Mizzou News

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Incurable virus doesn’t hurt new breed of pigs

A virus that makes it hard for pigs to reproduce and slows their growth costs farmers $660 million a year. So far, no vaccine has been effective. But now researchers have bred pigs that aren’t harmed by the disease.

Scientists have tried for years to determine how the porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome (PRRS) virus infects pigs and how to stop it. Previously, researchers believed that the virus entered pigs by being inhaled into the lungs, where it attached to a protein known as sialoadhesin on the surface of white blood cells in the lungs.

However, two years ago researchers showed that elimination of sialoadhesin had no effect on susceptibility to PRRS. A second protein, called CD163, was thought to “uncoat” the virus and allow it to infect the pigs. In the new study, researchers worked to stop the pigs from producing CD163.

“Once inside the pigs, PRRS needs some help to spread; it gets that help from a protein called CD163,” says Randall Prather, professor of animal sciences at the University of Missouri. “We were able to breed a litter of pigs that do not produce this protein, and as a result, the virus doesn’t spread. When we exposed the pigs to PRRS, they did not get sick and continued to gain weight normally.”

“We edited the gene that makes the CD163 protein so the pigs could no longer produce it,” says Kristin Whitworth, a coauthor of the study in the journal Nature Biotechnology. “We then infected these pigs and control pigs; the pigs without CD163 never got sick. This discovery could have enormous implications for pig producers and the food industry throughout the world.”

While the pigs that didn’t produce CD163 didn’t get sick, scientists also observed no other changes in their development compared to pigs that produce the protein.

“At the end of our study, we had been able to make pigs that are resistant to an incurable, untreatable disease,” says Kevin Wells, coauthor of the study and assistant professor of animal sciences.
“This discovery could save the swine industry hundreds of millions of dollars every year. It also could have an impact on how we address other substantial diseases in other species.”

The university has signed an exclusive global licensing deal for potential future commercialization of virus resistant pigs with Genus, plc. If the development stage is successful, the commercial partner will seek any necessary approvals and registration from governments before a wider market release.

Genus plc, the US Department of Agriculture, and the University of Missouri’s Food for the 21st Century Program funded the work.

Scientists breed pigs resistant to incurable disease

COLUMBIA, Mo., Dec. 8 (UPI) -- Researchers at the University of Missouri have developed a pig breed resistant to an incurable disease currently costing farmers $660 million annually.

Swine infected by the Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) virus lose weight, rarely reproduce and suffer high mortality rates. But Missouri researchers, with help from scientists at Kansas State University, recently raised a litter of pigs resistant to the virus.

Their success is detailed in a new paper, published this week in the journal Nature Biotechnology.

"Once inside the pigs, PRRS needs some help to spread; it gets that help from a protein called CD163," study author Randall Prather, an animal sciences professor at Missouri’s College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, said in a press release.

"We were able to breed a litter of pigs that do not produce this protein, and as a result, the virus doesn't spread," Prather explained. "When we exposed the pigs to PRRS, they did not get sick and continued to gain weight normally."

Early in their research, Prather and his colleagues identified the protein CD163 as key in facilitating the proliferation of the PRRS virus. Researchers hypothesized that the proteins work
to "strip" or "uncoat" the virus, freeing it to infect the pigs. Gene editing experiments proved their hypothesis correct.

"We edited the gene that makes the CD163 protein so the pigs could no longer produce it," said study co-author Kristin Whitworth, a research scientist with Missouri's Division of Animal Sciences. "We then infected these pigs and control pigs; the pigs without CD163 never got sick. This discovery could have enormous implications for pig producers and the food industry throughout the world."

Researchers confirmed that the newly resistant pig breed did not suffer any negative side effects from the absence of the CD163 protein gene.

Now, researchers are working in coordination with Genus plc, a British biotech company specializing in pig and cattle breeds. They hope to take the breed to market in the near future.

MU professor, researchers find way to prevent deadly virus in pigs

Lauren Kelliher, Sarah Wynn

COLUMBIA — Pig farmers in North America lose more than $660 million annually due to a disease called Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome. That could change now that an MU professor, alongside a team of researchers, has successfully bred pigs that are resistant to the "incurable disease."

The virus was first detected in the U.S. in 1987, according to an MU news release, and no vaccine has ever been effective in eradicating it. The syndrome makes it difficult for pigs to gain weight and reproduce, and infected pigs have a high mortality rate. A team of researchers at MU, Kansas State University and Genus, a company that conducts research on animal genetics, have bred pigs that are immune, according to a news release on Tuesday.

Randall Prather, a pig geneticist and curators' professor in reproductive physiology in the Division of Animal Sciences in MU’s College of Agriculture, has been working toward a cure for the virus since 2002.

“When I got here they called it the mystery pig disease,” said Prather, who is on the team of researchers.
MU has signed an exclusive global licensing deal for potential future commercialization of virus resistant pigs with Genus, according to the release.

Paul Faris, a farmer and technical service manager at JBS, an international protein company, said his farm has suffered from the virus. Faris was an attendee at the the Passion for Pigs Seminar and Trade Show that was held Tuesday at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia.

“It’s a definite animal welfare improvement for the industry to be able to fight this,” Faris said. "There will be a lot more live pigs. Less pig suffering, less people suffering."

Faris said the disease has gotten more devastating for farmers in the past 20 years. Faris attended the seminar with Carl Brehe, also a farmer and production manager at JBS. The two said they have seen a combined loss of about 30,000 pigs in three years due to the virus.

“It’s a hell of a problem when you get it,” Brehe said.

A protein produced by the pigs, called CD163, helps the virus to spread, according to the release. The protein was thought to “uncoat” the virus — or do away with the outer shell of the virus — therefore allowing the inner virus to infect the pigs. Prather and his team modified the gene that creates the CD163 protein so the pigs no longer produce it.

The pigs in the study, along with a control group of pigs, were exposed to the virus for 35 to 45 days, Prather said. The pigs that could not produce the CD163 protein didn't get sick, and no other changes were observed in their development compared to the other pigs.

“These animals aren’t affected at all. The virus had just as much effect on them as it would on us,” Prather said.

While the early-stage results of the research are promising, the next steps for the researchers will be to further characterize the pigs and see if they can continue to grow.

Faris said the virus will run its course and his herd will combat the virus. He said they will stop any entries of new animals for months to help prevent the spread of the disease on the farm. Adding more animals would be like putting another piece of wood on the fire, he said.
The Course Release Conundrum

December 8, 2015 - 9:03pm

By Matt Reed

“Significant numbers of faculty aren’t teaching full loads!”

Assuming that’s true, what does it mean?

By itself, almost nothing. I’d want to know what they’re doing, instead.

If they’re getting free time to sip fruity drinks with umbrellas in them during the week, then yes, storm the barricades. A full-time job should be, well, full-time. And yes, there have been cases of people abusing leave -- whether as course release, sabbatical, or some other form of leave -- for their own reasons. It can happen.

But most of the time, course releases (or “reassigned times”) are ways of getting other work done. The public just doesn’t know that.

Yesterday’s story about course releases at the University of Missouri led to a series of comments about them being a symptom of the pathologies of research universities. They aren’t. Course releases aren’t unique to the research university world. In the community college world, they aren’t given for research, but they are given for other time-consuming things of value to the institution.

For example, department chairs routinely get teaching reductions. They get that in exchange for their work with adjuncts, assessment, budgeting, logistics, and the rest of it. Those tasks take time, and that time has to come from somewhere. Paying someone else to pick up a class or two is far cheaper than hiring another full-time administrator to do those things. Grant-funded programs often pay for adjuncts to cover course releases for faculty to work on the project for which the grant was funded. There’s nothing sinister about that, and nobody is loafing; it’s simply making room for new tasks.

That said, I’ve noticed some issues with course releases over the years.
First, the name is misleading. They should be called “course substitutions.” “Release” implies that the recipient is getting something for nothing; in fact, the recipient is picking up a new task in exchange for giving up a previous one. Misnaming them can lead low-information outsiders to jump to unhelpful conclusions. Which they do.

Second, for whatever reason, course releases are incredibly hard to “get back” once given. That shouldn’t be true, but it is. I once had an otherwise-intelligent professor tell me with a straight face that he had worked far more than his course release suggested, and that in choosing not to renew it, I was increasing his workload. I told him either claim could be true, but not both. He literally did not see the contradiction. The fetishization of “releases” isn’t limited to low-information outsiders.

Third, they rely on adjunct labor, with all that implies.

Fourth, they can introduce issues with evaluations. When evaluation criteria are based on teaching, but twenty to forty percent of the load has been switched to other tasks, it’s easy to create a de facto blind spot. That’s theoretically easy enough to get around, but in practical terms, it can happen.

Finally, they’re relatively blunt instruments. Some tasks are big enough to require some sort of compensation, but not really the equivalent of teaching a course. Stipends offer greater precision, and keep the full-time faculty in the classroom. They also tend not to generate the same sort of misunderstandings; nearly everybody can understand the concept of extra pay for extra work. Perhaps because they’re strictly monetary, people get their transactional nature much more clearly. On paper, that shouldn’t matter, but in practice, it very much does.

The caveats are real, but there’s nothing necessarily sinister about releases. Hearing that many faculty get them at a particular university (or college) doesn’t raise an eyebrow. It’s a standard, inexpensive way to get work done that either wouldn’t get done otherwise or would cost far more. Mizzou has its challenges, but this shouldn’t be one of them.
MU weighs options for graduate workers' health costs

COLUMBIA (AP) — A University of Missouri task force is recommending two options for graduate student employees' health insurance premiums.

According to the task force's final report those options are creating a fellowship or increasing stipends. Health insurance became an issue after the university gave graduate assistants 24-hour notice in August that they would no longer receive health insurance subsidies because of an IRS interpretation of the Affordable Care Act. The university rescinded that decision for this academic year after student and faculty backlash and created a task force to work on the issue.

The task force compiled its recommendations into a report last month given to interim Chancellor Hank Foley. The report, which was published online Friday, also suggests adding another option to the student insurance plan.
MU anti-abortion group disagrees with Genocide Awareness Project’s tactics

By Megan Favignano

Tuesday, December 8, 2015 at 2:00 pm

Mizzou Students for Life, an anti-abortion student organization, tried to dissuade the Genocide Awareness Project from coming to the University of Missouri campus this week. The Genocide Awareness Project, a mobile display that travels to college and university campuses, has posters on display in front of the Student Center that include graphic images of genocide victims and aborted fetuses.

Pastor Clenard Childress Jr. with the New Calvary Baptist Church in Montclair, N.J., led the effort to bring the display to campus. He said information about abortion is not reaching a group that historically has the most abortions: black women.

“If all black lives matter, then we should consider all black life,” Childress said. “That includes the children being discriminated against in the womb.”

Kristen Wood, president of Mizzou Students for Life, said the group agrees with the project’s anti-abortion message but does not support its tactics.

“We want to approach this issue from a place of love and logic, not scare tactics,” Wood said of the display’s graphic images.

MU’s Jewish Student Organization circulated a statement about the Genocide Awareness Project via Twitter on Monday, criticizing the project for comparing abortion to the Holocaust.

“The images and comparisons made are not only inaccurate; they are offensive and triggering to students,” the student organization’s statement read. “This organization hijacks the tragedies that groups have faced in order to progress their political, anti-abortion agenda.”

Bill Calvin of the Center for Bioethical Reform, the not-for-profit group that started the Genocide Awareness Project, said the displays were designed to compare abortion, which the group views as modern-day genocide, to historical genocides.
“Unfortunately, people need to see what a terrible atrocity abortion is ... to take action to stop it,” he said of the display.

Wood said the Genocide Awareness Project is taking advantage of MU’s tumultuous campus climate. In November, former UM System President Tim Wolfe and MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin resigned amid protests over the racial climate on campus.

Childress said the group wanted to visit MU to encourage students to work to stop abortion.

“The students misjudged our motive for being here,” Childress said. “With all of the social activism that’s been on this campus this year — with students making demands and the president being dismissed — they at first perceived” the Genocide Awareness Project “to be a project to minimize their efforts.”

Mizzou Students for Life hosted the Genocide Awareness Project a few years ago and received negative feedback from students, Wood said. When the student group declined to host the poster display this semester, Genocide Awareness Project organizers said they still planned to visit MU.

MU spokesman Christian Basi said no student group or campus organization sponsored the display, which was installed Monday and will be removed Wednesday afternoon.

Muslim Mizzou student sues professor over alleged remarks

December 8, 2015 • Associated Press

COLUMBIA, Mo. • A Muslim student at the University of Missouri has filed a lawsuit alleging that a biology professor directed a slew of sexually suggestive and religiously offensive remarks at her.

Fatma El-Walid claims in the lawsuit filed Nov. 30 that professor Michael Garcia asked El-Walid if her parents had waterboarded her “as a child in preparation for the future.” The lawsuit also claims that he wanted to know if her faith made her hate gay people and Jews. The lawsuit also alleges that Garcia suggested that El-Walid should pose as a suicide bomber.

El-Walid claims the remarks were made in March.
Garcia’s lawyer, Josh Oxenhandler says his client “vehemently” denies the claims.

The Columbia Missourian reported that El-Walid said her grades dropped as a result of trauma from the exchange with her professor. She is seeking more than $25,000 in damages and wants the school to discipline Garcia.

University of Missouri spokesman Christian Basi said the school was aware of the lawsuit, but declined to comment specifically about Garcia.

The lawsuit says a complaint was reported to the school’s Equity Office by a student not named in the lawsuit. Basi said that when a complaint is filed, it is immediately referred to the relevant office.

El-Walid is being represented by St. Louis lawyer Azra Ahmad. Ahmad said El-Walid was referred to her through the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Ahmad told KMIZ in a phone interview last week that his client was “humiliated publicly,” and wanted an apology.

“And she wants the University to take a stand that such behavior, such prejudice and racism should not be tolerated in a place of higher learning,” Ahmad told KMIZ.

DECEMBER 8, 2015

A conversation with Mike Middleton, who was chosen to lead the University of Missouri out of crisis

The civil rights attorney, law professor and administrator is faced with calming MU’s tumultuous racial climate

The fact he is African-American, he believes, was a factor considered by those who picked him for the job

BY MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS
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The books filling the shelves in the office Mike Middleton has occupied since becoming interim president of the University of Missouri System nearly four weeks ago don’t belong to him.

They, like the racial turmoil on the Columbia campus, were there when he took the job. But, he points out, he likes at least one of the books, “Nelson Mandela: Conversations With Myself.”

Middleton, 68, stepped away from his recent retirement into the temporary job when Tim Wolfe resigned under pressure after student protests over racial inequity on the campus. The chancellor on the Columbia campus, R. Bowen Loftin, stepped down the same day under pressure from faculty who said they had no confidence in his leadership.

It’s a crisis, Middleton says, he’s well suited to manage.

At the time of his interim appointment, Middleton was working part time at the university directing efforts to improve inclusion, diversity and equity within campus activities. He’d been at the university 30 years, including 17 as deputy chancellor.

A 1968 graduate of the MU Law School, he also had a long career as a civil rights attorney and a university professor. When the rudderless university began buzzing over who would lead the four campuses — Columbia, Kansas City, St. Louis and Rolla — while a search for a long-term president was launched, Middleton’s name rose to the top of the list.

When The Kansas City Star sat down with Middleton last week for an interview, he spoke candidly in measured tones with his voice in full bass. He talked about growing up in the Deep South, racism then and now, and conditions on the Mizzou campus. He also addressed student protests, why he took this job and how he intends to make changes in the short time he’ll sit behind the big desk in the president’s office.

**Q: Why put retirement on hold to take this position?**

A: I have been asked that question and I have been advised by people very close to me not to do it. My sister in particular wrote a very long email imploring me to
take care of myself and do what I wanted to do. But in the end I decided that this is what I want to do.

I care about this university. And I care about its reputation. I know that it is better than the last couple of months suggests that it is. And I was excited about the opportunity to try to restore this university to the place it held before and the place that it aspires to be.

When I was here as a student, everyone thought very highly of the University of Missouri and I have only seen it grow in its ability to do what it does. So I did this because someone needed to do it and I thought I was in a pretty good position to do that. Retirement can wait.

**Q: Given the state of the university at the time you came into office — the claims of systemic racism, systemic oppression, marginalization of students of color — what credentials do you have that make you more prepared to fill the slot than others who were considered?**

A: I understand clearly what marginalized students and faculty mean when they express what they have been expressing for the past several months. I have experienced all that myself.

I went to law school so that I could do something in the civil rights arena. I was very much inspired by Thurgood Marshall and Bob Carter and other lawyers who came to Mississippi, where I was living as a child. I saw the change they were able to make in that profession.

When I finished law school here at the University of Missouri School of Law, I became an attorney with the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice. During my 15-year career in federal service, I was deputy assistant secretary of education for the Office for Civil Rights. I was an associate general counsel at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. So I’ve got credentials in that area.

But also in Washington, I was a manager of some fairly large offices in the federal system for the last 10 years of my employment there and I developed some understanding of management of organizations and organizational development and budgets and that kind of thing. In my 17 years at MU in the chancellor’s office, I became quite familiar with how the university operates. So I think my training, my experience, my background all suit me nicely for this position.
I have been able to confirm my impression that the folks at the system were really dedicated and committed and knew what they were doing. There is a culture here that is very supportive of the four campuses.

Q: Did you at any point consider that you may have been asked into this position not solely because you are highly qualified but also because you happen to be African-American?

A: I am an African-American and that is who I am. So whenever anyone considers me, they are by definition considering the fact of who I am. So no, that does not bother me.

It bothers me when someone discriminates against me, discounts my qualifications and marginalizes me because I am a black man. But I have no problem with people recognizing that there are times when my being an African-American is an asset that ought to be utilized. In this society, unfortunately, race permeates most decisions and activities that we engage in. That is the problem, that race is often considered in ways that do damage to the institution.

I have always been surprised that this country has had the success that it has had excluding large parts of the population from any meaningful involvement and decision-making. That included blacks, Hispanics and women to a large degree. So we have been developing as a nation with our right arm tied behind us for hundreds of years.

It is remarkable that we have gotten this far, but it is time for us to include everyone in the process. And I think that will only make us better and stronger.

Q: How much of your time in this job will be about addressing the immediate racial and social problems on the Columbia campus and how much will be dealing with running a four-campus system? Because you are not a campus chancellor. You’re a system president.

A: I am well aware of that. The difficulty that we are going to have is my job is to run the four-campus system and I fully intend to do that. But I have to tell you that it is going to be very difficult for me to do that if we don’t get the issues that gave rise to our current situation resolved, or at least to build a structure within the system and on the campuses to get the right people in place, to get the right committees and task forces operational to give them some direction on what they are being called to do.
And that is to review everything that we do and recommend modifications to improve the way we operate. Find best practices from the research and institutions around the country that we can implement here to move the ball further to get some resources devoted to sustaining that kind of effort. To ensure that it is a true collaboration with all stakeholders.

And once I get that process going, I am hopeful that I will be able to turn my attention to managing the university system. I know that my board expects that of me.

But I also know that my board understands that we are coming out of a crisis and it is going to be very difficult to rebuild trust and confidence in the system without bringing our current set of issues to some resolution.

Q: This sounds like a long-term task. Do you have time to do all that?

A: I certainly have time to set the process in motion. I mean we are working hard right now. We have already secured a chief diversity officer for the Columbia campus. There were such positions at St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla already. We are in the process of searching for a chief diversity officer for the system.

We are putting together a systemwide task force to address these issues, and I fully expect each campus to develop a campus-level task force to feed ideas into that larger system-level task force. We’ve got a process in place to review our collective rules and regulations to ensure they are tight and clear and don’t produce any unintended consequences.

We have got lots of things in motion. It won’t take us long to get the process started. But as you point out, this is a very, very complex, long-term problem. It hasn’t been solved in the 50 years since the Civil Rights Act, and there wasn’t much effort to solve it prior to 1964. So we haven’t been working on this issue effectively for a long time. But the number of years that it has taken to get us where we are today suggests that it is going to take quite some time to bring these issues to a final conclusion.

But what we can do is tap the enthusiasm and excitement that has been created by this crisis among people in our community, supporters of the university, people in the legislature. People all over want this thing resolved, and I think people all over realize that saying that is not going to do it. So we are going to have to come together around the table and have some serious discussions, some
serious scholarly work, some honest appraisals of policies and practices and programs and really focus our attention on moving this issue forward.

That is really all I expect to really be able to do in the year that I have. But we will get that done.

**Q:** What is different about the student protests in Columbia and on other campuses across the country today compared to those that occurred on this campus when you were here as a student?

A: Well, when I was a student here, there were very few students of color on this campus, so our numbers were small. We didn’t have as large a voice. We didn’t have as large a support system of like-minded colleagues. So our movement was a bit more subdued. Our marches were 10 or 15 people. The Legion of Black Collegians when we founded it probably had maybe 10 members. And in my day, I think that my generation necessarily developed some coping mechanisms to deal with the subtle microaggressions, the effects of implicit bias. When someone was overtly antagonistic, you had to have a reaction. But you kind of learned how to not allow some of these subtle acts to deter you from what you were trying to do.

I grew up in Mississippi. I was very accustomed to being discriminated against on a daily basis. I mean it was in your face — men and women colored restrooms at gas stations, that was common. Having a clerk tell me when I was 7 years old when I asked her why I couldn’t try on a pair of shoes that my mother was trying to buy me and she told me that no self-respecting white child would put those shoes on after they had been on my feet.

Those kinds of things were daily occurrences. So when that is happening to you, you have to decide whether you are going to let that destroy you or whether you are going to push through it and try to achieve something.

I think this generation of young people have not had that kind of harsh experience with racism. So you get a combination of a larger number of young people — who are much brighter than I was at their age, by the way — who are just unwilling to put up with that kind of treatment, and the numbers are large enough that they can support each other. They can organize themselves better than we did back in the ’60s.
I think the other factor is that back in the ’60s there were some other issues that society certainly viewed as more important. The largest protests that I was involved with in the ’60s were anti-war protests. So the race issue was marginalized because of the larger anti-war movement, so it was just a different time, different generations of young people. A whole different experience.

But it is all part of the same movement. I mean this movement, this struggle has been going on since slavery, and the struggle changes form depending upon the social circumstance at the time. So it is not dramatically different. These students were doing exactly the same things that we were doing. It is almost from the playbook. Different but at the same time not that different.

**Q:** Since you have been in this position, have you met with some of the protesting students — Concerned Student 1950, graduate students? And what kinds of things did you discuss?

A: I have met with students from all of those groups over the past year and a half, and obviously we have discussed their frustrations and we have discussed the history. I am a member of a race relations committee that the faculty council put together on the Columbia campus when I was a campus person. That committee discussed these issues all summer. So those conversations have been ongoing.

But I have met with any number of students. Payton Head (the student body president who was called the N-word on campus), I met when he was a freshman here and we have related well over the years. I don’t think I have had time to talk to them since I took this position, other than the listening session the Board of Curators had here on Nov. 20. There were a number of students who came and presented their concerns to the board. I have told a few of them that I am relying on them to come to the table and help us devise solutions to these problems. We need their input, we need their insights, we need their suggestions.

But I also told them let’s not do it now. This is finals. You have got to maintain your attention on your studies.

**Q:** What does the university need to do to restore faculty, student and graduate student trust?

A: I think what we need to do is demonstrate a commitment to working cooperatively, collaboratively with faculty, student, staff alums and all the other
stakeholders on resolving all the issues that confront us. I think it is important to remind everyone what we are as a university.

We educate 77,000 students in the state of Missouri on our four campuses. We have got a hospital system that provides health care to millions of people in mid-Missouri. We have all sorts of research going on on our campuses, and that research is advancing the health and quality of life for people in Missouri and around the world.

We are connected internationally to great universities and do collaborative research, collaborative work on all kinds of issues that are going to move our culture forward. And I think that people need to be reminded of who we are and what we do and the value that we provide to the state of Missouri and to the nation.

We are a huge economic engine for the state of Missouri. Our extension programs hit every county in Missouri with valuable information that helps Missourians live better lives. So this university is of great value to the state of Missouri. And that is not changed by these incidents that we are dealing with.

These incidents pointed out a weakness in our culture, and we will take care of that. But don’t let that distract you from understanding the 175-year history of this institution and what we do and continue to do for the people of Missouri.

And I think if we can get that message across and reassure people that we have people in place who are managing this institution well and we are advancing this institution and growing it and making it better, as we have for the last 175 years, that will continue.

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**MIKE MIDDLETON’S INSPIRATION**

“In our resolve to restore confidence in the University of Missouri System, it will take every member of our diverse university community coming together to address the very human issues of marginalization so that we may then return to focusing on our mission of education, research, economic development and service.” — Mike Middleton, inspired by a Nelson Mandela quote:
“In real life we deal not with gods, but with ordinary humans like ourselves: men and women who are full of contradictions, who are stable and fickle, strong and weak, famous and infamous.” — Nelson Mandela


MU committees look to long term in race relations, diversity requirements

COLUMBIA — Since May, Berkley Hudson and other members of the MU Faculty Council Committee on Race Relations have met for two hours once a week. They talk about race and racism. They talk about diversity and inclusion.

After months of racial turmoil on campus and amid calls for a quick fix to discrimination and racism, Hudson, the committee chairman, said he and 11 other members — including now University of Missouri System President Mike Middleton and graduate student activist Jonathan Butler — are in it for the long haul to make MU safer and more inclusive.

“We always said our approach was a long-term approach,” he said.

Shedding light on race relations

The committee made five videos, including "Response to Skeptics" and "Describe the Racial Landscape," in which members talk about the racial climate at MU. Made in September and released on MU's "Transparency" website in November, they seem almost prescient of the fall's events on campus. A protest by Concerned Student 1950, a student activist group, during the MU Homecoming parade Oct. 10 began nearly a month of protests and unrest at MU that contributed to the resignations of UM System President Tim Wolfe and MU Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin.

“If you listen to the videos, you won’t be surprised by what happened. Or if you were at any of the listening sessions,” Hudson said, referring to campus forums held in late 2014 and early 2015, "you were not surprised by what happened.”

In "Response to Skeptics," Butler, a founding member of Concerned Student 1950, answered the prompt: "What do you say to those who deny that issues of race exist on the University of Missouri campus?”
"For anyone who doesn't think (race) is an issue, a very short answer is that you're part of the problem," he responded.

Hudson said they made the videos to try to give faculty members a tool to begin conversations with students and with each other.

“Our viewpoint all along was how to write a script for conversations that were difficult and uncomfortable, and that’s what we’ve been doing,” he said. "And we hope to move soon to the next step, which is extending that conversation to the university community, especially to faculty."

Leigh Neier, an assistant teaching professor in the College of Education and a member of the committee, said its discussions have remained proactive in the wake of campus unrest.

"Well before the events, we recognized that working on the campus' race relations had to happen," Neier said.

Neier said, though, that she believes the events will not only change how race is discussed at MU but also will translate into the campus becoming a national model for the best practices related to inclusion. She said she recognizes the value of talking to faculty across departments and students involved in the Missouri Students Association and MU athletics and hopes members of the committee will continue to serve as liaisons across campus.

Although the committee hopes to reach out to MU administrators, students, alumni and staff, Hudson said its focus is on equipping faculty members. He said he spoke with a professor who at first couldn't see the value of showing the videos to his biochemistry class and with an engineering professor who pointed out that engineering graduates may get jobs with assignments in Saudi Arabia or Africa and have to negotiate cultural, religious and racial differences.

"It is our role, actually, to educate one another and ourselves and our students and our fellow faculty, our staff, our alumni that this is an important issue," Hudson said.

He said that not every group fighting for racial equality on campus approves of the committee's approach and that the committee itself contains a wide range of viewpoints.

Hudson said he profoundly believes that conversation may be able to heal wounds and encourage understanding.

“OK, so we’re having a family feud right now,” he said. "Can we all agree we still want to be part of the family and help solve the problem?"

**Creating a diversity requirement**

A second group within the MU Faculty Council, the Diversity Enhancement Committee, has been working on recommendations for a diversity requirement since August 2014, soon after Ferguson.
In the 15 months since then, the committee, of which Hudson is also a member, has crafted several proposals for a campus diversity requirement, the latest of which was published on MU's "Transparency" website Nov. 20, said Angela Speck, a professor of astrophysics and chair of the committee.

The requirement, like one in place at Washington State University, would require undergraduates to take a three-credit diversity course as part of their general education classes. Speck said the requirement wouldn’t add cost or credit hours; students would be able to pick from classes already available within their majors.

Speck said she has been trying to bring all stakeholders into the conversation; she said Concerned Student 1950 has participated in forming the proposal. Speck also said recent events on campus have made stakeholders more interested and more invested in the process.

“They raised the profile,” she said. "Maybe some people who hadn’t been paying attention started to pay attention.”

Speck said she thought there were a lot of faculty at MU who weren’t aware before the protests of how bad racism was on campus.

She said the proposed requirement can’t solve racism or change how students think or feel about each other, but it may help students navigate an increasingly globalized society and work in an increasingly diverse environment.

“Regardless of whether or not we can change hearts and minds, if nothing else, we can help them be more productive members of society," she said.

**Encouraging faculty communication**

Hudson said his committee hopes to encourage people such as Kathryn Chval, acting dean of the College of Education. She has been in and out of listening sessions about race. She helped create a space in Townsend Hall, The Bridge, where students can discuss their experiences. She’s organized discussions to talk about recent events at MU.

On Nov. 9, Chval facilitated an action planning event that drew 240 students, faculty, staff and administrators to talk about solutions for the racial climate on campus, with two rules: Everyone had to look the speaker in the eye and treat each person as a genius. Chval said it was her most memorable night in more than 12 years at MU.

After the meeting, emails poured in. Students told her that was the first time they had ever felt listened to and respected at MU, Chval said. Others, such as Hayley Kuehner, wrote to thank Chval for letters she wrote to the college following threats on campus and to tell Chval about discussions during class lectures.

Throughout the past two months, Chval has actively communicated with students and their families, writing frequent, impassioned open letters. Her first letter, referencing dangerous
threats made on social media on Nov. 11, shared her own feelings “as a mother of three children.” The letter was shared over and over on Facebook and Twitter.

Chval said she thought the letter connected with students’ families because her message and tone weren’t institutional. Due partly to that letter, Chval said administrators from schools including Moberley Area Community College, Florida A&M University, Penn State University and California State University-San Bernardino have reached out to her to offer support and ask advice.

As a faculty member in the College of Education, Neier said her college is hardwired to talk about diversity, inclusion and equity. It’s part of the college's strategic plan. When the protests and unrest received national attention, the college rose to the occasion.

"When the time came to act, we were ready. Our number one priority was to care for our students and our faculty and support their well-being and their emotional health," she said.

With many campuses experiencing protests and unrest, Chval said she thought MU could be a model — or a caution — of how to address an institution's history and move forward.

"For us, it’s been exciting that so many have been reaching out in this effort," she said. "It’s not just been one or two people, but faculty, staff and students from all over."

In an interview, Chval said repeatedly: "The world is watching us."

diversity course requirement changed with student course load in mind

The changes made in the proposal would allow students to select from pre-existing courses at MU that have been approved to educate on the subject of diversity.

**The hotly debated diversity course initiative lead by the Faculty Council Diversity Enhancement Committee has been altered, as detailed in a Nov. 20 update posted on the MU Transparency website.**

The adjustments in the proposal would involve requiring incoming freshmen or transfer students to select a pre-existing three-credit-hour course on the subject of diversity from a list of approved classes in order to fulfill the already mandatory 27-credit-hour general education requirement.
The courses that could be included in the gen ed cultural competency requirement include courses from all colleges including, for example, ESCP 2000 (Experiencing Cultural Diversity in the United States) from the College of Education and JOURN 2000 Cross-Cultural Journalism from the School of Journalism,” the update reads. “There are many courses in the humanities and behavior/social sciences within the College of Arts and Science as well as in the College of Human Environmental Sciences.”

Each course would be added to a list of applicable classes on the merits of its cultural competency.

According to the update, a new standing committee will be created, composed of faculty on campus who will collaborate on a rubric that will serve to define the requirements necessary for a course to be able to be chosen by students.

This new change in the proposal shows a radical difference from the previous update from the Diversity Enhancement Committee, which was released on Oct. 14.

In the October update, the committee advocated that students would take a three-credit-hour course titled Educational, School and Counseling Psychology 2000: Experiencing Cultural Diversity in the United States.

Angela Speck, chairwoman of the committee and astronomy professor, said that in the 15 months she has lead the committee, she has overseen many changes made to the proposal as a result of ongoing dialogue between committee members and students on campus.

“It's evolved a lot over time,” Speck said. “We started with a proposal that was very different to start with that had one single goal as a requirement. Now, it's looking at what courses we already have that can fulfill this requirement, because we actually do have a lot of courses that could fulfill this, and it means that we could implement it with very little cost and very little change to how things already work, except that students will have to pick one of the courses.”

Speck said the change should benefit students by lessening the course load that would have been required in the previous change to the proposal.

“Something to emphasize is that this does not add extra requirements in terms of credit hours,” she said. “I was worried that this would put more burden on students, but really it's not meant to do that. Within the 27 hours of gen eds that you can choose from, like nine of science, you will pick one of those to fulfill the diversity requirement.”

The most recent change made to the proposal is the third update made to the initiative. In 2005, the Legion of Black Collegians issued a list of demands regarding the racial climate at MU, drawing attention to the lack of diversity representation.

In 2006, the Chancellor's Diversity Initiative was created to address the concerns of students, with Roger Worthington appointed as chief diversity officer.
However, the course proposal didn’t gain momentum until Worthington and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies Jim Spain gathered with students in 2007 to discuss the goals surrounding the proposal and how to implement the course.

The course proposal stagnated in 2010, but was finally approved by Faculty Council in 2011.

Although the discourse surrounding the initiative has been long-running, Speck said many people were unaware that the conversation existed until recent campus events involving Concerned Student 1950 brought it to light.

“The recent things that have happened on campus have made it more public,” Speck said. “It’s always been public, it's always something we’ve been trying to get out. But even though we’ve been as open as we can about what’s going on and involving people, some have not heard about it because people sometimes just delete emails that come from the chancellor or what other.”

Speck said the publicity garnered more public input and involvement.

“What happened was that this really raised this issue to the point where people were like ‘oh, this is already going on, I want to be involved,’” Speck said. “It helped us get word out because we were already doing this.”

Speck said this course is necessary because a lot of students are from homogeneous backgrounds and lack knowledge on how to communicate with students who are different from them.

“I think that having courses that introduce them to these issues of who is marginalized, why are they marginalized and how does this fit into the bigger picture of how society works is going to help everybody,” Speck said. “You can’t be a leader if you don’t know who you are leading. You can a manager if you don’t know the problems of who you are managing. I think it is helping our students become the next leaders.”
Columbia analyzes racism within community

Watch story: [http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31837&zone=5&categories=5](http://www.komu.com/player/?video_id=31837&zone=5&categories=5)

COLUMBIA - Stephens College hosted a forum Tuesday night to analyze racism in Columbia, and as one panel member put it, "things might get a little uncomfortable."

*The Diversity Awareness Partnership included speakers from the University of Missouri, the Columbia City Council, and the group Race Matters.*

The recent demonstrations on the University of Missouri's campus thrust the school into the national spotlight, when graduate student Jonathan Butler went on a hunger strike and the football team stood with him, refusing to practice until his strike was over.

"They have been soundly and roundly ignored" said Traci Wilson-Kleekamp when referring to the student protesters at MU last month. She said she would also be angry if she was trying to learn in a similar campus climate.

Panelists drew from personal experiences when answering questions.

"Disney is one of the worst for creating stereotypes" said panelist Michael Hosokowa. He said he is often referred to as "Mr. Miyagi," the karate master in "The Karate Kid". Hosokowa says that those types of stereotypes can erase a person's identity.

MU professor Cynthia Frisby said it's important to remember when discussing diversity that it isn't always "black versus white".

She said there are many different ways that people are diverse, but added that the media and the events it covers is part of the reason why people see a "black versus white" narrative in society.

Hosokowa agreed, saying "The more stories we exchange...the more understanding we've created."
One attendee said they believe the City of Columbia has racist hiring practices and wanted to know how it plans on changing that. Ward 4 Councilman Ian Thomas responded saying he didn't believe people were being implicitly racist in hiring practices, but said it is common for people to hire others they see as similar to themselves.

Wilson-Kleekamp said in order to have these changes be instituted, it "needs to go beyond paper."

She said City Manager Mike Matthes is the one who is responsible for holding the departments accountable for their hiring practices, and the city council should should ask him how he plans on instituting his social justice resolution.

Wilson-Kleekamp also emphasized the importance of creating a positive climate for minority employees so they will want to continue working there.

US universities gripped by identity crisis

Universities across the United States are caught up in a wave of protests swirling around issues of race, identity and how institutions should respond to their history.

It's raised far-reaching questions about campus culture and the boundaries of free speech.

Much of this battle has been fought out in symbols and arguments over language.

In Harvard, there are calls to ditch "master" from the academic title of "house masters", the heads of residential houses, because of the word's associations with slavery.

The title has more to do with the British education system, with its "school masters" and "house masters". But in the US context, where "master" has different historical echoes, the word itself has become toxic.

And reflecting the mood on campus, this argument has been accepted by the Harvard house masters themselves, who say they are now looking for a different title.

They say the use of the word "master" causes discomfort and creates images of "human subjugation".
**Slavery links**

Harvard's Law School has been embroiled in a row over its crest, which displays the coat of arms of the Royall family. This is a link to an 18th Century college donor, Isaac Royall, who as well as establishing the college's first professorship in law, was a particularly brutal slaveholder.

This has been the law school's official seal since the 1930s, but now this winter, following accusations that this was a racist emblem, a committee has been set up to reconsider its use.

In Princeton, the dispute has focused on a school named after Woodrow Wilson. The former US president stands accused of holding deeply entrenched racist views, and protesters from the Black Justice League want the building renamed.

In Yale, there has been a campaign to rename Calhoun College, to remove links with John Calhoun, a 19th Century advocate of slavery.

The thread linking the protests is the suggestion that racism is not a thing of the past but remains as an unresolved question on campus.

There is a website, the Demands, listing the grievances in more than 70 universities where students have "risen up" against such prejudice.

'Tribal identity'

But why are so many protests hitting universities now?

Carol Christ, director of the Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley, says that "symbolic fights are always about real and current political issues" and in the US, the issue of race is never far from the surface.

"Race is so traumatic and central an issue in American culture - with both the history of slavery and the genocide of Native Americans always present," says Dr Christ.

The sensitivity over race and discrimination was heightened by events such as the shooting of a young black man by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

"That created a lot of activism on college campuses," Dr Christ says.

And the arguments over emblems and traditions are part of a wider battle over identity and whose culture should be commemorated on campus.

"Colleges and universities in the United States make a huge amount of their history, they're always telling their story, it's the way in which they try and make almost a tribal identity," Dr Christ says.
But these stories might make difficult listening for minority groups, with the college names and emblems having echoes of slavery and segregation.

"They will feel an alienation from the stories that they're told to accept as part of their college identity," says Dr Christ.

**Economic significance**

What makes this an even more significant struggle is that university is now seen as the gateway to a better job.

Even though universities might have a public commitment to inclusion and diversity, protesters have accused them of remaining the domain of a white middle and upper class.

Only about 5% of lecturers in US universities are black, according to official figures. Protesters have argued that universities have turned a blind eye to a long legacy of discrimination.

"It's about the increasing sense that college is the way to economic security and power in modern society," Dr Christ says, adding this is combined with fears prestigious colleges are increasingly being dominated by the wealthy.

Another provocative thread in the campus disputes has been about free speech and whether activities or language or opinions should be blocked if they upset some students.

This has included the concept of "safe space" where students can be protected from language or arguments that might offend them.

But this has been criticised by opponents as contradicting the intellectual purpose of a university, which should be about challenging ideas and contesting beliefs.

*Narcissistic*

Among the most forthright attacks came from Everett Piper, president of Oklahoma Wesleyan University.

Dr Piper told his students: "This is not a day care. This is a university."

And he warned: "Our culture has actually taught our kids to be this self-absorbed and narcissistic. Any time their feelings are hurt, they are the victims.

"Anyone who dares challenge them and thus makes them feel bad about themselves, is a 'hater', a 'bigot', an 'oppressor' and a 'victimiser'."

There have also been arguments that changing the names of buildings is a way of avoiding uncomfortable questions about past attitudes, rather than addressing the historic legacy of universities.
But this simmering winter protest shows no sign of subsiding.

The president of the University of Missouri resigned last month, amid claims he had failed to respond adequately to allegations of racism.

And this week, a Yale lecturer, caught up in a row over the right to wear Halloween costumes, even if they caused offence, decided to step down from teaching.

Dr Christ says that "because race is so vexed and turbulent a subject" in the United States, the "controversies will continue".

High and Long-Term Stakes

December 9, 2015

By Peter McDonough and Lorelle L. Espinosa

Today the U.S. Supreme Court again hears oral arguments in Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin. It is a case about one institution’s limited use of race in its rather unique admissions process, but what may be hanging in the balance is the ability of colleges and universities across America to ensure a racially diverse student body and, just as critically, build a diverse faculty.

Many people were surprised to see the Supreme Court take up Fisher once more, after ruling in 2013 that lower courts needed to apply “strict scrutiny” and not give colleges deference in reviews of challenges to the consideration of race and ethnicity in admissions decisions. Whatever the reason for revisiting the case now, the justices will be hearing it against the backdrop of racial tensions in our society and recent protests, demands and discussions at the University of Missouri and other colleges and universities nationwide. This timing underscores higher education institutions’ need for engaged, thoughtful and diverse perspectives that will shape the learning of our students, who, in turn, will shape our nation’s future.

What ought not to be open for debate is the societal value of allowing colleges and universities to construct diverse, inclusive campus environments. As the American Council on Education’s amicus brief recalls, the court has repeatedly recognized the educational value of a diverse student body. While the
benefits are paramount in structured settings like college and university campuses, long-term gains for our society and workforce are just as powerful. In today’s diverse world, and in the world that lies ahead of us, the ability to understand and engage with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives is a necessary skill and a national imperative.

The range of amicus briefs filed in the Supreme Court in Fisher I and II and in the court’s prior consideration of race in admissions reflects this reality. As briefs filed from Fortune 500 businesses, state and federal elected officials, and military leaders argue, higher education’s commitment to ensuring diverse perspectives and engagement across differences is supported by those who work together in corporate boardrooms, scientific laboratories, doctor’s offices and on the battlefield.

Further, and importantly, the outcome of Fisher II won’t just impact student diversity on our nation’s campuses. It could also crimp the pipeline from undergraduate to advanced study for students of color who aspire to the professoriate -- just the opposite of what is needed at a moment when faculty diversity is among the many concerns intensely expressed by students in recent weeks.

Today’s students are tomorrow’s professors, and diversity across America’s professoriate is crucial. After all, who instructs and inspires entering freshmen and transfer students after they arrive on our nation’s campuses? Who advises, coaches, mentors, encourages, challenges, cajoles, counsels and comforts them? A diverse faculty enriches experiences, fosters empathy, cultivates and shares talents and perspectives, and offers unscripted opportunities to open minds and inform thinking.

Some people argue that the consideration of race in admissions is a policy ready for retirement. In fact, in 2003, Justice Sandra Day O’Connor noted that “race-conscious admissions policies must be limited in time,” and the court expected that in 2028 “the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary” to further an institution’s interests in having an educational environment that benefits from a diverse student body. If the court upholds the consideration of race in 2016, Justice O’Connor’s optimistic time horizon may not be so far off: many of 2028’s college freshmen are kindergartners today. They will emerge from a pool of potential college students that will be the most racially diverse in our history.

Yet to truly ready their campuses for the class of 2028 and the educational benefits that a diverse student and faculty body provides, colleges and universities must have the necessary tools at their disposal today. The consideration of race remains such a vital tool and -- as the research of ACE and others has shown -- this consideration is at its best when used in conjunction with the consideration of other student characteristics, such as family income, academic preparation and life experience.

The bottom line is that colleges and universities require the freedom not only to say but also to act on the tenet that racial diversity matters -- to their students, their faculty and the future of this country.

BIO

*Peter McDonough is vice president and general counsel of the American Council on Education. Lorelle L. Espinosa is assistant vice president of ACE’s Center for Policy Research and Strategy. ACE represents more than 1,600 college and university presidents and related associations.*
Is there an optimal number of minority students on a college campus? At what point are diversity’s educational benefits broadly realized, and is there a threshold at which students from underrepresented racial groups feel welcome?

Those questions are at the center of a series of affirmative-action cases at the Supreme Court and recent student demonstrations for improved racial climates.

Since its decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* in 2003, the Supreme Court has framed this number as "critical mass." About one-third of the student-activist groups that have issued demands on approximately 70 campuses nationwide have sought to increase the share of black students to help them feel less isolated. Protesters at Washington University in St. Louis, for example, have advocated for the share of black and Latino students each to increase to 10 percent of enrollment. Students at Michigan State University want the number of underrepresented students from urban areas to triple by 2017-18.

So, what’s the right number?

Education researchers have shied away from articulating one. Critical mass, the American Educational Research Association argued, "should be examined dynamically, and is contingent upon several factors beyond simple numerical targets." Factors like a college’s racial climate, history, and institutional practices ought to be weighed on a case-by-case basis, the association wrote in its brief to the Supreme Court in *Abigail Noel Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* (No. 14-981), in support of Texas. The case is being argued on Wednesday.

Colleges face a Catch-22, says Liliana M. Garces, an assistant professor of education at Pennsylvania State University, and one of the researchers whose work is widely...
cited in the association’s brief. When colleges fix on a number for critical mass, she has written, "it becomes a quota, but if the concept is not a number, then the concept is too amorphous."

Numbers are then both central to concerns about diversity — and a distraction. "I’m not saying numbers don’t matter," Ms. Garces said in an interview. "Obviously, they do matter, but not when they’re separate from the context in which students find themselves."

One potentially useful way to think about numbers is suggested by research from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles. Since 2010, researchers there have administered the Diverse Learning Environments Survey, which asks students for their views on their campus’s climate on issues of race, gender, religion, and sexual orientation, among others.

As the researchers sifted through the data to gauge the relationship between minority representation and campus climate, they had in the back of their minds the work of Rosabeth M. Kanter, a professor of business administration at the Harvard Business School. She studied the experiences of women in corporations in the 1970s, finding that when their ranks reached a certain threshold — about 35 percent — their presence started to change their organizations’ culture, norms, and values.

UCLA’s researchers ran their numbers and observed a threshold similar to the one Ms. Kanter found. Black, Hispanic, and Native-American students were less likely to say they had personally been the object of discriminatory verbal comments, had seen offensive images, and had felt excluded from events and activities when their combined numbers on a campus were higher than 35 percent. As the rates of hostile interactions dropped, their sense of belonging on campus rose, the researchers found. And a sense of belonging tends to predict retention and persistence.

"Discrimination starts to diminish as the numbers start to increase," said Sylvia Hurtado, a professor of education at UCLA who leads the institute’s Diverse Learning Environments Survey. Her findings are based on the responses of nearly 8,900 minority students at 58 four-year campuses between 2010 and 2015.

When larger numbers of diverse groups of students are on a campus, she said, it tends to disrupt stereotypes and reduce microaggressions. It affects the perceptions of white students, too. "They see there’s variability within these groups," Ms. Hurtado said. Other benefits include greater tolerance of difference and increases in critical-thinking skills, especially among white students.
The findings might be an artifact of having a relatively small number of campuses in the survey, Ms. Hurtado said. To have a large enough sample of minority students to make observations, the researchers had to combine black, Hispanic, and Native American groups (Asian Americans were excluded from the analysis, researchers said, because they are not underrepresented in higher education). But combining categories also has a certain logic, Ms. Hurtado said, because it encourages a broad conception of diversity. "To have a more mutually beneficial learning environment," she said, "it helps to have a variety of groups."

But Ms. Hurtado stopped short of identifying the 35-percent threshold as critical mass. That term describes a broader phenomenon: a campus’s culture, the quality and frequency of meaningful interactions there, faculty demographics, and an institution’s policies.

"I don’t want it to turn into a magic number," she said. "You can have a bunch of diverse people in a room, but if they don’t interact, you’re not going to get the benefits of diversity."

Risks and Benefits

Affixing numerical targets to diversity goals can risk undermining those efforts, say several scholars.

Administrators might be tempted to declare victory after hitting enrollment numbers but then neglect to offer resources that help minority students succeed once they arrive.

Enrolling higher numbers of minority students is good, but only if colleges take concrete steps like establishing multicultural-affairs offices and other resources that might help them persist and graduate, said Shaun R. Harper, a professor in the Graduate School of Education and executive director of the Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education at the University of Pennsylvania.

"College and university administrators," he said, "are notorious for presuming that if we could just get a bunch of students from different groups in a residence hall, they’ll magically interact with each other in meaningful ways."

An even bigger challenge, Mr. Harper said, is increasing the number of faculty members and administrators from minority groups. Without adequate racial representation in the ranks of the professoriate and leadership, he added, the human infrastructure of institutions will continue to feel overwhelmingly white, even on campuses with large numbers of black, Hispanic, and Native-American students.
Thinking about diversity beyond a count of single groups but as a collection of different ones has its uses. Robust groups of different students can deepen their understanding of one another and build solidarity, Mr. Harper said. But important distinctions can also get papered over. Mr. Harper’s research has found that students tend to report varying levels of satisfaction with college, based on their race. White students are the most satisfied. Hispanic and Asian-American students often acknowledge that they experienced discrimination but still feel somewhat satisfied. Black students are the most dissatisfied, he said, because they have a longer history with their institutions than other minority groups, and it’s often filled with disappointment and hurt.

Ms. Hurtado’s research surfaced similar distinctions among minority groups. As campuses became more diverse, she found, the rate at which Hispanic students reported incidents of bias and discrimination decreased. The pattern was linear. Black students, however, followed a different path. The rate of black students’ reports of such incidents increased when their campuses had "moderate" levels of underrepresented minorities, defined as between 21 and 35 percent, even when compared with those with the lowest rates of diversity. Once minorities accounted for more than 35 percent of the student body, the rates of reports dropped back down, mirroring the broader pattern. When black students are isolated, as they would be on campuses with low levels of diversity, they may be more reluctant to report their experiences, several scholars said.

The Big Picture

While 35 percent may not be the critical mass for every campus, it is a bar that few colleges reach.

Campuses whose share of underrepresented students fails to crack 20 percent include some of the highest-profile sites of conflict in recent months: Yale and Princeton Universities, the Universities of Missouri and Oklahoma, and Claremont McKenna College. Among the approximately 70 campuses with student demands cataloged on the website thedemands.org, all but five fall below the 35-percent threshold. The number of Title IV-compliant, four-year, degree-granting public and nonprofit private colleges where at least 35 percent of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduates are black, Hispanic, or Native American is just 374, about 19 percent of the total number of these institutions. More than a third of these diverse institutions are designated as historically black or tribal, or have Hispanic enrollments of 80 percent or more, according to federal data.
Increasing numbers of students of any kind should prompt colleges to change to meet these students’ needs, said Deborah A. Santiago, chief operating officer and vice president for policy at Excelencia in Education, which promotes efforts to help Hispanic students succeed in college. That holds true when the students represent races that have historically not enrolled in higher education, as is happening now, just as it did in the past when women, veterans, or commuters flooded campuses.

At a certain point, Ms. Santiago said, the changing composition of a campus’s student body will become so altered that a college must evolve, too. When? "It could be 15 percent," she said. "It could be 40 percent."

But demographics alone won’t embed new cultures on campuses or lead to student success, she added. Many Hispanic students, for example, are the first in their families to attend college. They often need academic advising that is more active and intrusive than it is for white students, she said.

What ultimately matters, said Ms. Santiago, is that colleges act thoughtfully and intentionally.

"Institutions that are oblivious," she said, "might be missing the boat."

Ariana Giorgi contributed to this article.

Dan Berrett writes about teaching, learning, the curriculum, and educational quality. Follow him on Twitter @danberrett, or write to him at dan.berrett@chronicle.com.
I graduated with the University of Missouri Class of 1965. I’m the son of two Mizzou graduates — my father, who became a respected professor of agricultural economics there, and my mother, the founding director of the MU Visitors and Guest Relations Office. My sister and my former wife are also Mizzou alumni. We have all been proud members of the university’s family beginning in 1946, when my World War II veteran dad first enrolled there under the GI Bill.

But — and speaking only for myself as a college faculty member with more than 50 years of classroom experience — I am absolutely appalled by the recent events surrounding the racism issues on the Columbia campus, particularly the forced resignations of UM President Tim Wolfe and Chancellor R. Bowen Loftin. I recognize that many students and faculty on your campus felt Wolfe and Loftin were insensitive and insufficiently responsive about the matter of race, but they didn’t invent racism; they didn’t spray racist graffiti on buildings; and they didn’t call black students racist names.

I grew up in Columbia, attended its schools and actively participated in all aspects of its civic life, and I reject the protesting students’ — and many reporters’ — allegations that the town and the university are “hotbeds of racism.” Quite the opposite. The perceived discrimination against minorities at MU simply reflects the cultural attitudes of a lot of Americans in general — including some of the GOP candidates for president — and as a prominent public institution of higher learning, it’s only normal for the widely diverse student body there to reflect such unfortunately universal attitudes.

That obviously doesn’t make racism OK, but to single out President Wolfe as being a root cause of the nation’s problems regarding racism is ridiculous, and for students, faculty and even the school’s Board of Curators to demand that he resign is outrageous. Wolfe didn’t create racism, and his forced departure won’t end it, either on the campus or elsewhere.

But the real culprits are the 30-plus members of the Tigers football team who refused to play unless Wolfe left the school. These players, most of them black and on generous scholarships that allowed them to attend a previously fine university, broke their promise and their contract with MU and should have been immediately removed from the team and booted from the school. Not because of their color or their act of disrespect, but because they voluntarily chose not to honor their obligation — which, if done in their careers after graduation, would have resulted in them appropriately being fired.

The same goes for the complicit and weak football Coach Gary Pinkel and Athletic Director Mack Rhoades — who claim to be good role models — for acting to protect their bloated salaries. They were so desperate to be seen as politically correct that they publicly conspired with the players, setting a horrible example and creating a terrible precedent for the future of university athletics.

The wimpy Mizzou administration and Board of Curators, instead of falling all over themselves to avoid giving up millions of dollars in football television rights, should have kicked out troublesome players, their coaches and the athletic director, suited up those players of any color who wanted to play and worked out the claimed racism grievances via the established democratic personnel policies set up just for such situations. That’s the way the oldest public university west
of the Mississippi River, with a once world-class journalism school, is supposed to operate, acting as a noble example for its students and all of Missouri.

But instead, MU — once our state’s flagship university — is now the laughingstock of the academic world and humiliated and pitied by both the American and foreign press. Where it was previously respected as an eminent university with a mediocre football team, Mizzou is now seen as a second-rate football team reluctantly saddled with a cowardly college.

So I’m returning my diploma, and I would like to be issued a new one more appropriately representative of the new reality and thus signed not by eminent former President Elmer Ellis but by the new boss of the university, Athletic Director Mack Rhoades.

Larry Lee Rottmann, B.A., Class of 1965

A Columbia native, Larry Rottmann lives in Springfield and teaches English at Ozark Technical Community College.

Sundance documentary a first for MU and professor

COLUMBIA — MU professor Robert Greene's film "Kate Plays Christine" was one of 16 U.S. documentaries selected for the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

Stacey Woelfel, the director of MU's Jonathan B. Murray Center for Documentary Journalism, where Greene teaches, wrote in an email that he thought Greene was the first MU journalism faculty member to ever have a film at Sundance.

Steve Weinberg, who wrote an official history of the Missouri School of Journalism, also wrote in an email that he wasn't aware of any faculty member to ever have a film in the festival, which receives over 12,000 submissions each year.

Greene's film follows an actress, Kate Sheil, as she prepares for the role of Christine Chubbuck, a Florida newscaster who killed herself on air in 1974. Chubbuck's death is also the topic of "Christine," one of the 16 narrative films premiering in Sundance's U.S. Dramatic Competition next month.

"Sundance is the biggest place to start the life of a film in this country," Greene said. "I feel really lucky."
The film explores themes of suicide, voyeurism and the nature of performance. It is the first film Greene directed to premier at the festival, although two films he edited have previously screened at Sundance: Alex Ross Perry's "Listen Up Philip" in 2014 and Charles Poekel's "Christmas, Again" in 2015.

Although this is Greene's first semester teaching at MU, his relationship with Columbia began years earlier when his second feature, "Kati with an I," premiered at the 2010 True/False Film Fest. Since then, he has directed and edited several other feature-length documentaries. Roger Ebert listed Greene's film "Fake It So Real" as one of the best documentaries of 2012, and Greene's 2014 film "Actress" was nominated for a Best Documentary Gotham Award.

Greene also co-edited "Killing Them Safely," directed by MU alumnus and professor Nick Berardini, which screened at the Missouri Theatre last month.

"It’s also special that it happened our first semester at the Murray Center," Greene said. MU’s Jonathan B. Murray Center for Documentary Journalism began its first classes in August.

The 2016 Sundance Film Festival will take place in and around Park City, Utah, from Jan. 21 to Jan. 31. All 65 features playing in and out of competition were officially announced Dec. 2 on Sundance's website.

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**The Alumni Question**

*As colleges grapple with issues of race and diversity, they face questions from alumni and donors -- not all of whom are pleased with new campus efforts.*

December 9, 2015

By Kellie Woodhouse

**NO MU MENTION**
As student groups throughout the nation demand more diversity on their campuses, administrators have to consider many constituencies, including students (those protesting and those not) and professors with a range of views.

Yet one of the loudest groups isn’t even on campus.

Alumni.

As protests ripple through college campuses, alumni are far from shy in sharing their viewpoints and frustrations with their alma maters. Around the country, alumni responses to race protests are flooding presidents’ email inboxes and college’s social media accounts. And the heightened attention from alumni -- who will sometimes threaten to cease philanthropic support if they’re unhappy with an institution’s direction -- asks the question of whether the racial protests roiling college campuses throughout America also have the potential to negatively impact university fund-raising.

“It’s interesting to see how institutions react, and donors will eventually react to that reaction,” said David Strauss, a partner with the higher education consulting firm Art & Science.

A lot of the colleges with protest movements -- Yale, Harvard and Brown Universities, as well as many others -- have a strong history of philanthropy. And while opinions about student protesters’ demands and tactics are varied -- either because of one’s political and generational bent or because of their support for academic freedom and free speech -- they’re always strongly held.

For example, John Hinderaker, an alumnus of Dartmouth College and Harvard Law School, is watching closely as Dartmouth continues to respond to an incident in November when student protesters finished a night of race protests by flooding the library and chanting, “Black lives matter.” Some reports said students in the protest intimidated and insulted those students who were studying at the library. In the wake of the incident, some alumni were sympathetic to the protesters while others decried their methods.

“Would this kind of thing impact future contributions? It depends on how the administration of the college handles it,” said Hinderaker, a practicing lawyer and conservative blogger. Though he himself was a student protester while in college -- against the Vietnam War -- Hinderaker largely disagrees with the current set of protesters' demands and tactics. He has a history of giving to Dartmouth, though he is not a major donor. “To the extent that [a response] creates an impression of the administration being ridiculously left wing, that's something that would color my thinking.”

The college’s leader, Philip Hanlon, has since penned at least three statements about the incident, each in support of diversity but each more sternly worded than the last to disavow intimidation.

“Dartmouth is committed to the principles of free speech, public protest and inclusivity and we understand that these ideals may sometimes conflict with one another; however, the safety, well-being and support of all of our students remain our highest priorities,” Hanlon wrote in an email to alumni last month. Dartmouth officials declined to comment for this article.
Impact on Giving

Meanwhile, at Harvard a law student wrote a Boston Globe essay encouraging alumni not to give to the law school because, she said, it was not adequately addressing incidents of racism and inequity on campus. In November a series of black faculty portraits were defaced with black tape, and the student argued that administrators’ response to the incident was weak.

“I ask our alumni to use the power of the purse to bring change to the school. Do not let us go into the third century propagating the same hate that our institution has over the last 200 years. I ask that they withhold contributions until change is enacted,” wrote third-year student Bianca Tylek, who spoke at an alumni fund-raising event in support of the law school a few months before penning the editorial.

In a statement at the time, the Harvard Black Alumni Society said it “is our hope, desire and expectation that the university will address this incident appropriately and swiftly.” The Harvard Law School dean, Martha Minow, sent an email to alumni informing them of working groups aimed at discussing students' concerns and encouraged alumni input. And during an open forum, she agreed that racism is a “serious problem” at the law school.

Yet even this response angered some alumni who don’t believe racism is a problem at the school. Hinderaker, for example, said the dean’s response during the forum seemed insincere. “She doesn’t say that to alumni. To alumni she puts out these sort of typical emails,” he said.

In generations past, if college leaders told students one thing and alumni another, it wasn’t immediately evident to either group. Now most every message is shared on social media and through college websites, and leaders have a greater pressure to be perceived as consistent in their messaging.

The vastly different reactions of alumni can make it difficult for colleges to fully respond to alumni concerns over incidents and race protests on campus. College development offices nowadays woo an increasingly diverse set of donors, including millennials and minorities as well as a donor base that has traditionally been a strong source of fund-raising: the older, predominately white and perhaps more conservative set.

At Pomona College, minority students threatened to stage a sit-in at the president’s office unless President David Oxtoby agreed to address a list of their demands. Oxtoby agreed to meet with students and discuss their demands -- including meeting with at least one student group a week. When he emailed alumni to keep them informed about race protests and relations on campus, he received a range of responses in return.

“The majority of them were supportive and said, ‘This is great, what you’re doing,’ and then a certain number of them were critical, but not always from a point of view of understanding what’s going on. We just take it as an opportunity to engage our alumni,” he said.

Oxtoby says he’s not really concerned about how alumni perceptions of the protest will affect giving. There are already “so many excuses not to give,” he continued. “When someone says I’m not going to
give because of such and such, it’s one more excuse. Frankly I’ve seen all of them, and most of those people weren’t giving anyway.”

And institutions may feel fewer shock waves, in terms of donations, than they might be anticipating.

Donor relationships are often built over decades or more of engagement and interaction with a university -- creating bonds between donor and college that are not easily broken, says Ivan Adames, executive director of alumni relations and development at Northwestern University.

“At the end of the day you might have a disagreement, but it doesn’t diminish that pride that you have in that relationship,” he said. Northwestern has experienced some student demonstrations over race. And though it has received varying responses from alumni, giving has not been impacted. “There would have to be a significant lapse in institutional integrity for it to really be disruptive.”

Strauss recalled an institution his firm worked with about a decade ago that was cracking down on its fraternities after a series of troubling incidents. Alumni were contacting administrators expressing frustration with the crackdown, and the university was worried giving would suffer because of alumni concerns. But a survey of 900 alumni found that less than 1 percent of respondents actually said they’d decrease their giving.

“They were hearing from all the squeaky wheels,” recalls Strauss, who added that a relatively small proportion of alumni at any institution are substantial donors. It’s the big donors that universities should keep in touch with during times of turmoil on campus.

“We used to talk about the 80-20 rule, that 80 percent of the money comes from 20 percent of the donors. For many of these institutions it’s now the 95-5 rule. The concentration has become just amazing,” Strauss said.

Hard Conversations

At Yale University, minority students have issued a set of demands and staged a series of protests after Erika Christakis, an associate master of one of Yale’s residential colleges, sent out an email that many students believe was racially insensitive. In her email Christakis questioned whether Yale should advise students on what types of Halloween costumes to avoid, asking, “Is there no room anymore for a child or young person to be a little bit obnoxious ... a little bit inappropriate or provocative or, yes, offensive?”

Some students and alumni found the email thought provoking, but many thought it was offensive and called for her resignation. One video of a student angrily confronting Christakis’s husband went viral. More than 700 people -- many of them alumni -- signed a letter in support of the Christakis. Meanwhile, more than 2,000 alumni signed a letter in support of the protesters. Christakis has since resigned from her teaching position at Yale, but remains an associate master of the residential college.

Yale was flooded with reactions from alumni, through email and social media, many of whom wanted to know how the university was going to react to student demands.
Yale President Peter Salovey addressed the protests on campus, and the controversy over free speech, directly with alumni at an event earlier this month. He said discussions over diversity, race and academic freedom, while difficult, are not “something we should be running from or spinning” and he encouraged alumni to be part of a larger community conversation.

Meanwhile, Christakis’s resignation prompted concerns from many alumni who were already worried about the state of free speech on Yale’s campus. “As one of many alumni who defended you for [your] defense of free speech, [please] reconsider leaving or risk emboldening censors!” one alumnus, Glenn Hurowitz, wrote to Christakis on Twitter.

Erin Hennessy, vice president of TVP Communications, a public relations agency focused on higher education, said that as institutions communicate with alumni about protests on campus, they need to underscore that the expectations of the modern-day student are different from what many alumni “wanted or needed” when they were on campus.

“These are institutions that change and live and grow every day, so the student body we served today may not be the same we served 20 years ago,” she said.

At Hamilton College a group of black students using the moniker The Movement have a list of at least 39 demands aimed at bettering race relations and increasing diversity on campus.

A few of the demands have rankled some alumni, including a demand that white faculty be discouraged from leading departments about “societies colonized, massacred and enslaved.” Explained one alumnus on a Facebook post: “I’m inclined not to even give the movement [sic] the time of day. If you’re going to make this many ridiculous demands with this many inaccuracies you don’t really deserve a discussion.”

As alumni contact the college -- many with concerns over the approach students have taken and the way demands have been communicated to administrators -- officials remind them that, even among students, there’s a diverse set of views, including a contingent that disagrees with most of the protesters’ demands.

“We remind alumni that students don’t always express their sentiments perfectly, but the fundamental issues are real at Hamilton and throughout society,” explained Mike Debraggio, Hamilton’s assistant vice president of communications, in an email. “Colleges, of course, should be places where differing views and perspectives are shared and debated, and sometimes those discussions are difficult.”

During an alumni event in New York on Dec. 5, Hamilton President Joan Hinde Stewart drove this point home: “These are interesting times in higher education. Campus conversations across the country are reaching a level of intensity we haven’t seen in a long time. Is this surprising? Not really,” she said. “It’s not a bad thing for questions previously overlooked to be raised in a civil way.”

Hennessy says that colleges will have the best results in communicating with alumni if they send out regular updates and try to educate them about new initiatives on campus. Yale, for example, is responding to each email inquiry from alumni directly.
“The institutions that [have] threaded this needle are ones that have stayed in touch so that alumni are hearing regularly from their institution,” she continued.

Added Adames, “It’s one thing for them to submit their comments and not have anything in response, as opposed to saying, ‘We hear you -- this is what our response has been.’ All of us just want to be heard.”

Yet even with constant communication, it’s impossible to appease everyone.

“With some of these more difficult issues, you’re going to have alumni say, ‘Well, that’s not my college or university anymore,’ and that’s unfortunate,” Hennessy said. “But on the flip side, a lot of alumni may be re-engaged in the institution” because they are sympathetic to protesters’ demands. Whatever the case, institutions can’t stop having hard conversations for fear of upsetting alumni, she said.

“This is the current atmosphere and these are important conversations, and putting aside these conversations because we might upset one of these constituencies, even if they are very important constituencies, isn't the best solution for this day and age.”