Koster: No evidence of Planned Parenthood wrongdoing in Missouri

Sept. 28, 2015  •  By Alex Stuckey

JEFFERSON CITY • The Missouri Senate will continue investigating Planned Parenthood even though the state attorney general found no evidence suggesting the organization sold fetal body parts in the state.

Attorney General Chris Koster, the sole Democratic candidate for governor in 2016, launched an investigation into the organization after controversial videos were released in July alleging the organization sold fetal body parts. The state Senate launched its own investigation at the same time.

One video specifically mentions St. Louis as a potential location to obtain fetal tissue. Planned Parenthood has vehemently denied that any fetal tissue was sold in Missouri.

The St. Louis Planned Parenthood is the only facility performing surgical abortions in the state. Koster’s office reviewed documents tracing its process for disposing of fetal tissue for 317 abortions performed in June 2015.

“The evidence reviewed by my investigators supports Planned Parenthood’s representation that fetal tissue is handled in accordance with Missouri law,” Koster said. “We have discovered no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis facility is selling fetal tissue.”

But Republican Sen. Kurt Schaefer, chairman of the Senate committee tasked with looking into the Planned Parenthood allegations, said Koster’s “incomplete” report would not put an end to the Senate’s probe.

Koster didn’t interview witnesses and he looked at a narrow window of time, Schaefer said. Schaefer is running for attorney general next year.

Koster’s office found that once the procedure is performed, the tissue is placed in a leakproof container and taken to Pathology Services Inc., a Brentwood-based lab contracted by the facility to conduct the examinations.

Under state law, abortion providers must send a “representative sample of tissue” taken at the time of the abortion to a pathologist for examination. That lab is required to send a pathology report to both Planned Parenthood and the Department of Health and Senior Services. A March inspection report of the St. Louis facility showed the lab was not sending these reports to the department for an unknown period of time — and
that department officials were not aware the reports were missing. That situation has since been corrected, state officials say.

Additionally, department director Gail Vasterling previously told the Senate panel, called the Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life, she did not know what happened to the tissue following the examinations.

Koster’s office looked into that as well, determining that once the lab is done with the examination, a waste disposal company collects the tissue and destroys it in an incinerator. This was determined by looking at invoices from the lab charging Planned Parenthood for the work and certification from the waste disposal company that the tissue was destroyed.

In a statement, Mary Kogut, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri, said the organization was pleased but not surprised by Koster’s findings.

“We have always followed the highest medical and ethical standards and comply with all laws,” Kogut said.

Leading candidates for the Republican nomination for governor, meanwhile, sided with Schaefer’s decision to continue investigating Planned Parenthood.

“General Koster’s cursory investigation of only one month’s records at a Planned Parenthood clinic performing thousands of abortions each year falls short of what he promised Missourians,” said a statement from the gubernatorial campaign of Catherine Hanaway, a former Missouri House speaker. “A thorough investigation would have included comprehensive interviews... a phone hotline for anonymous reporting of past activities and covered more than a single month.”

The gubernatorial campaign of Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder issued a statement saying that Koster’s report confirms “gruesome” practices by Planned Parenthood. “This is why I have fought to condemn the practices of Planned Parenthood in our state,” said Kinder’s statement. “We must continue our efforts to ensure that Missouri protects and respects human life at every stage.”

Schaefer expects to hold another committee hearing next month. The committee also has been examining the resumption of abortion privileges at Columbia Planned Parenthood last month.

Following committee questioning, the University of Missouri announced Thursday that it is eliminating a category of clinical privilege at its Columbia hospital that Planned Parenthood’s physician uses, and legally needs, to be able to provide medication abortions.

The organization is looking for ways it can continue to provide abortion procedures after the privileges go away Dec. 1.

Kevin McDermott of the Post-Dispatch contributed to this report.
Abortion uproar in Missouri: Chris Koster clears Planned Parenthood but political group attacks medical research

Report clears Planned Parenthood in Missouri

Attorney General Chris Koster: “No evidence of wrongdoing.”

Anti-abortion group re-engages in stem cell wars

BY BARBARA SHELLY
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Now we know why it took Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster so long to report on his investigation into Planned Parenthood and the bogus allegations of profiting from the sale of fetal organs and tissue.

Koster’s work appears to be incredibly thorough. His staff examined the procedure for disposing of fetal tissue at the Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri, the only clinic in Missouri that performs surgical abortions. Investigators reviewed about 3,500 pages of documents, including the records from 317 abortions performed at the facility in June. They also interviewed multiple employees from the clinic and its pathology lab.

“As a result of our investigation, the office of the Missouri Attorney General has found no evidence that PPSLR has engaged in unlawful disposal of fetal organs or tissue,” the report states.

So will that quell the political demagoguery that already has led the University of Missouri to yield to bullying from a state Senate committee and revoke limited hospital privileges for a doctor who needed them in order to perform non-surgical abortions at Planned Parenthood’s Columbia clinic?

Hard to say. Sen. Kurt Schaefer, the committee chairman, never showed much interest in the fetal tissue allegations, even though that was the ostensible reason
for forming the Senate’s “sanctity of life” committee. Maybe he guessed, accurately, that there wasn’t anything to the fetal tissue suspicions. The Columbia clinic proved to be a much more productive target for the ruthlessly ambitious Schaefer, a Republican who wants to replace Koster, a Democrat, as attorney general.

Schaefer’s success in getting the Mizzou administration to revoke the doctor’s admitting privilege and cause the Columbia clinic to cease performing abortions as of Dec. 1 has made him a darling of Missouri’s anti-abortion groups. But Missouri Right to Life, the most powerful of those groups, is a demanding master.

The Columbia Tribune reported over the weekend that the anti-abortion group is now telling its members it expects politicians to support its renewed crusade to end embryonic stem cell medical research at the University of Missouri.

This is a reprise of the stem cell wars of a decade or so ago, when extremist legislators and groups drove scientists away and harmed Missouri’s academic and research climates with their efforts to outlaw certain types of stem cell research. Apparently empowered by the hysteria over the Planned Parenthood sting videos and Schaefer’s political witch hunt, Missouri Right to Life is reopening that ugly chapter.

That’s not good news for Schaefer or other politicians who are eager to court the anti-abortion vote. Most Missourians recognize that equating life-saving laboratory research to abortion is an extremist, destructive posture.

As dismaying as it is to see the stem cell wars flare up again, it will be fascinating to see how pandering politicians respond to this latest twist.

Koster clears Planned Parenthood of wrongdoing in St. Louis regarding fetal tissue

By MARSHALL GRIFFIN • 14 HOURS AGO
Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis clinic is complying with Missouri law regarding fetal tissue, so says Attorney General Chris Koster.

In a report released Monday, Koster says the evidence reviewed by his investigators lines up with Planned Parenthood’s statements that the organization is properly disposing of fetal tissue, and that there is "no evidence whatsoever" that the St. Louis clinic is selling fetal tissue.

"During our investigation, we reviewed more than 3,500 pages of documents and conducted multiple interviews of representatives for PPSLR (Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri) and its pathology laboratory," Koster said in the report. "For (June 2015), our investigation traced the fetal organs and tissue removed during surgical abortions ... to the statutory pathological examination, (and) to their ultimate destruction. As a result of our investigation, the Office of the Missouri Attorney General has found no evidence that PPSLR has engaged in unlawful disposal of fetal organs or tissues." (emphasis in the report)

Koster launched his investigation in the wake of publicity over videos by an anti-abortion group alleging that Planned Parenthood clinics in several states had been selling aborted fetuses to research companies.

Mary Kogut, president and CEO of the St. Louis regional Planned Parenthood affiliate, praised the decision in a written statement:

"We have always followed the highest medical and ethical standards and comply with all laws. We are pleased, but not surprised that this thorough investigation by the Attorney General found our actions fully compliant with the law. This report stands and it is time for Missouri’s lawmakers to now focus on increasing access to high quality health care, including birth control, lifesaving cancer screenings, STD testing and treatment, well-woman exams, infertility and family planning."
While the Planned Parenthood organizations in Missouri do not have fetal tissue donation programs, some Planned Parenthood affiliates have programs for women and families who want to donate tissue to help leading research institutions find treatment and cures for diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Missouri is now the 6th state that has cleared Planned Parenthood centers of any wrongdoing. Seven states have declined to even start investigations based on no evidence of wrongdoing.

Our top priority is always the compassionate health care and education that we provide. For nearly 100 years, Missouri women and families have trusted Planned Parenthood for high-quality, affordable health care and information. Planned Parenthood has extremely high medical and professional standards, informed by the leading medical and health care organizations in the country."

The full report can be viewed here.

Koster is expected to seek the Democratic nomination for Missouri governor next year.

Missouri lawmakers have been conducting their own investigation into Planned Parenthood's operations, which includes an interim Senate committee's inquiry into why a hospital run by the University of Missouri issued "refer and follow" privileges to a physician who provides medically induced abortions for Planned Parenthood's Columbia clinic.

On Thursday, UM Health Care announced in a brief statement that as of Dec. 1 it would no longer offer refer and follow privileges, calling them "outdated and unnecessary." That decision means the Columbia clinic will have to cease performing abortions on that date, unless the physician in question, Dr. Colleen McNicholas, successfully appeals the revocation of her privileges.
The state senate committee looking into Planned Parenthood is chaired by Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, who is seeking the Republican nomination for attorney general next year.

Laura McQuade, CEO of Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri, blasted UM Health Care for "caving to political pressure" and said in a written statement that they will "take any and all legal action necessary to ensure that the full range of high quality reproductive health care services, including abortion, remain legal, available, and accessible in our state."

Two Sept. 29 events are planned to support “women’s health and the services Planned Parenthood provides,” according to a press release.

The Rev. Mike Kinman, Rabbi Deana Sussman and the Rev. Jan Barnes will host a rally and press conference at 1 p.m. at Christ Church Cathedral, 1210 Locust St. Also at 1 p.m. The Washington University Student Advocates for Reproductive Rights will host an event with Rep. Stacey Newman, D-Richmond Heights, at the Danforth University Center.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

Koster finds no illegal activity in investigation of Planned Parenthood

ELISE SCHMELZER, 13 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — After tracking the paperwork on tissue from every surgical abortion performed in June by Planned Parenthood in the St. Louis area, the Missouri attorney general’s office announced Monday it found the health care provider didn't violate any laws in its disposal of fetal tissue.
State legislators and some members of the public asked the office to investigate Planned Parenthood's operations in the state after the release of videos in July that claimed to show representatives of the health care provider selling aborted tissue. In one of the videos, the Planned Parenthood representative specifically mentioned the St. Louis clinic as a place to buy tissue, though leaders from national and regional Planned Parenthood offices have continuously denied any illegal activity. The video has since been discredited for having been highly edited to misrepresent the actions of a Planned Parenthood representative.

Investigators tracked the progress of every fetal tissue specimen from the 317 surgical abortions performed at Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri's clinics in June from the medical procedure to their destruction, according to the attorney general office's report. They reviewed more than 3,500 pages of documents and interviewed staff from the health care provider and the pathology lab that receives the tissue.

“The evidence reviewed by my investigators supports Planned Parenthood’s representation that fetal tissue is handled in accordance with Missouri law,” Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster said. “We have discovered no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis facility is selling fetal tissue.”

The St. Louis Planned Parenthood locations are the only provider of surgical abortions in the state, and its tissue disposal procedure is detailed in the report.

Each specimen is labeled with a unique number that corresponds to the patient's medical records. After each procedure, the tissue is placed in an individual container with a preservative, double bagged, labeled with the patient's number and stored in a refrigerator at the clinic. A pathology laboratory collects the tissue twice a week and examines the specimen as required by Missouri law. The tissue is then placed in a waste receptacle to be picked up by a medical waste disposal company, which destroys the specimen.

Investigators verified each step of the process and tracked each patient number and its documentation from the procedure to disposal, according to the report.
The Senate Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life began a similar investigation into Planned Parenthood’s disposal of aborted tissue in July in response to the videos. The committee has since questioned MU’s relationship with Planned Parenthood and the legality of the Columbia clinic’s license to provide medical abortions. The committee has yet to subpoena any representative of the health care provider, though committee chairman Senator Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia, said in a Sept. 15 committee meeting that the committee planned to do so.

Schaefer did not immediately return calls Monday afternoon.

Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri said Monday night in a news release that they were "not surprised" by the investigation’s conclusion and urged legislators to "cease political grandstanding and disband."

The Assault on Planned Parenthood Is Getting Personal for Me

Last week, they came for my Planned Parenthood clinic.

I’m not talking about the closest clinic to where I live now, in the relatively reproductive-rights-friendly state of California. I’m talking about the clinic where I went for birth control when I was young and uninsured in Columbia, Missouri. Technically they’ve been coming for it for years. The clinic stopped providing medical abortions in 2012, when the doctor who provided them moved away. There was a nearly three-year gap in care until July — right around the time surreptitiously recorded and deftly edited videos from within Planned Parenthood clinics began to emerge — when the clinic was cleared to begin providing them again thanks to a doctor from St. Louis who was willing to make the 124-mile drive.

Not for long, however. Missouri has enacted a restriction — a so-called TRAP law, as has been passed by right-leaning state legislatures in seven other states — that requires providers to have clinical privileges at a nearby hospital in order to perform abortions.
Missouri hospital had been the clinical partner of St. Louis-based doctors, and last week, under intense pressure from anti-abortion activists, the university revoked those privileges. “It is time to just get better and get rid of crummy doctors, get rid of doctors who are not going to take us into the future,” the chief medical officer of the university hospital system told the local newspaper.

Then yesterday, the Missouri Senate announced it will continue its investigation into Planned Parenthood affiliates in the state after anti-abortion activists charged that the clinics were profiting from the sale of fetal tissue. This, despite the fact that the state attorney general had conducted a similar investigation and found no evidence of such wrongdoing — as it turns out, fetal-tissue donations were made with the consent of the women having the abortions and given to medical researchers at no profit to Planned Parenthood. It’s all part of a strategy that goes far beyond Missouri.

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I knew Planned Parenthood was synonymous with abortion before I really understood what abortion was. I grew up in a largely Catholic town, and many lawns in our neighborhood were dotted with red, octagonal “STOP Planned Parenthood” signs. I didn’t think much of it when I was a kid. But, thanks in part to this anti-marketing, when I got older I knew Planned Parenthood was a place I could go for sexual-health services when I needed them.

And, like many women, I ended up needing them, often. When I was broke, but was scared to put my birth-control pills through my conservative parents’ insurance plan. When I was broke (a different time) and had the worst insurance ever, but needed a checkup. When my friend needed an abortion, but lived in a state with a waiting period, and I drove her across state lines to a Planned Parenthood. Those octagonal yard signs might as well have been advertisements: “Stop! Planned Parenthood! Free exams and affordable contraception!”

Lawn signs are the least of Planned Parenthood’s worries these days. After an extreme anti-choice group released edited, surreptitiously filmed footage of Planned Parenthood staff arranging to donate fetal tissue to medical researchers, the organization has been subject to wave after wave of investigations at the state and national level — none of which have revealed any illegal activity. That hasn’t stopped the House of Representatives from voting to strip away its federal funding, which Planned Parenthood uses to provide low-income people with STD screenings and contraception services, but not abortions.

Today, Planned Parenthood is holding a national Pink Out, offering free STD testing in several cities and raising awareness about its services beyond abortion. There will be pro-choice vigils and marches. Online, expect a tide of supportive tweets and pink avatars. PPFA president Cecile Richards will testify before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee about the fact that — again, with the permission of the person having the abortion — some Planned Parenthood clinics donate fetal tissue. Unfortunately, we won’t hear from the scientists who use that tissue to develop treatments for everything from muscular dystrophy to eye disease to diabetes, either because they haven’t been asked or because they’re too scared of anti-abortion protesters to speak about their research.
Planned Parenthood is, paradoxically, both an easy target and an effective organization because it is a brand name. Every year, 2.7 million people visit Planned Parenthood’s 700 clinics. One in five women has sought health care there. Women know that, no matter where they are in the country and no matter how much money they have, if they can get themselves to a Planned Parenthood clinic, they can get the morning-after pill, a mammogram, a pelvic exam, an abortion, or a referral. Men know they can go there for an STD test or a cancer screening. Everyone knows these services will be safe and, just as importantly, judgment-free.

But it’s useful, especially with all the action on Planned Parenthood’s behalf today, to remember that we shouldn’t need a reproductive-care health care brand. Contraception and STD testing and abortion should be things that you get from your regular doctor — and you should have a regular doctor even if you’re poor. Planned Parenthood exists because the services it provides are stigmatized and pushed out of the routine health-care framework, or are unaffordable within it. And its brand recognition is so important, in part, because the opponents of reproductive choice have gone out of their way to confuse women by establishing faux clinics that provide no health services at all, and to spread misinformation about the safety of contraception and abortion.

The campaign to take down Planned Parenthood is a primary front in the war on abortion access. It is not simply about pandering to the religious-conservative base anymore. It is not the work of just a few fringe extremists. And it is not only affecting low-income women. Just ask John Boehner, who was forced from his job as speaker of the House because his fellow Republicans would not vote for a budget that continued Planned Parenthood’s funding. Just ask the people of Louisiana, which has the highest rates of syphilis and gonorrhea in the country, where lawmakers recently moved to cut off Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood. In lieu of this trusted provider of women’s health care, the state has suggested that women can visit audiologists, ophthalmologists, radiologists, and nursing homes if they are in need of breast exams, pap smears, or birth-control prescriptions. Planned Parenthood has said it will continue to fight state and national moves to defund it.

But overall, it’s losing. Women are losing. “From the beginning of 2011 through August 2015, states enacted 287 new legal restrictions on access to abortion care,” according to the Guttmacher Policy Review. “For women in large swaths of the United States, access to abortion services is more limited now than at any time since Roe v. Wade.” Abortion-providing clinics are closing at a rate of 1.5 per week. In Texas alone, in the two years since Wendy Davis made her stand for reproductive rights on the floor of the legislature, more than half of the state’s 44 clinics have shut down. The ’90s were known for abortion-clinic violence, but last year more than half of providers surveyed reported threats and intimidation. A Planned Parenthood clinic in Washington State was set on fire just this month. The group that filmed those undercover videos has ties to violent anti-abortion extremists. And the Republican Party leaders are more anti-choice than ever. “Every single GOP presidential nominee since Roe v. Wade has at least supported some exceptions for abortion,” said EMILY’s List president, Stephanie Schriock, at a luncheon this week. “These guys running right now are so extreme, they’re against exceptions, period.”

And this has happened at the exact time that the need for affordable reproductive health care has increased. Between 2010 and 2013 alone, the ranks of women in need of publicly funded family-
planning services swelled by almost a million. In 103 counties, Planned Parenthood is the only provider of low-cost family-planning services. And Planned Parenthood centers are the go-to provider for women even in counties where alternatives exist. While Planned Parenthood affiliates are only 10 percent of publicly funded family-planning clinics, they serve 36 percent of patients who seek publicly funded services. Abortion will always be an option for relatively wealthy women, who can hop planes and cross borders to places where the procedure is safe, legal, accessible, and destigmatized. The rest of us can’t be so certain. Quality reproductive health care is rapidly becoming a luxury, not a right.

This is particularly infuriating because, despite conservatives’ best efforts to marginalize them, Planned Parenthood’s patients couldn’t be more mainstream. A majority of Americans are women. A majority of those women — 86 percent — have had sex in the past year. A majority of those sexually active women are able to get pregnant, but don’t want to have a baby right now. (Perhaps — and this is just a wild guess — this is partly because a majority of Americans have no paid maternity or paternity leave.) A majority of Americans have also had an STD or STI at some point in their life.

A majority of Americans — 55 percent, according to a recent New York Times/CBS poll — support government funding for Planned Parenthood. Contrary to the hopes of the anti-abortion movement, graphic undercover videos have not turned people away from Planned Parenthood en masse. “The process of acquiring organs from the unborn involves practices and habits that would shock the squeamishly pro-choice if they ever had to confront the reality,” writes Times columnist Ross Douthat. Like most people, I don’t love seeing billboards and tweets featuring gory photos of fetuses (really looking forward to my Twitter timeline after I publish this article!), but I am not shocked or unaware that abortion is visceral and intense. Do photos of it make me squeamish? Of course. But there are a lot of things that make me squeamish whose legality I am comfortable with — childbirth, veal, and professional football, to name just a few. Ultimately, when it comes to a legal right, I trust women to choose what’s best for themselves.

These days I live in the relatively choice-friendly state of California, where fetus billboards and STOP Planned Parenthood signs are few and far between. But I do drive past Planned Parenthood clinics sometimes. I know these buildings are full of dedicated professionals who sacrifice higher salaries and personal safety to care for people who truly need them. I know that, by definition and brand reputation, these clinics are welcoming places where even poor people can get expensive care, and even religious conservatives can get the procedures they protest against.

But it’s clear that many of these clinics are built with the knowledge that they are targets. They are designed for defense: thick concrete and high walls and bulletproof mirrored glass. If you ever doubt that there’s a war on reproductive freedom going on, just slow down as you pass a Planned Parenthood and take a good, long look. These clinics are battlegrounds. We are battlegrounds. And when your body is the battleground, there is no winning. The best you can hope for is not to lose.
Planned Parenthood weighs its options for Columbia clinic

By Rudi Keller

Monday, September 28, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri is weighing several options for its Columbia clinic, whose license to provide abortion services was thrown into flux Thursday after the University of Missouri revoked the hospital privileges granted to the St. Louis doctor providing the services locally.

Laura McQuade, president and CEO of the local Planned Parenthood affiliate, said officials are discussing whether Colleen McNicholas should reapply with MU Health Care, seek privileges at Boone Hospital or file a lawsuit.

“We are examining all our legal options,” she said.

A rally planned for Tuesday at MU will demand that the university reverse its decision on McNicholas and on cooperative agreements canceled by Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

A series of videos released in July showed Planned Parenthood’s alleged participation in fetal tissue donations at some clinics, triggering legislative investigations into the disposal of fetal tissue and the license for abortions granted in July to Planned Parenthood’s Columbia clinic.

On Thursday, under intense political pressure, the University of Missouri announced that on Dec. 1 it would revoke the hospital privileges granted to McNicholas, the doctor providing abortion services in Columbia.

The Department of Health and Senior Services, which licenses abortion clinics, wrote Friday to Planned Parenthood of Kansas & Mid-Missouri that if McNicholas loses her privileges, the department will revoke the clinic’s license to perform abortions.

McNicholas is a faculty member at Washington University and has full staff privileges at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis. Boone Hospital Center in Columbia is leased by BJC, the Barnes-Jewish parent company.
Privileges are not automatic through that system, said Ben Cornelius, spokesman for Boone Hospital. “All applicants follow the same process, and their affiliation with any other hospital has no bearing on the decision.”

Until the Columbia clinic was licensed in July, the only locations offering abortions were Planned Parenthood of the St. Louis Region and Southwest Missouri’s clinic near Forest Park.

On Monday, Attorney General Chris Koster released an investigative report that said there is no evidence Planned Parenthood diverts tissue from abortions performed in St. Louis to research or other uses.

Investigators reviewed the disposal of tissue from 317 abortions performed in June, the month before the videos surfaced.

“We have discovered no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis facility is selling fetal tissue,” Koster said.

In the report, Koster said investigators chose to review the surgical abortions performed in June because most occurred after the state’s latest inspection on June 9 and before the release of the anti-Planned Parenthood videos.

“We are pleased, but not surprised, that this thorough investigation by the attorney general found our actions fully compliant with the law,” said Mary Kogut, president of Planned Parenthood’s St. Louis affiliate.

The investigation did not satisfy state Sen. Kurt Schaefer, R-Columbia. Schaefer chairs the Senate Interim Committee on the Sanctity of Life, which exerted the pressure that led MU to revoke McNicholas’ privileges. The report is incomplete, Schaefer said, because it only reviewed documents for one month.

The committee found that some pathology reports on abortions have not been delivered to the state, Schaefer said. The committee will subpoena officials of Planned Parenthood and the pathology lab for questioning.
Today’s Talk: Many Commenters Sound Off About Planned Parenthood


Colleges help student startups navigate the legal landscape

BY COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, MASS. - It seemed like a sure thing. Working on weekends in a cramped fraternity room, four friends at MIT built a computer program that would give websites a new way to make money without online ads. Not so fast.

New Jersey’s attorney general alleged the software had been used to hijack computers. Progress halted while authorities investigated. After more than a
year, the inquiry ended and none of the students was charged with a crime. But by then, this past May, another company had already picked up on a similar idea.

The case reminded the Massachusetts Institute of Technology that, on a campus where students are encouraged to tinker and to turn their ideas into businesses, students had largely been left to navigate legal obstacles alone. Now, following a trend at colleges nationwide, MIT is partnering with Boston University's law school to open a free legal clinic for campus entrepreneurs.

"There is this increasing interest among our students to engage in innovation and entrepreneurial activities," said Cynthia Barnhart, the chancellor of MIT and an engineering professor at the school of 11,000. "MIT students needed exactly these kinds of services."

Run by BU law students, the clinic helps get protection for their intellectual property, work with investors and avoid legal pitfalls.

Next year, MIT is opening a second law clinic on Internet law, also in response to Tidbit, the project that was investigated by New Jersey. MIT drew scrutiny when it steered the students elsewhere for legal help, and a nonprofit ultimately represented them.

Jeremy Rubin, an MIT student who led Tidbit, said the controversy had a chilling effect among campus entrepreneurs. But with legal support from the school, he said, students across campus should feel free to pursue creative ideas, not just those who can afford a lawyer.

"For students who are working on really innovative things, they need to be able to show people what they're working on," he said. "Making those resources available will be immensely helpful."

Other colleges have seen similar demand. Along with traditional student-run legal clinics, which serve groups like military veterans and low-income families, more law schools are opening clinics that aim to help startups off the ground, especially those created on campus.

**Penn State plans to open a free clinic for entrepreneurs next year. The University of Missouri launched one this semester. Dozens of others have been formed at U.S. colleges in recent years, including at the University of Virginia and Boston's Northeastern University.**
"These clinics are growing because there's an unmet need," said James Greif, spokesman for the Association of American Law Schools. "Patent applications have tripled over the last 20 years, and small businesses make up about half of the private sector in the U.S."

Clinics give law students important work experience, Greif said, while their clients get free advice. Colleges, meanwhile, can get a boost from the success stories.

"Who doesn't want to say that they were responsible in some way for the next Google or Facebook?" he said.

A clinic at the University of Wisconsin’s helped students start EatStreet, an online food-delivery service. The University of Michigan helped launch TurtleCell, a phone case with built-in headphones. Northeastern worked with two students to get their energy bar, Coffeebar, sold at 300 stores.

Even without a law degree, students running the clinics can handle most cases. They draft contracts, check the availability of trademarks and work with investors. But there are limits. At Northeastern, for example, students don’t submit patent applications.

"The students operate like a small startup law firm. They make decisions as group, they collaborate on their projects," said Susan Montgomery, a law and business professor at Northeastern, who advises the clinic.

Between classes at MIT, sophomore Isaiah Udotong visited the clinic asking how to get nonprofit status for his fledgling startup, which helps African companies expand their online reach. While there, law students also urged him to strike a formal agreement with his co-founders.

"It's almost like a godsend," Udotong said. "We were looking for legal advice and wondering how we were going to make sure everything is legitimate."
Fewer flowers mean bumblebee tongues are shrinking

Rising temperatures in mountains around the world have led to a decline in flowers—which has in turn led to a decline in bumblebee populations.

But two species have figured out a way to survive: They have evolved shorter tongues. The findings, published in *Science*, suggest that some bumblebee species may be able to adapt to environmental challenges caused by climate change.

“We are not saying climate change isn’t a problem for bumblebees—it is a major problem,” says Candace Galen, professor of biological sciences at the University of Missouri. “However, these findings indicate that some bumblebees may be able to adapt if provided adequate habitat, and are largely shielded from environmental pollutants, such as pesticides.”

Since bumblebees have co-evolved with the floral resources needed for nutrition, researchers were curious how resident bumblebees were faring in the alpine regions of the Rocky Mountains. They looked specifically at changes in tongue length among resident bumblebees because this trait is intimately tied to the bee-flower relationship.

In general, bumblebees with longer tongues are considered “specialists” which feed on flowers with deep, long tubes, while short-tongued bumblebees are “generalists” and tend to move pollen from a variety of flowers.

Researchers measured the tongue lengths of alpine bumblebee species collected between 1966 and 1980 at three alpine sites of the central Rocky Mountains and archived at the University of Colorado and other museums. They resurveyed bumblebee species in the same alpine locations between 2012 and 2014 and measured their tongue lengths.

They found that for populations of two species on three mountains, tongue length had decreased by nearly 25 percent over the 40-year period.

“A change of 25 percent over this amount of time is dramatic, especially when we take into account that this change has occurred over just 40 generations,” Galen says. “Most evolutionary
change occurs on a timescale of a few hundreds, thousands or millions of years. Forty years is a timescale that happens in a human lifetime.”

When they looked at the flowers visited by the alpine bumblebee species, they found that the bees’ favorite flowers had not shifted to a shallower form, but were less prolific. Overall, they found that the total food resources available to alpine bumblebees had fallen by 60 percent since the 1970s.

The scientists then examined the relative advantage of the specialists versus the generalist bumblebees in a simple environment. They found that when deep flowers are in the minority and the total flower density drops, the advantage of being a generalist increases sharply.

“Basically, it shows you can afford to be a specialist if there is enough of the plant you are specializing on,” says Ricardo Holdo, assistant professor of biological sciences.

“As you start losing resources, then that’s going to have a disproportionate impact on that specialist whose flowers are not really common to begin with; this is one of the real strengths of the study: It shows that the change in the flower population is actually exerting a selective pressure on the pollinator.”

The finding of rapid adaptation is “a glimmer of hope” for bumblebees, whose populations worldwide are declining, Galen says.

“It suggests that the findings we can manage locally, like pesticides, habitat destruction, and planting companion plants, can actually make a difference because these factors can buy pollinators time for natural selection and evolution, thus allowing the species to keep pace with the things that we can’t manage locally. They seem to be giving bumblebees ‘running shoes’ in this race against climate change.”

The National Science Foundation supported the work.

The Washington Post

Prestige schools team up on redesigned college application

More than 80 of the most selective colleges and universities are teaming up to design a new application system that aims to deepen engagement with high school students, especially those from low-income families.

By next summer, the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success plans to unveil an online application that will be an alternative to the widely used Common Application. The coalition
announced Monday includes 52 private and 31 public schools. Its membership includes the Ivy League, other highly selective liberal arts colleges and research universities, and public flagship campuses in states such as Florida, Maryland, North Carolina and Virginia.

At many of the schools, the application would take effect for students who are now high school juniors, while others could adopt it more slowly.

Applying to selective colleges is an annual rite that has become more intense in recent years. The peak of the stress hits in the fall of senior year, when students are racing to meet early application deadlines in October and November. At ultra-selective schools, admission rates have plunged to as low as 5 percent (at Stanford University) while application totals have soared. Students from wealthy families, with access to top teachers, counselors, tutors and consultants, are much better equipped to navigate application season than those who come from poverty. Often, disadvantaged students with strong credentials will apply to only a few schools in their region, in the mistaken belief that they couldn’t get into or afford elite schools elsewhere.

“The college admission process today can be stress-inducing, and we know it can present barriers for all students, especially for those who are the first in their family to attend college,” said Zina L. Evans, vice president for enrollment management at the University of Florida.

Florida and others in the coalition joined together to fashion what officials say will be a less-stressful and more user-friendly approach to thinking about college, one that helps underprivileged students raise their ambitions. They envision that students will use free online tools from as early as ninth grade to begin assembling an academic self-portrait and a list of possible colleges that might fit their goals. The first set of planning tools will be introduced in January.

“This is going to be a way to level the playing field,” said David W. Oxtoby, president of Pomona College in California, which belongs to the coalition.

The coalition arose partly in response to concerns about the Common App, which serves more than 600 colleges and universities and is a dominant force in the admissions field. The Common App weathered heavy criticism two years ago when it rolled out a new version of its online application that was plagued with technical glitches. Those glitches have since been solved. Oxtoby said Pomona plans to continue to use the Common Application, as well as the coalition’s own application. “Competition is always good,” he said.

Aba Blankson, a spokeswoman for the Common App, said the organization has redesigned its Web site and taken other steps recently to help engage college-bound students. Asked about the coalition, Blankson said a primary goal of the Common App is to improve access for all students. “We’re focused on doing what we’ve been doing for the last 40 years,” Blankson said. “Helping more students apply to college, and helping them find the right fit.”

Barbara Gill, associate vice president for enrollment management at the University of Maryland, another coalition member, said that too often college planning is “condensed into a
very short window in the beginning of senior year. That creates a lot of frenzy.” Getting more students to plan earlier, she said, “could decrease some of that.”

Gill said some of the coalition’s planning tools would be like an online “locker,” allowing students to upload videos, photographs or other work that documents their academic record. That would help them talk about college goals with counselors and other experts. She said College Park does not plan to drop any of its core application requirements. Applicants will still be required to submit a transcript, an essay, admission test scores and recommendations.

College planning tools are hardly new. Many high schools pay private vendors to provide their students with online college research and planning services, such as Naviance. But the coalition says that its tools will be available for free, making them attractive to high schools with tight budgets.

To join the coalition, colleges and universities must have a six-year graduation rate of at least 70 percent. Those that are public must have tuition deemed affordable for in-state students, and those that are private must commit to meeting the full, demonstrated financial need of every domestic student they admit. “We want to make sure the universities and colleges that participate have a proven track record,” Gill said.

*Here is the full list of coalition members:*

Amherst College  
Bates College  
Bowdoin College  
Brown University  
Bryn Mawr College  
California Institute of Technology  
Carleton College  
Clemson University  
Colby College  
Colgate University  
College of Holy Cross  
College of William & Mary  
Colorado College  
Columbia University  
Connecticut College  
Cornell University  
Dartmouth College  
Davidson College  
Duke University  
Emory University  
Franklin and Marshall College  
Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering  
Georgia Institute of Technology  
Grinnell College
Hamilton College
Harvard University
Haverford College
Illinois State University
Indiana University – Bloomington
James Madison University
Johns Hopkins University
Miami University – Ohio
Michigan State University
Middlebury College
Mount Holyoke College
North Carolina State University at Raleigh
Northeastern University
Northwestern University
Oberlin College
Ohio State University
Penn State
Pomona College
Princeton University
Purdue University
Reed College
Rice University
Rutgers University – New Brunswick
Skidmore College
Smith College
St Olaf College
Stanford University
State University of New York – College at Geneseo
State University of New York – University at Buffalo
Swarthmore College
Texas A&M University
Tufts University
Union College
University of Chicago
University of Connecticut
University of Florida
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Maryland – College Park
University of Michigan
University of Minnesota – Twin Cities

**University of Missouri**
University of New Hampshire
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
University of Notre Dame
University of Pennsylvania
University of Pittsburgh
Eighty leading colleges and universities on Monday announced a plan to reverse a decades-long process by which colleges have -- largely through the Common Application -- made their applications increasingly similar.

Further, the colleges and universities are creating a platform for new online portfolios for high school students. The idea is to encourage ninth graders begin thinking more deeply about what they are learning or accomplishing in high school, to create new ways for college admissions officers, community organizations and others to coach them, and to help them emerge in their senior years with a body of work that can be used to help identify appropriate colleges and apply to them. Organizers of the new effort hope it will minimize some of the disadvantages faced by high school students without access to well-staffed guidance offices or private counselors.

While the goals of the effort are ambitious, so are the resources and clout of the colleges participating in this campaign. These colleges include every Ivy League university, Stanford University and the University of Chicago; liberal arts colleges such as Amherst, Swarthmore and Williams Colleges; and leading public institutions such as the Universities of Michigan, North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Virginia. The 80 members
expect more institutions to join.

While they aim to create a new way for students to apply, they also hope the portfolio system they create prods changes in high school education that could have an impact beyond those who apply to these institutions.

The new group is called the Coalition for Access, Affordability and Success. It will be open to public institutions with “affordable tuition along with need-based financial aid for in-state residents,” according to an outline provided by the coalition. (There isn't a clear definition yet for “affordable.”)

Private colleges may join if they “provide sufficient financial aid to meet the full, demonstrated financial need of every domestic student they admit.” That means colleges need not be need blind (in which admissions offers are made without regard to financial need) to participate. And indeed a number of colleges that have joined are “need aware” for some students, meaning that, for some of their slots, they consider only those students who do not have financial need. But colleges that engage in “gapping,” in which some admitted students are not provided enough aid to attend, will not be allowed to join. Gapping is common among private colleges that do not have substantial endowments.

To participate, colleges also must have a six-year federal graduation rate of 70 percent, a threshold that will exclude many public institutions.

The new effort brought immediate response on social media and on websites where high school students trade gossip and tips about the application process. Many comments suggested that frustrations with the Common Application have people ready for an alternative. One comment on Twitter was from a counselor to high school students: "Look out Common App -- here comes viable competition." A comment on College Confidential (where students and their parents discuss admissions): "Bye-bye Common App!"

But others were quick to note that most coalition members are wealthy, prestigious institutions, and raised questions about how this would help those who aren't likely to be admitted to those colleges. (More below, but that's the line the Common Application is taking.) And some questioned whether the portfolios would add stress to high school freshmen by having them think about college admissions that early.

There are three main parts to the coalition's work:

**The high school student's portfolio:** This would be offered to all high school students, free, and they would be encouraged to add to it, starting in ninth grade, examples of their best work, short essays on what they most proud of, descriptions of their extracurricular activities and so forth. Students could opt to share or not share all or part of their portfolios, but college admissions leaders would provide regular prompts, appropriate for grades nine and up, and questions students should ask about how they are preparing for college.

**New forms of interaction with high school students.** Students could opt to share (with any privacy levels they desire) some or all of their portfolios with people who might provide advice. Community organizers focused on education might check in on
students to see how they are progressing. Colleges could, at students' invitations, provide feedback as early as freshman year of high school. Pamela T. Horne, vice provost for enrollment management at Purdue University, which is part of the coalition, said she always worries about high school students who may well have the talent to do well in math and science but don't have anyone pushing them. She envisions universities such as Purdue accepting students' invitation to advise them as early as ninth grade, "so we can say, 'yes, you are on a path to be ready for calculus,' or can say, 'yes, you did well in science courses so here are more to take,'” and so forth.

**A new application system.** The coalition will introduce a new online application. Like the Common Application, there will be some factual information that students would need to enter only once (name, high school, etc.). But once an applicant hits short answers or essay or other sections, each college would prepare its own questions. The idea is to link many of the questions to material that applicants would have put in their portfolios, so applicants are not scrambling for ideas on essays but are relying on work they did in high school. (Standardized test scores and high school transcripts would continue to be provided to colleges.)

The portfolio system is scheduled to be live in January, and the application in the summer of 2016.

The goal of these three features is to change the way students, colleges and society think about the admissions process. “The idea isn't about how you should pad your résumé, but about how you should have significant experiences as part of your education,” said Horne.

Stephen M. Farmer, vice president for enrollment and undergraduate admissions at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, said UNC was joining because of the opportunity in this new approach to interact with low-income students much earlier, and to help them prepare for admission. “We've got to broaden our thinking about what constitutes talent,” he said, adding that this approach will lead universities to focus on developing the talent of high school students, not just picking already talented high school seniors.

Seth Allen, vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid at Pomona College, was one of the organizers of the coalition. He said the coalition's ambition is to “serve students who don't have the college-going resources” of wealthier students, and to create a communication system so that others “can act as a proxy for a counselor asking the right questions.”

Allen said that organizers also want to shift college preparation and admissions away from the current frenzy, which many find decidedly disconnected from educational values. When colleges ask their own questions, and students are drawing on a large portfolio of work to answer, “I’m hoping to have more rich, vibrant parts of the application.”

**Community College Transfers**
Coalition organizers stressed that they expected more colleges to join over time, as details are worked out and better understood. Reviewing a list of the initial 80 colleges (available at the end of this article), the lack of any University of California campuses...
jumps out, given that UC includes some of the best universities in the country and that most of the system's divisions meet the minimum graduation rate requirement. Dianne Klein, a spokeswoman for the university system, said that when coalition organizers approached UC about joining, the plans for the application did not have features for evaluating community college transfers. "That alone was a nonstarter," she said, because the university values transfer students. Further, it was unclear if applicants could use the same application to apply to all UC campuses, not all of which have a 70 percent graduation rate.

Klein said UC has been told that the coalition now plans to include applications that can be used for community college transfer applicants (as does the Common Application). As a result, UC remains open to joining the coalition, she said, adding that there has not been time for a new round of discussions. Coalition officials confirmed that they are planning to have a transfer option as part of the application.

**A Challenge to the Common App?**

One big question about the new system is how much of a challenge it will represent to the Common Application, which has more than 600 members, including most if not all of the new coalition's members. Over its 40-year history, the Common Application has grown from a small group of small liberal arts colleges to a dominant player in college admissions, attracting all kinds of colleges with competitive admissions, many of which have reported boosts to application numbers since joining the Common App.

All of the coalition members contacted for this article said that they plan to offer, but not require, the coalition application, and that they expect to continue having a majority of applicants (certainly in the coalition's early years) apply through the Common App. Several members of the Common Application board are admissions officials at colleges joining the coalition.

Many admissions leaders who once raved about the Common Application stopped doing so in fall 2013, when the Common App introduced a new software system that resulted innumerous glitches and system crashes that prevented applicants from submitted their applications on time. Students, guidance counselors and college admissions deans all complained not only about the problems, but what they perceived as a slow response from the Common Application. Many also started talking about how the Common Application represented a “single point of failure” in admissions technology, since many institutions had no other way to accept applications.

The Universal College Application -- now up to 44 colleges -- gained ground in the wake of the Common App’s technical failures in 2013, but Universal has never had the critical mass or recognition among high school students of the Common App.

Further, the Common Application has been criticized on issues aside from the technology failures (which no longer appear to be a problem). Some admissions experts have questioned whether, in the simplicity of its approach, it has homogenized college admissions to the point where the application process has lost its ability to help students and colleges find a good match. (For an example of this type of critique, see this essay in *Inside Higher Ed* by Theodore A. O'Neill, formerly dean of admissions at the University of Chicago.)
Organizers of the coalition took care not to criticize the Common Application in discussing their new venture. But there is no question that, if it takes off, the coalition could represent a significant challenge to the Common App, which charges a per-applicant fee to colleges. Allen of Pomona said he would consider the new application highly successful if, in a few years’ time, it was responsible for 15 percent or so of his college’s applications. Across coalition members, such a decline would be a serious loss of revenue for the Common Application.

Purdue’s Horne said that, in considering the reasons to join the coalition, “we want to assure that no matter what, in the future we have at least two different online applications, so that just in case something goes wrong, we have an alternative.”

Matthew T. Proto, vice president and dean of admissions and financial aid at Colby College, said he welcomes having an alternative to the Common Application, and views the coalition application as creating “another pathway” for students to college. Proto said he wants to see Colby and other high-quality colleges attract more students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and he thinks the portfolio could help more of them envision college in their future and present their own talents in ways that might win them admission.

**Customizing Applications**

For colleges that are joining the coalition, one attraction is the ability to embrace a less formulaic approach to applications than has been the norm. Jeremiah Quinlan, one of the organizers of the coalition and dean of undergraduate admissions at Yale University, said that “technology has completely transformed our application process, and the back end of our process, but the Yale application today is very similar to what I filled out when I applied to Yale decades ago, and the students are very different.”

He said he imagined Yale asking applicants to submit a piece of work from their portfolio “rather than another 500-word essay,” so that the admissions team would be looking at actual student work.

Jess Lord, dean of admissions and financial aid at Haverford College, said that he has “not been a total fan of this push to minimize institutional presence in the application,” so he is pleased by the idea that the coalition will move away from that model. He said that having similar or identical applications “has obviously meant more applications and arguably helped access,” but he added that he thinks “there might be a better balance that would more fully serve students and institutions.”

While he believes applications with more of a unique tie to an institution create an “opportunity for students to build relationships with institutions,” to the extent others prefer the status quo, the Common Application remains an option for colleges. “[Having] more application options serves the larger end by giving students more pathways to engage with specific institutions,” Lord said.

**Common Application Makes Its Case**

Aba G. Blankson, director of communications for the Common Application, started a discussion about the new coalition by taking the high road. "If the coalition helps more students to go to college, then that's great. Ultimately that's what it's all about," she
said.

But she went on to question whether the new application is the best tool for many low-income students. Blankson said that 32 percent of the 860,000 applicants who used the Common Application last year were first-generation students. Many of these students enroll at colleges that, in part because they serve many disadvantaged students, don't have the graduation rates to be eligible for the coalition.

"All students deserve an opportunity to go to college," she said. "Not all of them are going to be admitted to [coalition] institutions. Having the breadth and diversity of our membership helps more students find a fit, even if they are not admitted to some of these elite institutions."

Patrick O'Connor, associate dean of College Counseling at Cranbrook Schools and a member of the Common Application board (but speaking for himself), raised another issue. He said that he had "equity" concerns, given that colleges may be evaluating very different submissions from those who use the Common Application and those who used customized coalition applications. "If one applicant on the coalition application uses a portfolio item, while a Common App applicant uses an essay prompt, will it be easy to compare the qualities of the two submissions?" he asked.

Building the Website and Paying for It

Allen of Pomona said the portfolio and application system is being built, for free, by CollegeNet, a company that provides technology services to colleges in admissions and other areas. CollegeNet last year filed an antitrust lawsuit against the Common Application, and CollegeNet's CEO last year wrote an essay in Inside Higher Ed criticizing the Common Application. CollegeNet has also been a major supporter of the Education Conservancy, a group that has promoted a range of reforms of college admissions.

Eventually, Allen said, CollegeNet will likely receive fees on a per-applicant basis from colleges that use the coalition application. He said he expected the payments to end up being cost neutral, as colleges would be paying less to the Common Application if applicants start to use the coalition's application.

Calls for Reform in Admissions

Efforts to reform college admissions are difficult to pull off for a number of reasons. One is that institutions find it difficult to move together, as institutional interests may not always align. In 2006, Harvard and Princeton Universities ended their early action programs, in which applicants find out early if they are admitted. Many critics said that the practice favored wealthier students, who had the support (financial and otherwise) to make decisions early. But Yale University declined to go along, and momentum stopped. Today early action is back at Harvard and Princeton.

Legal threats may also limit reforms. Another reform many would like to promote is to reduce the use of non-need-based aid. Many college leaders say that they would move funds from non-need-based (so called merit aid) to need-based, but that they can only do so if the colleges with which they compete do so at the same time. And mutually agreeing on such a plan could lead to antitrust investigations by the U.S. Justice
The coalition appears to have identified a path around legal problems (no collaboration on aid or setting tuition rates), and on identifying issues on which a substantial group of colleges can agree. And while the group is clearly made up of public and private institutions that are more competitive (and more well off) than many of their peers, this is a group of institutions that others seek to emulate.

The coalition's work also comes at a time of many calls for reform in the admissions process. The College Board is preparing to introduce a new version of the SAT -- and more colleges than in the past are going test optional.

Institutions such as Goucher, Bennington and Bard Colleges are introducing new options for applications -- and attracting considerable praise for doing so. And First Lady Michelle Obama has stressed the importance of better guidance for low-income high school students if more of them are to prepare for and apply to college. Meanwhile, admissions leaders will gather in San Diego this week for the annual meeting of the National Association for College Admission Counseling, where the coalition's announcement is sure to generate considerable discussion.

**Coalition Members**
The members of the new coalition are:
- Amherst College
- Bates College
- Bowdoin College
- Brown University
- Bryn Mawr College
- California Institute of Technology
- Carleton College
- Clemson University
- Colby College
- Colgate University
- College of the Holy Cross
- College of William & Mary
- Colorado College
- Columbia University
- Connecticut College
- Cornell University
- Dartmouth College
- Davidson College
- Duke University
- Emory University
- Franklin & Marshall College
- Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Grinnell College
- Hamilton College
- Harvard University
- Haverford College
- Illinois State University
• Indiana University at Bloomington
• James Madison University
• Johns Hopkins University
• Miami University of Ohio
• Michigan State University
• Middlebury College
• Mount Holyoke College
• North Carolina State University
• Northeastern University
• Northwestern University
• Oberlin College
• Ohio State University
• Penn State
• Pomona College
• Princeton University
• Purdue University
• Reed College
• Rice University
• Rutgers University at New Brunswick
• Skidmore College
• Smith College
• St. Olaf College
• Stanford University
• State University of New York at Geneseo
• State University of New York at Buffalo
• Swarthmore College
• Texas A&M University
• Tufts University
• Union College
• University of Chicago
• University of Connecticut
• University of Florida
• University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
• University of Maryland at College Park
• University of Michigan
• University of Minnesota-Twin Cities
• **University of Missouri**
• University of New Hampshire
• University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
• University of Notre Dame
• University of Pennsylvania
• University of Pittsburgh
• University of Rochester
• University of South Carolina
• University of Vermont
• University of Virginia
• University of Washington
• Vanderbilt University
• Vassar College
• Virginia Tech
MU researchers develop physics curriculum on digital platform

By Megan Favignano

Monday, September 28, 2015 at 2:00 pm

After a decade of curriculum development and three years creating a digital platform, two University of Missouri researchers are putting a digital physics textbook directly in the hands of instructors and students.

“Exploring Physics” is an application geared toward high school students. Meera Chandrasekhar, a professor of physics at the University of Missouri, received a $5 million grant from the National Science Foundation to address the low number of high schoolers who take physics. The app was created as part of that grant.

The team set out to create an inquiry- and modeling-based experimental physics curriculum. They later added the digital format component to the project to adapt to education trends, Chandrasekhar said.

“We thought we’d publish it as an electronic or digital module rather than in print form,” she said. “That just made more sense for the methodology that we use.”

With the model-based curriculum, teachers guide students to learn through a discussion rather than lecturing.

“There’s lots of textbooks around, there’s no shortage of them at all,” Chandrasekhar said. “This is a methodology that has been shown to work very well for high school students, especially for new students who are just beginning to learn the content.”
MU spokeswoman Jesslyn Chew said app development is not uncommon among university students and researchers. App development specifically for curriculum is a relatively new approach, she said.

The curriculum Chandrasekhar and her team developed is designed to help students become more successful at science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM courses, in high school and college.

Dorina Kosztin, associate chairwoman of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at MU, also contributed to the project and has worked on the curriculum development from the beginning. Kosztin said the application has eight e-units; students and instructors using the app can select a unit and scroll through activities or lessons.

The app’s activities allow students to conduct labs, enter data and create graphs and drawings to display their findings.

The app also includes experiment simulations, which allow students to reiterate concepts they learned in class. Kosztin said those simulations also allow students who miss class to still see how the lab worked.

“The simulation mimics the lab,” Kosztin said. “They can learn the same concepts using the simulation.”

The creators of the app tested the curriculum on more than 10,000 students while developing the software. The team hopes to get any kinks worked out through beta testing and wants teacher feedback on what additional features the app needs.

Columbia Public Schools spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark said apps are becoming more common in classrooms. She said CPS uses apps in addition to textbooks but that the district doesn’t typically replace a textbook completely with an app.

Before the district would use something such as “Explore Physics,” Baumstark said, district officials would have to evaluate how the app aligns with curriculum and whether it works within its budget.

More information about the app and samples of its activities are available at exploringphysics.com.

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The Price We Pay for Sitting Too Much
New formulas for how long we should spend sitting and standing in a workday
Sumathi Reddy
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New research is helping medical experts devise formulas for how long a typical office worker should spend sitting and standing.

Studies have found that sedentary behavior, including sitting for extended periods, increases the risk for developing dozens of chronic conditions, from cancer and diabetes to cardiovascular disease and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. Some ergonomics experts warn that too much standing also can have negative effects on health, including a greater risk for varicose veins, back and foot problems, and carotid artery disease.

“The key is breaking up your activity throughout the day,” said Alan Hedge, a professor of ergonomics at Cornell University. “Sitting all day and standing all day are both bad for you,” he said.

For every half-hour working in an office, people should sit for 20 minutes, stand for eight minutes and then move around and stretch for two minutes, Dr. Hedge recommends, based on a review of studies that he has presented at corporate seminars and expects to publish. He says standing for more than 10 minutes tends to cause people to lean, which can lead to back problems and other musculoskeletal issues.

The British Journal of Sports Medicine earlier this year published guidelines for sitting from an international panel of experts, including Dr. Hedge. The panel recommends a combined two to four hours of standing and light activity spread throughout the workday. And research from NASA has found that standing up for two minutes 16 times a day while at work is an effective strategy for maintaining bone and muscle density, Dr. Hedge says.

“The current scientific evidence shows that when people have occupations in which they are on their feet for more than two hours a day, there seems to be a reduction in the risk of developing key chronic diseases,” said John Buckley, a professor of applied exercise science at the University of Chester in England and lead author of the published guidelines. Among the guidelines’ eight authors, one of the other panel members disclosed a competing interest as owner of a website that sells sit-stand work products.

Other research aims to find ways to mitigate the adverse effects of too much sitting. A curious study, published last week in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, looked at fidgeting. The researchers examined data from the UK Women’s Cohort Study, which has followed a large group of women for about 20 years. Nearly 13,000 of the women were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how much they fidget. Among women who were rated as the most sedentary, those who fidgeted a lot had the same risk of dying as those who weren’t especially sedentary. But women who didn’t fidget had an increased risk for mortality.
Janet Cade, professor of nutritional epidemiology at the University of Leeds, in England, and senior author of the paper, said the study found an association between the two factors and didn’t prove causality.

“In order to get benefits from nonsedentary behavior maybe you don’t have to go out and run a marathon,” Dr. Cade said. “Maybe you can do small amounts of movement and that would give you some benefit.”

Various studies have shown that even regular exercise won’t compensate for the negative effects from sitting too much during the day. Sitting causes physiological changes in the body, and may trigger some genetic factors that are linked to inflammation and chronic conditions such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, said Dr. Buckley, of the University of Chester. In contrast, standing activates muscles so excess amounts of blood glucose don’t hang around in the bloodstream and are instead absorbed in the muscles, he said.

Standing burns one-half to one calorie more a minute than sitting. In four hours, that represents as many as 240 additional calories burned. Sitting more than an hour lowers the levels of the enzyme lipoprotein lipase, which causes calories to be sent to fat stores rather than to muscle, Dr. Hedge said.

The effects of prolonged sitting on blood flow were examined in a recent small study involving 11 young men published in the journal Experimental Physiology. **After six hours of sitting, the vasculature function in one of the leg’s main arteries was reduced by more than 50%, but was restored after 10 minutes of walking, said Jaume Padilla, an assistant professor in the department of nutrition and exercise physiology at the University of Missouri in Columbia and senior author of the study.**

“More research is needed to determine if reduced vascular function with prolonged sitting leads to long-term vascular complications,” said Dr. Padilla.

Scientists also are studying how to induce people to sit less. An article published online in the journal Health Psychology Review last week reviewed various studies looking at 38 possible interventions to get people out of their chairs. Among those that worked: educating people about the benefits of less sitting time; restructuring work environments, such as adding standing or adjustable desks; setting goals for the amount of time spent sitting; recording sitting times; and creating cues or alerts for people when they need to stand, said Benjamin Gardner, senior lecturer at the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience at King’s College in London and first author of the article.

The majority of interventions that didn’t work were aimed at getting people to do more physical activity, Dr. Gardner said. “We need interventions that are designed specifically to break up sitting as well as interventions that try to get people to move about more,” he said.

Michael Jensen, a professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn., who specializes in obesity and diabetes, uses various ways to reduce daily sitting time that he also recommends to his patients. When he has meetings with just one or two people he finds a place where they
can walk together instead of sitting. And he tells his patients who are parents to use their children’s athletic events as a time to be on their feet. “There’s no reason you have to sit and watch those games,” Dr. Jensen said.

Tiffany Mura, who has been using a standing desk since 2012, says it increases her concentration. The 45-year-old, who works at a biotech company near Boston, says she also makes a point of standing at most meetings despite the fact that it was awkward at first. “I’m an avid runner and agree that standing is necessary even for fit people like myself,” she said.

Marc Ebuña builds standing time into the 25-minute train ride to his work at a public-relations firm in Boston. “People fight for a seat, I’m happy to stand out of the way and let them fight,” said the 28-year-old.

Short walks can counteract negative effects of sitting all day

COLUMBUS, Mo., Sept. 28 (UPI) -- Most workplaces are sedentary environments, and most people spend their days using computers or sitting at desks, all of which researchers say is bad for health.

While several previous studies have pointed this out, researchers at the University of Missouri found in a small study that walking for as little as 10 minutes after prolonged periods of sustained sitting can counteract its negative effects on the vascular system.

"It's easy for all of us to be consumed by work and lose track of time, subjecting ourselves to prolonged periods of inactivity," said Dr. Jaume Padilla, an assistant professor of nutrition and exercise physiology in the school of medicine at the University of Missouri, in a press release. "However, our study found that when you sit for six straight hours, or the majority of an eight-hour work day, blood flow to your legs is greatly reduced."

The researchers worked with 11 healthy men, measuring their vascular function before and after a period of prolonged sitting. They found that after 6 continuous hours of sitting, blood flow in the popliteal, an artery in the lower leg, was significantly reduced.

After finding that blood flow was reduced in the men's lower leg's, researchers asked each of them to walk for 10 minutes. The self-paced walking restored the impaired vascular blood flow and improved blood flow.
The researchers acknowledge that reversing the basic sedentary modern lifestyle may not be possible, they plan to conduct further, larger studies to explore whether small bouts of walking can be shown to reverse the effects of all that sitting.

"Studies have shown that sitting less can lead to better metabolic and cardiovascular health," Padilla said. "However, more research is needed to determine if repeated periods of reduced vascular function with prolonged sitting lead to long-term vascular complications."

**COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN**

**Flu vaccine now available in Columbia**

ELAINA STEINGARD, 16 hrs ago

COLUMBIA — The flu vaccine has arrived in Columbia and will be free for people 18 and younger.

The vaccine program began Monday. The cost is $25 for those 19 and older, according to the Columbia/Boone County Department of Public Health and Human Services.

Public health nurses will be administering shots at flu clinics in participating Boone County elementary, middle and high schools.

*The Health Department said in a news release that support from MU Children's Hospital and the David B. Lichtenstein Foundation is helping it provide the free vaccines.*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the flu vaccine prevented about 7.2 million flu-associated illnesses last year, according to the Health Department news release.

It can take two weeks for the vaccine to become effective once it is administered, according to the CDC website, which recommends getting vaccinated earlier rather than later. Sixty-one million doses of this year's vaccine have been administered around the country thus far.
The vaccine will be available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Public Health and Human Services Clinic, 1005 W. Worley St. The shots will be available until spring 2016 when flu season ends.

The vaccines will be administered through the spring of 2016 or after flu season has ended.

FluMist vaccines will be available later in the year.

COLUMBIA MISSOURIAN

FROM READERS: ResLife staff member reflects on rewards of the job

RYAN MATHEWSON/MISSOURIAN READER, 1 hr ago

Ryan Mathewson is a junior engineering student at MU and is currently in his second year as a member of Residential Life.

Being a student staff member is one of the most rewarding jobs on campus. We are the first people that new freshmen meet when they move to Columbia, the friendly faces that are there to help whenever needed, and, of course, the ones to keep the students in line.

So why would someone want to be a student staff member? There are some caveats to the position. Being the overnight on-call staff and writing information reports about various incidents are a couple, but those are not the reasons I returned to ResLife for a second lap.

At some point during freshman year I became intrigued by ResLife and everything it stands for. I applied to be a peer advisor — a student staff member who is also in charge of teaching a Freshman Interest Group (FIG) class to about 20 students. After receiving the notice of being accepted, I was so ecstatic that I called my friend Abbie — who had also been accepted — and we met up to do a literal happy dance.
Something about being responsible for introducing students to their next big step made me jump for joy. I had always liked the idea of making bulletin boards and door decorations to brighten a student’s day, but at the time, I didn’t realize how much influence I would have on my future residents.

People say being on student staff is like living in a fish bowl, and it really is. As my first year progressed, I noticed some quirks of mine rubbing off on my residents, something I never thought of before. Many of them would model choices based on what I chose or recommendations I made. I felt a bit like a puppeteer for students starting the next chapter of their lives, but with that influence came lots of responsibility. I quickly grew to care deeply for every one of my residents, and that became a struggle at some points to manage.

Being in my position, one must wear many hats: teacher, life advisor, rule enforcer and friend. No single hat could be forgotten, and everything must be kept in balance. While I wanted to be their friend and help them all the time, I had to ensure students continued to follow the rules of living with Residential Life. No, I didn’t like having to be the bad guy, but it was still my responsibility. I hope they realize now that the rules were often there for their own safety and well-being.

I wrote a letter to my parents near the end of last year letting them know that I had finally started to understand a bit of what it was like to let kids go off and do their own thing. At the start there had been lots of questions, helping students through hard times and celebrating their successes together. By the end, they knew everything there was to know.

It was difficult once May arrived to know that they would all be moving out and my work was done. If you see your current (or former) student staff member, tell them thank you. They put a lot of effort into their positions to give students the greatest experience they can, and they genuinely do care a lot about each one of you.

Now that my second year is in full swing, I’ve reflected on the year previous to see where I can improve to be the best resource I can be to my residents. The impact I had made through the community on my floor and through my FIG class last year was greater than I believed, resulting
in continued contact with many past residents of mine to this day. I even sat with a few of them during the Mizzou vs. SEMO football game and watched a few others play with Marching Mizzou.

With another year comes the newest round of challenges to be faced. New students, new names, a new community dynamic and new personalities. Sooner rather than later, they will share the same place in my heart that my former residents do, and I can’t wait for that day.

At this rate, I might decide to go around the track again during my senior year for one final lap with ResLife. It’s going to be a great year.

US colleges seek better integration for Chinese students

Sept. 29, 2015 • By MICHAEL MELIA

STORRS, Conn. (AP) — The multitudes of Chinese students attending American universities are approaching college as less of a life experience and more as a transaction, educators worry, leading to measures to help them integrate — including broadcasting football games in Mandarin and giving them orientation before they even leave Asia.

While students of similar backgrounds naturally flock together anywhere, the integration question is being discussed with urgency in relation to Chinese students because of their sheer numbers. On American campuses, where they number in the hundreds or thousands, it is easier for them to find friends who speak the same native language and form insular communities.

The experience of Anyi Yang, a 19-year-old University of Connecticut sophomore from Beijing, reflects some of the challenges.
When she arrived in the United States, it was a member of a Chinese student group who picked her up at the airport. An applied math major, she has gotten to know some of her American peers through coursework, and she cheered alongside them as she watched a broadcast of the women's basketball team winning a national championship. But she spends nearly all her free time with Chinese friends. She had expected Americans to be more welcoming.

"They are friendly, but some I thought would be more interested in talking to me," Yang said. "Actually, they seldom speak to me if I don't speak to them."

Where administrators and analysts of US-China relations see missed opportunities for exchange, some professors also see a disconnect affecting their classrooms as Chinese students, in general, participate less in discussions.

"They like to stay with each other, and it's getting the attention of a lot of our professors," said Yuhang Rong, an assistant vice provost for global affairs at UConn, which counts more than 300 students from China in its freshman class.

With the rise of China's middle class, the number of students it sends to the United States jumped to 274,439 in the 2013-2014 school year from 61,765 a decade earlier, according to the Institute of International Education. Graduate students account barely for the biggest group, but undergraduates from China have been gaining quickly.

Robert Daly, director of the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Wilson Center, said some of today's students have a different attitude from the Chinese who came as pioneers in the 1980s and 1990s.

"There's not a sense of coming to America, like an older generation, so much as buying a credential to get a better job," he said.

At Big Ten public universities, which began a big recruiting push in China several years ago for students and their tuition dollars, the integration of Chinese students has become such a pressing issue in the past couple of years that they now hold regular summits to discuss strategies.

The University of Illinois, which enrolls nearly 5,000 Chinese students on a campus of some 44,000 students, began holding "Football 101" clinics a couple years ago and introduced Mandarin-language broadcasts this fall. Mike Waddell, a senior associated director of athletics, said he has seen the students at games listening to the broadcasts through their smartphones.

"It's such a big part of the Big Ten culture that we wanted to make sure we reached out to students and made them feel very welcome," Waddell said.

At Purdue, one of several schools that now hold pre-departure orientation sessions in Chinese cities, Michael Brzezinski, the dean of international programs, said officials begin stressing to incoming freshmen even before they arrive in Indiana the importance of engaging with other students.

Many schools are also working with domestic students and faculty to help make Chinese students more comfortable.

Ohio State has developed programs to encourage domestic students to interact with international students, including joint tours of nearby cities. Purdue prods student groups to do more with international student groups by offering additional money for joint events, and it's trying to create training programs for students on intercultural competence. UConn, likewise, is having discussions on expectations of "global competencies" for faculty and staff.
Local Chinese consulates are also involved. In meetings with freshmen from China on campuses around the Northeast, Zhang Yang, of the New York consulate's education office, said officials encourage them to study hard, be good student ambassadors, make new friends, and learn and adapt to campus culture.

Kevin Zhuang, a UConn student from Shanghai, said the biggest challenge for most students is the language barrier. The campus experience, he said, really depends on the student.

"We have some Chinese students who are really outgoing who have a lot of American friends," he said. "We also see people who stay at home all day and just hang out with Chinese and don't want to speak English at all."

September 29, 2015

Just Half of Graduates Say Their College Education Was Worth the Cost

By Goldie Blumenstyk

NO MU MENTION

Only half of 30,000 college alumni polled for the Gallup-Purdue Index strongly agreed that their higher education was worth the cost, according to the results of the second annual national survey, being published on Tuesday.

Among recent graduates, the proportion who were unequivocally positive was even lower: only 38 percent of those graduating from 2006 through 2015.

The overall results did not differ widely depending on the kind of institution attended — except when it came to alumni of for-profit colleges. Only 26 percent of those alumni strongly agreed that their postsecondary education was worth the cost. And 13 percent strongly disagreed that it was worth it, a proportion that was notably higher than the national average of 4 percent.

Perhaps not surprisingly, younger alumni carrying student-loan debt were more negative than those without debt. Among those with debt, only one in three strongly agreed that their college education was worth the cost.

The 2015 findings highlight a continuing challenge for colleges, said Brandon Busteed, Gallup’s executive director for education and work-force development. "If
we don’t figure out how to improve that value proposition," he said in an interview, "the great tidal wave of demand for higher education in the U.S. could easily come crashing down on us."

Role of Student-Loan Debt
For the 2015 poll, Gallup interviewed a nationally representative sample of more than 30,000 college alumni.

Debt concerns are affecting more than alumni’s attitudes about their undergraduate experience. Nearly half of recent graduates with student-loan debt said they had delayed postgraduate education because of it. Their levels of debt mattered too: 40 percent of those with student debt below $25,000 said they had delayed going back to school, but for those with debt in excess of that amount, the proportion was 56 percent.

Student debt also had other effects. Of recent alumni with more than $25,000 in student debt, 43 percent said it had caused them to delay buying a home, 40 percent said it had delayed their purchase of a car, 27 percent said it had delayed their moving out of their parents’ home, 25 percent said it had delayed their starting their own business, 19 percent said it had delayed their getting married, and 26 percent said it had delayed their having children.

The 2015 poll builds on the findings of last year’s survey, which sought to identify educational practices that correlate with graduates’ later satisfaction with their careers and overall level of well-being. The new poll found that alumni were more likely to believe their education was worth the cost if they had taken part in experiences like an internship relevant to their studies or a long-term project.

But another kind of experience — a research project with a professor — was irrelevant to their opinion about the worth of their college education. That means, in some cases, the research opportunities may be perfunctory and "not the highest quality of experience that they should be," said Mr. Busteed.

College-Specific Surveys
Along with its national poll, Gallup has begun selling individual polling services to colleges. At a price of about $30,000 for a very basic survey to around $200,000 for a fuller range of services, the individualized surveys allow colleges to compare results from their own alumni and students to the national sample.
Next to the costs of alumni surveys, which can run about $20,000 to $30,000, according to one consultant, or to the less-expensive individualized reports from groups like the National Survey of Student Engagement, the price tag for the Gallup product can be hard for some colleges to swallow.

A year and half ago, Gallup said that about 50 colleges had expressed interest. On Monday, Mr. Basted said about 40 colleges had contracted for the individual surveys. Results for several of those institutions have already been published online, including Arizona State University, Purdue University, the Universities of New Hampshire and Virginia, Virginia Tech, and Western Governors University. Under Gallup rules, colleges may keep those reports private, but if they choose to make any of the information public, they must publish the report in its entirety. That ensures they don’t cherry-pick which results to publicize.

For some institutions that may be an attraction or a concern. At New Hampshire, one of the most recent to publish a report, it was "a little bit of both," said Mark W. Huddleston, the president. "You can’t game it."

New Hampshire paid for the high-end level of services, he said, and believes it was worth it. Colleges have been "somewhat at loose ends" when it comes to describing their value, he said, and the survey helps to quantify that "what we do makes a difference." He said he also planned to use the findings to help guide future projects that would more intentionally involve alumni in mentoring programs for students.

Gallup’s business got an additional boost in July, when the Indiana Commission for Higher Education agreed to subsidize the cost for public and private colleges in the state to take part in the survey. Purdue and the Lumina Foundation, both of which played a role in creating the Gallup-Purdue Index, are based in Indiana.

For the commission, Gallup offered a special price and the loan-guarantee company USA Funds also provided a sizable subsidy. A spokeswoman for the commission said six institutions would take part under that plan: Ball State University, Indiana University (the spokeswoman was unable to immediately say whether it was the Bloomington flagship or a regional campus), Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne, the Ivy Tech Community College System, Purdue University Northwest (beginning after the merger of the Purdue Calumet and Purdue Northwest campuses), and Western Governors University-Indiana.