the Natural History Museum in London, in a related commentary.

“If these fossils were three million years old they would tell us something totally different than if they were thirty thousand years old,” adds Carol Ward from the University of Missouri. “Without dates, the fossils reveal almost nothing about hominin evolution, beyond supporting the growing realization that there was much more species diversity than previously thought.”

Hawks is less concerned. “They could be the ancestors of humans. They could be some sort of really primitive creature that lived alongside modern humans,” he says. “To not be able to tell which of those is the case is pretty engaging.”

And their behaviour might have been similarly engaging. “We have very strong reason to suspect that H.naledi was doing culturally interesting things, and was doing it with a small brain,” Hawks adds. What kinds of things? “Well, like depositing their bodies in a cave.”

How did all those bodies get in a chamber that is 70 metres from the outside world and many metres down an impossibly tiny crevice?

On the 1,550 pieces of bone, the team couldn’t find a single mark made by a tooth or a stone tool, or any trace of a fracture that happened when the individuals were still alive. “These were the healthiest dead things ever seen,” says Berger. That ruled out cannibals, prehistoric serial killers, or predators that dragged them down into the crevice. The sediment in the chamber also revealed no evidence that water had carried the bodies in from outside. There’s no debris to suggest that the individuals were actually living in the cave. And most tellingly of all, except for a few bones from a bird and some rodents, H.naledi is the only thing in that chamber. “We found nothing else, and the only time you ever find just one thing is when humans deliberately do it,” says Berger.

Perhaps they took their dead to the cave and dropped them in from the top of the chute. “I don’t see any other conclusion,” Berger adds. “You have a cave that has always been in the dark and has never been exposed to the outside world. There’s no water flowing in. No other animal could get into that chamber. And you have a whole bunch of this one species of hominin, that don’t come in at the same time, and that have no damage, or signs of scavenging. Wanna call it burial? If we found them in any human context, anywhere, you would. We have no better hypothesis.”

Was H.naledi really carrying out a burial ritual, despite having a brain no bigger than a gorilla’s? Did they invent the practice independently of our ancestors? “These are going to be great things to explore,” says Berger.
The Rising Star team is now busy trying to describe specific parts of *H. naledi*’s anatomy, such as its feet, hands, and legs. And they are encouraging other anthropologists to study the fossils, by uploading scans and 3-D models of the fragments to an open database. Eventually, anyone should be able to print *H. naledi* if they want to.

The team is also actively searching for even more fossil troves in other parts of the Rising Star Cave, as well as other sites. Elliott, one of the skinny cavers who answered Berger’s ad, is now directing the operation on the ground, as well as leading expeditions into other caves.

“Five years went by and we sat in the lab having won the lottery and not going out into the field,” says Berger. “So I say: buy another ticket. Because it appears that the odds are not that bad.”

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**Sex on Campus**

September 10, 2015  
By  
Billie Wright Dziech

**NO MU MENTION**

Campus sexual assault remained in the forefront of higher education’s concerns last week when a St. Paul’s School graduate, Owen Labrie, was tried for, as a senior, raping a 15-year old classmate who accompanied him to an unoccupied building amid rumors of a school tradition requiring graduating seniors to take the virginity of younger female students.

For colleges and universities, the case seemed in many ways too close for comfort as a New Hampshire jury issued a divided verdict acquitting Labrie of aggravated felonious sexual assault but guilty of felonious illegal computer use to meet the 15-year-old. Once again familiar issues were raised: the need to define and discover ways to prove consent, disagreements over “no means no” vs. “yes means yes” standards of proof and preponderance of evidence vs. beyond a reasonable doubt standards, plus the necessity of evolving definitions of rape.
The Internet was on fire with comments.

Meanwhile the greater concerns went largely unaddressed. What motivated the decisions these two made and what have educators, especially those in colleges and universities, done to discourage or encourage the hypersexual culture in which students live?

Seventy percent of Americans report having had intercourse by age 19; 6 percent of children have had similar experience by age 13. MRIs have taught us that adolescent and postadolescent brains are prone to engage in risky behaviors, yet these numbers seem disproportionate given all we have tried to teach about the dangers of premature sexual activity.

Shouldn’t we wonder then what, beyond testosterone and peer pressure, makes a bright young man about to enter Harvard University on a full scholarship choose to participate in a school tradition that he must know has the potential to destroy his future?

And what does it mean when a teenager, sobbing on the stand, tells the court, “I didn’t want to come off as an inexperienced little girl .... I didn’t want him to laugh at me. I didn’t want to offend him.” How did we get to the point where she would say she laughed during their encounter because she “was trying to be cool”?

If I had a hundred-dollar bill for every young woman who has visited my office in the last 15 years with statements like hers or complained about a roommate who tied strings or rubber bands on the doorknob to signal “keep out -- sex in progress,” I could finance a very opulent vacation or two.

For years we have talked about alcohol, unscrupulous males and disengaged institutions as instrumental in the crises on campus. People like me have added “lecherous professors” to the mix. Much of that is true. But not all sexual violence involves alcohol, not all males are sexually aggressive and not all institutions are disengaged.

And, whether some like to admit it or not, the majority of young women are capable of taking responsibility for their own decisions and safety. The protests on campus demonstrated that collegians can have the strength and courage to stand up for themselves and can act as role models for those less likely to do so. Infantilizing emerging adults is itself a form of victimization.

So what have we missed about the sexual assault problem while the number of college sexual violence complaints has increased more than 1,000 percent since 2009? Despite the growing number of response and prevention efforts by colleges, we have overlooked the realities of change and culture. The values many of us knew as graduate students and young professors are gone forever, and our students are reaping the rewards -- and the dangers -- of a hypersexualized culture. Nothing will ever be the same.

Our responsibilities are to cope with what we have been given and attempt, insofar as we are able, to serve as adult role models and behave like professionals.
Professionalism demands that we respect and protect students by differentiating between legitimate and shock curriculum and pedagogy.

The times are especially precarious for the young. In Breaking Her Fall, the poignant story of a father struggling to come to grips with his drunken teenage daughter’s giving oral sex to a group of males, Stephen Goodwin’s protagonist ruminates on the lives of contemporary girls:

“Buffalo jumps. I’d been reading about Montana. And I kept thinking about the Buffalo jumps, the cliffs over which the Plains Indians drove the herds of buffalo, slaughtering them in great numbers. That was what was happening to the girls ... I saw them acting out the roles defined for them in the thousands of commercials and TV shows and popular songs and movies ... When I tried to make sense of it all, it seemed to me that the girls were as helpless and confused and panicky as the buffalo must have been as they stampeded over the precipice, that in all the noise and din they lost their bearings, that they had no idea of the dangers of the plunge they were about to make.”

Author Rachael Simmons once commented, “In a culture that can’t decide who it wants them to be, girls are being asked to become the sum of our confusion.” And if we are truthful, that observation also applies to young men who, like contemporary females, struggle to understand what is expected of them in a culture so hypersexualized that a 15-year-old girl alone with a physically aroused boy recalls she “didn’t want to come off as inexperienced.”

The young people we see today are light-years removed those in the 1920s who took the first steps toward our sex-frenzied society when the automobile made it possible for dates to leave parents behind, and we will never gain control of the assault problem unless we come to terms with the changes that have occurred since that early time.

Alcohol and male libido are not the heart of the problem. Whatever Owen Labrie did, he did because he believed he could. When the girl agreed to meet him, she believed she should. And both acted, at least in part, because, as Marshall McLuhan declared in 1964, “The medium is the message.”

Since concerns about sex-related problems emerged on campus in the 1970s, we have traveled through time and I Love Lucy, Happy Days and All in the Family to messages from Sex in the City, Dating Naked and Mad Men -- to say nothing of erotic vampire activity in productions like True Blood. Millennials have never known a culture without media like this, and whether or not they act on what they have seen and heard, they bring cultural messages with them to campus.

Many of my current freshmen have recently seen The Diary of a Teenage Girl, a film adaptation of Phoebe Gloeckner’s novel. Wildly praised by critics, it depicts a 15-year-old who offers her mother’s 35-year-old boyfriend sex and enjoys the experience so greatly she sets out on an erotic romp -- all with no seriously adverse consequences.

Mom’s boyfriend isn’t sleazy or degenerate. The men to whom she gives oral sex while pretending to be a prostitute aren’t dangerous or dissolute. Friends welcome the self-confidence her awakening sexuality produces. In the end the she turns out more or less
OK. No disease. No violence from strangers. No humiliation. She’s discovered her sexuality. She’s fine. The message is clear.

Vanity Fair recalled Salon’s review of Gloeckner’s novel as “one of the most brutally honest, shocking, tender and beautiful portrayals of growing up female in America” and added that when the teenage heroine “strides onto movie screens this weekend, it will mark the arrival of the first real-life, modern heroine for teenage girls -- ever.”

Stressing the “urgent need for films like Diary of a Teenage Girl,” other websites described the film as set “amongst a freer period of sex and drugs,” and Vanity Fair echoed that curious time warp observation: “Flash forward and today seems prudish, even downright hostile to sexually adventurous young women.”

Whose America, whose real-life modern heroine and what current “prudish” culture may be a matter of dispute. But sex makes money, and maybe most critics have either never had or taught teenage kids or don’t understand the effects the media has on adolescent behavior, especially for young people at greatest social and economic risk. The millennials with whom we have worked for the last two decades are about to leave us. The media is the message, and it has told them how to be. What will become of their successors remains a matter of speculation. Obviously, hypersexual culture and student physical urges are here to stay, but if today’s young people have become “the sum of our confusion,” we must at some point consider whether we are complicit with films, television, advertisements and other commercial enterprises that contribute to the confusing and even dangerous messages they have received.

Regardless of slight rhetorical variations, college mission statements are almost identical in expressing high-minded goals. We are all committed to inspiring students to reach the heights of intellectual and emotional development, to pursue excellence and lifelong learning, to exhibit tolerance and respect for diversity, to serve and sacrifice for their communities and mankind, and to develop the skills and abilities required in the workforce and our ever-changing global economy.

'All This and Hookups, Too'

All this and hookups, too. In The End of Sex, Donna Freitas observes that “friends with benefits” relationships allow students “to get sex onto the CV without addressing any additional burdens, ensuring that they don’t miss out on the all-American, crazy college experience they feel that must have. They have been taught to believe the hookup culture is normal, that everyone is enjoying it and that there is something wrong with them if they don’t enjoy it too.”

So what have some educators offered in classrooms? One fairly common lesson is close observation of speakers who are prostitutes and stripteasers. Another I don’t personally understand is how Northwestern University undergraduates watching a woman being stimulated with a motorized dildo or “fucksaw” were being taught to serve mankind and develop respect for diversity. Nevertheless, just like the movies, that experience too supposedly provided “tender and beautiful [insight] into growing up in America.”

I must admit I had never heard of organized BDSM groups that engage in role-playing of bondage, dominance and submission, and masochism until I consulted on a case in which a student a quarter century younger than the professor with whom she had had a
brief affair died from alcohol abuse in his condominium. His classes were, in part, popular because he entertained his undergraduates in psychology with a speaker from a BDSM group.

Then too I have difficulty comprehending how professors requiring students to keep journals of their masturbation and other sexual behaviors are teaching skills and abilities required in the workplace and the ever-changing global economy.

In humanities departments, where enrollments continue to decline drastically, there are often too few students to justify study of great philosophers or Shakespeare (even though the Bard could be quite bawdy), but there are seldom enough desks to accommodate collegians in human sexuality courses.

Some humanists are catching on slowly but surely, though. “It’s like that line from the movie: ‘If you build it, they will come,’” one professor told me. “Put sex in the title, and the kids will fill the seats.”

No one is suggesting that most courses concentrating on sex issues lack academic substance. I hope my own classes of that type have genuine merit. But the challenge institutions face in meeting students’ appetite for sexually oriented material is to prevent an overabundance of offerings that send a message that sex is the all-consuming focus of education and life.

The other task is to recognize that institutional review of course content and pedagogy are essential. Academic freedom is a red herring if it is used to violate the stated mission and ethics of an institution. Postadolescents freed from restrictions are vulnerable to the obsession with sex that already pervades their lives, so professors and administrators have an obligation to ensure institutional priorities are academic rather than driven by enrollment and finance.

If we care about students as much as we profess, we might also take second looks at dormitory situations. When we relinquished the burden of in loco parentis responsibility, we placed much of the weight on students themselves, and this does not always work well.

Sometimes the most unlikely student changes under peer pressure in the hypersexed campus culture. A character in Tom Wolfe’s I Am Charlotte Simmons offers insight into collegiate existence when she tells the novel’s heroine, “College is like this four-year period when you can try anything and everything -- and if it goes wrong, there’s no consequences .... College is the only time your life, or your adult life anyway, when you can really experiment, and at a certain point, when you leave, when you graduate or whatever, everybody’s memory like evaporates .... There’s no record and you leave college exactly the way you came in, pure as rainwater.”

She might be right about experimentation and lack of consequences. Greek housing and off-campus apartments offer invitations to “try anything and everything.”

Dormitories should be different, but students everywhere tell stories of rules unenforced by youthful residence hall counselors, of vomit that decorates restrooms and halls after wild weekends, and of roommates' visitors who overstay their welcome
for nights and days at a time.

The pressure to appear “cool,” to avoid “coming off as an inexperienced little girl” or an unsophisticated male means that compliant students are especially vulnerable and reluctant to protest being locked out for whatever time it takes roommates to complete the sex act. So they remain silent, however inconvenienced they might be. More egregious are the tales of those who engage in sex with roommates present.

This is not to say we have the right to eliminate so-called sexual expression. That would clearly cause student insurrection. But institutions do have the right and the responsibility to demand that students express their sexuality without inconveniencing or embarrassing others.

If our primary constituency is emerging adults and they wish to be treated as adults, then our message should be that while on campus, students must behave as adults. Simply put, normal adults do not require friends and neighbors to loiter on their porches and do not invite them into their bedrooms while they are having sex. Owen Labrie and his unnamed classmate will inevitably be forgotten by the public, St. Paul’s School will recover, as educational institutions across the country have outlived sex scandals, and the media will move on to another sensational -- perhaps even more salacious -- story. But the messages colleges send will, for good or ill, have lasting effects.

**BIO**

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**ST.LOUIS POST-DISPATCH**

**Hunger strike planned at SLU as adjuncts professors push for higher wages**

Sept. 9, 2015 • By Koran Addo

**NO MU MENTION**

Students, faculty and staff at St. Louis University are expected to stage a hunger strike during business hours Thursday, skipping meals and holding mass prayers between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. to raise awareness of the issues adjunct faculty face.

The event is called Fast for Faculty, and organizers say about 50 people have committed to take part in the demonstration.
“It’s important that we all stick together on this,” Sheri Anderson-Gutierrez, a visiting assistant professor of Spanish said of the school’s faculty, including roughly 500 adjuncts.

She said the goal is for demonstrators to play on the university’s Jesuit tradition and compel administrators to raise their pay and offer them greater job security.

Adjuncts are part-time instructors who teach classes when full-time faculty are already overloaded with heavy course loads. They also fill in when teaching departments are short-staffed.

As low-wage earners they have become steadily more popular among college administrators who can hire someone with an advanced degree to teach students on the cheap.

Of the estimated 4,000 adjuncts working in the St. Louis area, industry watchers say it’s common for adjuncts to make about $20,000 a year or less, even among those teaching full course loads.

Thursday’s demonstration at SLU is just the latest wave in a national trend. Adjuncts have embraced a more vocal role at campuses around the country, forming unions and pushing for reforms.

In St. Louis, the Service Employees International Union has been the main driver behind a number of campaigns that have taken hold on college campuses.

In January, adjuncts at Washington University voted to form a union. A similar campaign at Webster University failed in May, while a number of smaller, and more muted campaigns are in the early stages at different campuses throughout the region.

There is another issue at play at SLU. The Ignation Solidarity Network, a social justice advocacy group, reports that 21 out of 28 Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. have adopted a Jesuit Just Employment Policy.

The policy was first put in place in 2005 at Georgetown University after students protested when they found that janitors hired directly by the university were paid much better than those hired through a subcontractor.

“What we want here at St. Louis University, is number one, a livable wage and, number two, that the administration stay neutral on unionization,” Anderson-Gutierrez said. “We don’t want to see any retaliation”

While SLU did not offer an official position on Thursday’s planned demonstration, or whether the university is open to enacting a Jesuit Just Employment Policy, it appears that they are listening.

Mike Lewis, associate provost for faculty development, said he’s been meeting with adjuncts since last spring.

And while the university doesn’t yet have an official stance, concessions have been made, he said. In addition to higher pay, adjuncts have asked for a number of things ranging from cheaper parking to better recognition of their contributions to the university.

In response, SLU has held a number of forums to listen to adjuncts. This school year, the university has so far followed up on some of the concerns raised by adjuncts by offering them reduced parking rates and incorporating them into orientation events.
Mayor proposes additional funding for community policing

City council is set to OK budget Sept. 21.

By Caitlin Campbell

Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Mayor Bob McDavid wants to allocate additional one-time funds to community policing efforts that he said would improve the relationship between Columbia police and city residents.

As part of the fiscal year 2016 budget, which the Columbia City Council will need to approve at its Sept. 21 meeting, McDavid said he wants the city to shift funding from other one-time funding categories to community policing. McDavid wants to add $150,000 to the police department’s budget by cutting $100,000 from the city’s strategic plan implementation and $50,000 from Columbia Access Television, or CAT-TV.

The city has cut CAT-TV’s funding during the past few years, and the organization has fought to keep itself afloat.

McDavid proposed the funding cut because, he said, he never has seen performance metrics or a budget from the television channel. He said the city has provided the organization with funding for years and that CAT-TV should be sustaining itself.

CAT-TV Executive Director Jennifer Erickson provided the Tribune with a copy of the group’s most recent budget report, which, she said, was sent to the city earlier this year. CAT-TV’s budget for the next fiscal year anticipates $216,350 in expenses and $243,500 in revenue, $100,000 of which would come from the city.

Erickson said the organization cannot maintain itself through membership fees, donations and grants. She said the group has made great strides over the past few years toward becoming independent but needs more time before it truly is self-sustaining.

“The city has invested more than … $1.2 million” in the past six years, Erickson said. Cutting funding “jeopardizes the investment they’ve made.”
Rob Rasmussen, a member of the CAT-TV board of directors, admitted the city is below an optimal officer-to-citizen ratio but said officials should find other ways to improve policing outside of cutting funding from the public-access channel. He said the city should work to incorporate the University of Missouri’s police officers into city service, with MU footing its portion of public safety expenses.

Council members who commented on McDavid’s proposal to reallocate $150,000 for community policing were mixed on cutting $50,000 from the community channel.

Fourth Ward Councilman Ian Thomas said he would not support taking money from CAT-TV because its services allow the community a public outlet for ideas. He said both the city and Columbia Public Schools have channels with much larger budgets and that the public’s voice also is important to fund.

Fifth Ward Councilwoman Laura Nauser supported McDavid’s amendments, and Second Ward Councilman Michael Trapp said the city should give the public-access channel one more year to achieve independence.